

## *Antichrist and the Whore in Early Modern England* Cultures of Interpretation

Early modern apocalyptic and anti-Catholic discourse draws on a wide range of Classical, biblical, medieval, and Humanist ideas. In this chapter, I explore how these intellectual strands are used before and after the Reformation. I then examine how theatrical and visual culture draws on such strands, suggesting how they relate to the generic, national, and international preoccupations of early modern drama. My main argument is that the seventeenth century sees the development of a flexible apocalyptic and anti-Catholic discourse closely attuned to political tensions within the state.

### I

One problem faced by early modern Humanists is how best to understand the very different accounts of creation, matter, and the end of the world found in Classical texts and in Scripture.<sup>1</sup> Book one of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (8 CE) offers Christian readers an alternative account of the world's creation and destruction. As Arthur Golding's 1567 translation has it:

Before the Sea and Lande were made, and Heaven that all doth hide  
In all the worlde one onely face of nature did abide,  
Which Chaos hight, a huge rude heape, and nothing else but even  
A heavie lump and clotted clod of seedes together driven,  
Of things at strife among themselves, for want of order due.

(I. 5–9)<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For ancient and classical theories of creation and destruction, see *Ancient Cosmologies*, ed. Carmen Blacker and Michael Loewe (London: Allen and Unwin, 1975), and Norman Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001). See too Jonathan Bate, *Shakespeare and Ovid* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> *Ovid's Metamorphoses: The Arthur Golding Translation 1567*, ed. John Frederick Nims (New York and London: Macmillan, 1965).

Matter is not created *ex nihilo* as in Genesis but preexists the moment that it is brought into 'order'. Ovid goes on to explain that after the four ages, Jove becomes angry with mankind and determines to destroy it in a great flood. He chooses this method over bolts of lightning because he fears to set the heavens on fire, and also because:

He did remember furthermore how that by destinie  
 A certaine time should one day come, when both Sea and Lond  
 And heaven itself should feele the force of Vulcans scorching brond  
 (l. 302–304)

Despite the difficult idea of Chaos, which does not fit well with an *ex nihilo* account of creation, generally these Classical theories are syncretised with Christian ideas in Humanist culture.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, Ovid is often quoted approvingly in apocalyptic writing, as in the commentaries of John Napier (1593) and Hugh Broughton (1610).<sup>4</sup> At the start of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid draws on the Epicurean physics and cosmology of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (c. 54 BCE), a text that has recently received a great deal of scholarly attention.<sup>5</sup> Lucretius' controversial argument (developed from Aristotle) that '*nil posse creari / de nilo*' (l. 155–156) is also used in defences of Christian cosmology, natural science, and providentialism during the period, as in John Dove's *A Confutation of Atheisme* (1605) and Ralph Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678).<sup>6</sup> Lucretian ideas may be alluded to in King Lear's 'Nothing will come of nothing' (l.i.89), and it is notable that this play explores the interplay between Classical and Christian theories of creation and destruction by drawing

<sup>3</sup> Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 171–176. See too Craig Kallendorf, "From Virgil to Vida": The *Poeta Theologus* in Italian Renaissance Commentary', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56, 1, 1995, pp. 41–62.

<sup>4</sup> On Christian Humanism and its assimilation of Classical ideas of chaos and creation, see Michel Jenneret, *Perpetual Motion: Transforming Shapes in the Renaissance from da Vinci to Montaigne*, trans. Nidra Poller (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), pp. 81–103. On Ovid, see John Napier, *A Plaine Discouery ...* (Edinburgh: Robert Waldegrae, 1593), pp. 46, 89, and Hugh Broughton, *A Revelation of the Holy Apocalyps ...* (Middleburg: Richard Schilders, 1610), p. 310.

<sup>5</sup> This is largely because of Stephen Greenblatt's *The Swerve: How the Renaissance Began* (London: Bodley Head, 2011), although scholarly consideration of Lucretius' influence in the period predates this book. See my essay 'Lucretius, Calvin and Natural Law in Measure for Measure', in *Shakespeare and Early Modern Religion*, ed. David Loewenstein and Michael Witmore (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 131–154.

<sup>6</sup> See John Dove, *A Confutation of Atheism ...* (London: Edward Allde, 1605), pp. 2, 27, 94, and Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe ...* (London: Richard Royston, 1678), pp. 29–32.

extensively on apocalyptic language and imagery.<sup>7</sup> To consider the end of the world is to consider physical matter itself, how it came to be, and how it might eventually be destroyed.

The discussion of prophecy and empire in Virgilian texts also influences the Reformers' interpretations of Revelation.<sup>8</sup> In book six of Virgil's *Aeneid* (19 BCE), Aeneas listens to the prophecies of the Cumaean Sybil and goes with her into the Underworld: '*Ibant obscuri sola sub nocte per umbram / perque domos Ditis vacuas et inania regna*' (6. 268–269).<sup>9</sup> After leaving the Underworld, Aeneas' own famous prophecy of a Roman golden age under Augustus Caesar follows (6. 777–807).<sup>10</sup> Such passages underpin the connection between prophecy and the imperial theme in the apocalyptic commentary tradition, especially the idea of a universal ruler or last world emperor with powers of *renovatio*.<sup>11</sup> Other Classical descriptions of the Underworld are important, not least those found in Seneca's plays, which are so influential for early modern dramatists. In the first act of *Thyestes* (first century CE), Tantalus says:

To pooles and floods of hell agayne and styll declining lake,  
And flight of tree ful frayght with fruite that from the lippes doth flee,  
To dungeon darke of hateful hell let leeful be for me  
To goe. Or if to[o] light be thought the paines that there I have,  
Remove me from those lakes agayne in midst of worser wave  
Of Phlegethon, to stand in seas of fyre beset to bee.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Titi Lucreti Cari, *De Rerum Natura, Libri Sex*, vol. 1, ed. Cyril Bailey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966), and William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, in *The Norton Shakespeare*, ed. Stephen Greenblatt et al. (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1997). See L.C. Martin, 'Shakespeare, Lucretius and the Commonplaces', *The Review of English Studies*, 1945, 83, 21, pp. 174–182; William G. Elton, *King Lear and the Gods* (California: Huntington Library, 1966), pp. 46–57; and Joseph Wittreich, "Image of that horror": The Apocalypse in *King Lear*', in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), pp. 175–206.

<sup>8</sup> See Kenneth Borris, *Allegory and Epic in English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 13–52.

<sup>9</sup> Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. G.P. Goold, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>10</sup> David Norbrook has shown how English republican writers often draw on these Virgilian passages – *Writing the English Republic: Poetry, Rhetoric and Politics, 1627–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 332, 369, 441, 466.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, David Pareus, *A Commentary upon the Divine Revelation . . .* (Amsterdam: C.P., 1644), p. 344, and William Bates, *The Divinity of the Christian Religion . . .* (London: J.D. for Brabazon Aylmer, 1677), p. 154. See too Marie Tanner, *The Last Descendants of Aeneas: The Hapsburgs and the Mythic Image of the Emperor* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), pp. 119–145.

<sup>12</sup> *Seneca His Tenne Tragedies Translated into English Edited by Thomas Newton*, intro. T.S. Eliot, vol. 1 (London: Constable, 1927), p. 57. There are also a number of proto-apocalyptic speeches in this play, for example, by the Chorus at the end of act IV (lines 788–884) or in the scenes in the final act where Atreus reveals his crimes to Thyestes.

In early modern England, the most well-known dramatic fusion of these Virgilian and Senecan tropes is found in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (c. 1587–1592), one of the most frequently performed plays of the period. As Frank Ardolino has shown, Kyd offers a sharp critique of Spanish imperialism towards Portugal (and by extension England) through a typically Humanist elision of Classical and apocalyptic language. Building on this work, Eric Griffin has argued that the play is concerned with the entanglement between 'two nations which read the present in terms of mythic past and an apocalyptic future that have long since determined its meaning'.<sup>13</sup> This imperial model and its internationalist perspective are influential for other dramatists, as I explore more fully in the next chapter.

Other Classical 'apocalypses' could be mentioned here. Book one of Virgil's *Georgics* (c. 29 BCE) contains a famous account of heavenly tumult, omens, earthy battles, ghosts, natural disorder, and opened graves, all of which signal disaster and which Virgil uses to rouse Rome to greater imperial glory (l. 461–514).<sup>14</sup> This passage is often invoked in discussions of empire and apocalypse. It is quoted, for instance, by William Fulke in his *Praelections* (1573) and by Broughton in *A Revelation of the Holy Apocalyps* (1610).<sup>15</sup> Virgil even makes an appearance in the popular Protestant Geneva Bible, mentioned by Francis Junius in his marginal commentary to Revelation.<sup>16</sup> A passage in book two of the *Georgics* ('*septemque una sibi muro circumdedit arces*', 2. 532–540) is sometimes used by commentators on Revelation to confirm that Rome and Babylon are synonymous. As William Perkins asks in his *Lectures upon the Three First Chapters of Revelation* (1604): 'What boy, I say, in the Grammer schoole doth not vnderstand this to be meant of the citie of Rome, although the Poet in that place doth not once name Rome?'<sup>17</sup> Last, sections of Lucan's *Pharsalia* (c. 65 CE) describing the eventual fall of the Roman Empire and the battle between Pompey and Caesar are often used in apocalyptic

<sup>13</sup> See Frank Ardolino, *Apocalypse and Armada in Kyd's Spanish Tragedy* (Kirksville: Northeast Missouri State University, 1995), p. 12, and Eric Griffin, *English Renaissance Drama and the Specter of Spain: Ethnopoetics and Empire* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), p. 93.

<sup>14</sup> Prodigies and portents are also the stock in trade of writers such as Plutarch and Livy.

<sup>15</sup> William Fulke, *Praelections upon the Sacred and Holy Revelations of S. John*, trans. George Gifford (London: Thomas Purfoote, 1573), pp. 114–115; Francis Junius, 'Commentary on Revelation', in *The Bible: That Is, the Holy Scriptures . . .* (London: Christopher Barker, 1599), chapter 17, verse 9, note c; Broughton, *A Revelation of the Holy Apocalyps*, pp. 55–56.

<sup>16</sup> Junius, 'Commentary on Revelation', chapter 17, verse 8, notes 13 and 15.

<sup>17</sup> William Perkins, *Lectures upon the Three First Chapters of Revelation . . .* (London: Richard Field for Cuthbert Burbie, 1604), p. 349. See too Napier, *A Plaine Discouery*, p. 35.

writing.<sup>18</sup> English Protestant exegetes give imperial Roman discourse a Christian gloss. The fact that so many of these commentators explicitly oppose the Roman Church and Spain (and later in the century France) shows how English apocalyptic writing often casts national opposition to Roman Catholic and Hapsburg (or Bourbon) rule in an imperial light.<sup>19</sup>

Many of these intellectual strands would have been familiar to Dante, Wycliffe, Chaucer, or Langland.<sup>20</sup> Reformers in the late-medieval period criticise both *ecclesiae* and *religio*.<sup>21</sup> Luther begins as an Augustinian monk with a soft spot for Virgil who tries to reform the Roman Church from within.<sup>22</sup> Anti-papalism is a medieval invention informed by imperial Classical discourse.<sup>23</sup> It is the political establishment of the Reformed Churches across sixteenth-century Europe that allows Protestants to lay claim to the medieval language of anti-papal critique. It also enables them to tap into an apocalyptic tradition that is the common heritage of all Christians and to recast it as one of the most powerful languages in Protestantism's rhetorical arsenal, anti-papery. To this end, a number of late-medieval and Humanist writers reconsider the relationship between prophecy and history.<sup>24</sup> One important strand is found in the writings

<sup>18</sup> The relevant sections are in books 1 and 7 – see Lucan, *Pharsalia*, trans. J.D. Duff, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1977), pp. 7–9, 367–434. For an early modern use of the passage in book 1 in an apocalyptic context, see Thomas Jackson, *The Eternal Truth of Scriptures . . . in the Works of the Reverend and Learned Divine Thomas Jackson D.D. . . .*, 3 vols. (London: Andrew Clarke for John Martyn, Richard Chiswell and Joseph Clark, 1673), pp. 110–111. On Virgil, Lucan, and apocalypse, see Morton D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 15–16. See also David Quint, *Epic and Empire: Politics and Generic Form from Virgil to Milton* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 189–199.

<sup>19</sup> Writers across the religious divide draw on a common set of Classical ideas and texts. See Tanner, *The Last Descendants*, pp. 119–145.

<sup>20</sup> Dante's *De Monarchia* (c. 1311) advances a theory of imperial, universal monarchy over that of the Pope, informed by Virgilian writing – Dante, *Monarchy*, ed. Prue Shaw (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For Dante, the universal monarch is the Holy Roman Emperor, who draws power directly from the ancient Roman Empire – he is less interested than Petrarch is in reviving ancient Roman imperial models. See Thomas James Dandeleit, *The Renaissance of Empire in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 24–25.

<sup>21</sup> See James Simpson, *Reform and Cultural Revolution: The Oxford English Literary History*, vol. 2 (1350–1547) gen. ed. Jonathan Bate (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); *Cultural Reformations: Medieval and Renaissance in Literary History*, ed. Brian Cummings and James Simpson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), and *Reading the Medieval in Early Modern England*, ed. Gordon McMullan and David Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> On Luther's love of Virgil, see Carl P.E. Springer, *Luther's Aesop* (Kirkville: Trueman State University Press, 2011), pp. 11–15.

<sup>23</sup> See Curtis V. Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden, Boston, and Cologne: Brill, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> See Tim Thornton, *Prophecy, Politics and the People in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), and Jonathan Green, *Printing and Prophecy: Prognostication and Media Change 1450–1550* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012).

of the Calabrian mystic and prophet Joachim of Fiore. The Joachimite tradition has a clearly defined 'historicist' slant. It interprets temporal and spiritual history together as moving through the Augustinian six ages, marked by the Trinitarian *status* of father, son, and holy spirit. Only when the last *status* is achieved will the world move towards the *renovatio* or seventh age promised at the end of days.<sup>25</sup> Such ideas are culturally influential across Europe. In the words of one scholar, 'Renaissance ideas of restoration and reformation in both Catholic and Protestant circles owed some of their hope to the expectation stemming from Joachim' and his belief that 'the Book of Revelation expressed a continuous history of the Church and the hope of further improvement to that Church within human history.'<sup>26</sup> These ideas inform texts such as Thomas Wimbleton's famous fourteenth-century sermon given at Paul's Cross. Drawing on Joachim and Hildegard of Bingen, Wimbleton argues that

if thou see in the secular menne that darknesse of syn beginneth to haue the mastry it is a token that the world endeth. But when thou seest Priests that be put in the top of sufferancie of spirituall dignitey, that should bee as hyls among the common people in perfect luying, that darknesse of sin hath got the vpperhand of them, who doubteth but that the worlde is at an ende? Also Abbot *Ioachim* in the exposition of *Ieremy* sayeth That from the yere of our Lorde. M.CCC. all times be to be suspected to mee and wee be past this suspect tyme, nigh CC yeres.<sup>27</sup>

The connection between anti-clericism and the imminent apocalypse finds a ready audience before and after the Reformation: Wimbleton's sermon was often reprinted during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>28</sup> Apart from shaping how medieval radicals interpret the prophetic and apocalyptic books of the Bible to comment on the ills of contemporary society, Joachimite theories of *renovatio* and a last world emperor who purges society in anticipation of the end times retain their appeal well into the early modern period. Such ideas are found throughout the commentary

<sup>25</sup> 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), pp. 30–31.

<sup>26</sup> Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 5. See too Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 29–31, and Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999), pp. 136–165. Heinrich Bullinger's influential *A Hundred Sermons upon the Apocalypse* ... (London: Iohn Daye, 1573), praises Joachim in the Preface (sig. B5v).

<sup>27</sup> Ralph [Thomas] Wimbleton, *A Sermon No Lesse Fruitfull Then Famous* ... (London: Iohn Charlewood, 1579), sigs. E3r–E4v.

<sup>28</sup> See Alexandra Walsham, 'Inventing the Lollard Past: The Afterlife of a Medieval Sermon in Early Modern England', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 58, 4, 2007, pp. 628–655.

tradition and in popular compendia such as Stephen Batman's *The Doome warning all men to the Iudgement* (1581). I explore this tradition further in Chapter 4.<sup>29</sup>

This essentially optimistic strand of thinking is contrasted by a more pessimistic approach found in the writings of the Lollards, or Wycliffites. This group often criticise the medieval papacy and predict its overthrow.<sup>30</sup> John Wycliffe's *De Pontificum Romanorum Schismate* was probably written in the late 1370s/early 1380s in response to a notorious ecclesiastical schism. Because of a disputed papal election, rival popes vied for pre-eminence in Rome and Avignon. In the text, Wycliffe offers an apocalyptic interpretation of the crisis: 'For þis unkouþe discencioun þat is bitwixe þes popes semeþ to signyfie þe perilous tyme þat Poul seiþ schulde come on þes laste dayes.'<sup>31</sup> Despite this particular claim, however, Wycliffite thinking also uses an 'allegorical representation of the continual sufferings of the true Church', one that needs to be decoded and interpreted.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps the most well-known medieval text that brings the historical and the allegorical together is William Langland's great dream vision, *Piers Plowman* (B Text c. 1376–1379). This poem ends with antichrist and his followers besieging Holy Church and Conscience resolving 'To seken Piers the Plowman' (XX, 383).<sup>33</sup> Although the point is open to debate, the poem's conclusion comes down on the side of ecclesial reformation rather than overthrow, even if the apocalyptic framework implies that the latter will not be long in coming.<sup>34</sup> *Piers Plowman* remained popular after

<sup>29</sup> Stephen Batman, *The Doome Warning All Men to Iudgement* . . . (London: Ralph Nubery, 1581). See too James (Giacopo) Brocardo, *The Reuelation of Saint Iohn* . . ., trans. James Sanford (London: Thomas Marsh, 1582), a commentary deeply influenced by Joachimite ideas. Apocalyptic commentators discuss prophetic figures such as the Sibyls, Hildegard of Bingen, Jan Hus, and others. See *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, ed. Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

<sup>30</sup> On Lollardy, history, and apocalypse, see Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), and Bostick, *The Antichrist and the Lollards*. See too Simpson, *The Oxford English Literary History*, pp. 322–382, and Brian Cummings, *The Literary Culture of the Reformation: Grammar and Grace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 15–26.

<sup>31</sup> John Wycliffe, *De Pontificum Romanorum Schismate*, in *Select English Works of John Wyclif*, ed. Thomas Arnold, vol. 3 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1871), p. 242.

<sup>32</sup> Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 6.

<sup>33</sup> William Langland, *The Vision of Piers Plowman: A Complete Edition of the B-Text*, ed. A.V.C. Schmidt (London: J.M. Dent, 1993). On Langland and apocalypse, see Morton Bloomfield, *Piers Plowman as a Fourteenth-Century Apocalypse* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1962), and Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism and Piers Plowman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

<sup>34</sup> For competing views on the pessimism or optimism of Langland's apocalypticism, see Kenneth Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), and Kerby-Fulton, *Reformist Apocalypticism*.



the Reformation, championed by writers such as Robert Crowley as a forerunner of Protestant concerns.<sup>35</sup> As he explains in his 1550 edition of the poem, it was written:

in the tyme of Kynge Edwarde the thyrde. In whose tyme it pleased God to open the eyes of many to se hys truth, geuing them boldenes of herte, to open their mouthes and crye oute agaynste the works of darckenes, as dyd John Wicklyfe who also in those days translated the holye Byble into the Englishe tonge and this writer who in reportynge certayne visions and dreames, that he fayned hym selfe to haue dreamed doth. . . rebuke the obstynate blynde.<sup>36</sup>

Langland's work, refracted through Crowley's Protestant lens, also influences early modern poets such as Edmund Spenser, Michael Drayton, and George Wither.<sup>37</sup> The mantle of the prophetic poet who hymns imperial power is worn with particular skill by Spenser. Though by no means an extreme Puritan, nor uncritical of the apocalyptic narrative, the imperial view of monarchy remains central to his poetic vision. Throughout his epic *The Faerie Queene* (1596) his praise of Elizabeth is framed by imperial language and imagery, as is the depiction of Una in Book One.<sup>38</sup> By contrast, the antichristian figures of Duessa and Archimago undermine this claim to authority. Duessa is depicted as the 'sole Daughter of an Emperour' who has 'the wide West vnder his rule' and who has set his throne in Rome 'where Tiberis doth pass' (Book One, Canto Two, 23).<sup>39</sup> Her Roman Catholic imperial lineage is a threat to both Una and, by implication, Elizabeth. While we can call Una an allegory of the True Church, Duessa a type of Whore of Babylon, and Archimago a kind of antichrist, Spenser's figures were also decoded by early modern readers, most notably James VI of Scotland, who objected to the trial of Duessa because it supposedly represented the fate of his mother

<sup>35</sup> See Anne Hudson, 'The Legacy of *Piers Plowman*', in *A Companion to Piers Plowman*, ed. John A. Alford (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 251–266, and Sarah A. Kelen, *Langland's Early Modern Identities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>36</sup> Robert Crowley, Preface to *The Vision of Pierce Plowman* . . . (London: Robert Crowley, 1550), sig. \*IIr.

<sup>37</sup> See A.C. Hamilton, 'Spenser and Langland', *Studies in Philology*, 55, 1958, pp. 533–548; Judith Anderson, *The Growth of a Personal Voice: Piers Plowman and the Faerie Queene* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), and Katherine Little, *Transforming Work: Early Modern Pastoral and Late Medieval Poetry* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

<sup>38</sup> For two views on Spenser's treatment of imperial monarchy, see Richard F. Hardin, *Civil Idolatry: Desacralizing and Monarchy in Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), esp. chapter 3, and David Lee Miller, *The Poem's Two Bodies: The Poetics of the 1590 'Faerie Queene'* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 68–119.

<sup>39</sup> Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, ed. A.C. Hamilton (Pearson: Harlow, 2007).



Mary, Queen of Scots. Allegory and typology, apocalypticism and anti-Catholicism: all intermingle, sometimes uneasily, in Spenser's great epic.<sup>40</sup>

The assimilation of these Classical and medieval ideas by early modern writers raises the matter of periodisation. Brian Cummings and James Simpson have argued that the very existence of period boundaries between medieval and early modern has a revolutionary ethos: 'Our very conception of historical periods, divisible into detached segments of time punctuated by liberating convulsions, is itself the product of revolutionary aspiration to neutralize the pathologies of time and start again.'<sup>41</sup> Yet this is not a move without difficulty: 'the humanists of the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries conceptualized their own place in history not so much by inventing the modern as by inventing the "medieval"'. They created the third term as a conscious polemic.<sup>42</sup> Early modern Protestantism offers a polemical redefinition of the 'medieval' in order to affirm an invariably partial interpretation of temporal and spiritual history. This 'liberating convulsion' is part of a broader Humanist revision of historiographical practice that is achieved by rewriting the relationship between Classical, medieval, and post-Reformation Christian history.<sup>43</sup> The idea of an imperial ruler who possesses a universal authority over the temporal realm and who will reform the spiritual realm as a prelude to the second coming is a powerful one in medieval and early modern Europe.<sup>44</sup> After the Reformation in England, the monarch, rather than the Emperor or the Pope, is invested with temporal and spiritual authority. The contingencies of religion and politics often occlude the articulation of the imperial idea in early modern England. But it is an idea – part reality, part fantasy – that does not go away.

<sup>40</sup> See Florence Sandler, 'The Faerie Queene: An Elizabethan Apocalypse', in *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature*, ed. Patrides and Wittreich, pp. 148–174; Joan Grundy, *The Spenserian Poets: A Study in Elizabethan and Jacobean Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1969); David Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics in Renaissance Poetry*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and Michelle O' Callaghan, *The 'Shepherds Nation': Jacobean Spenserians and Early Stuart Political Culture, 1612–1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Cummings and Simpson, *Cultural Reformations*, p. 3. Such an impulse would also have been familiar to apocalyptic commentators writing on the prophecies of the four kingdoms in the Old Testament book of Daniel (7: 1–28). The four empires are traditionally interpreted as Babylon, Assyria, Greece, and Rome – see Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 20–21.

<sup>42</sup> Cummings and Simpson, *Cultural Reformations*, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> It could also, in certain hands, be called revolutionary, as the Peasant's War of 1524–1526 and the emergence of radical spiritualist and Anabaptist groups in Europe demonstrate.

<sup>44</sup> See Dandeleit, *The Renaissance of Empire*.

The connections between 'Rome', ancient and Roman Catholic, are systematically rethought by Reformed commentators on Revelation. We can see this in various historiographical discussions of *imperium*.<sup>45</sup> Take the example of the ancient sibylline oracles, referred to by Christian writers throughout the medieval and early modern periods.<sup>46</sup> As mentioned above, the Cumaean Sybil is Aeneas' guide to the Underworld in the *Aeneid*. Virgil also refers to the sibylline oracles in his fourth *Eclogue* (37 BCE). This text ('*Ultima Cumaei venit iam carminis aetas; / magnus ab integro saeculorum nascitur ordo*', 4. 4–5), his prophecy of a child who sees the coming empire (4. 7), and his reference to a chaste virgin (4: 8) all inspire Christian writers to conflate the return of a pagan golden age with the coming of Christ and the eschatological promise of Revelation.<sup>47</sup> In *De Civitate Dei* (c. 410 CE) Saint Augustine argues that the Erythraean Sibyl prophesies the coming of Christ.<sup>48</sup> He also notes that this Sibyl may have 'liued in the Troyan war long before *Romulus*' and so only Christian writers can fully understand the prophecy.<sup>49</sup> *De Civitate Dei* is written at a period when the authority of the Roman Empire is under assault: small wonder that Augustine is interested in prophecies that seemingly predate that Empire. The imperial inflection of Augustine's historiography appeals to the Reformers as much as his theology. If these ancient texts can be used to affirm the reality of the historical Christ, then they can also be folded into a broader narrative that promises the return of Christ and the establishment of the City of God in the face of Rome's diminishing temporal power. Virgil uses the sibylline prophecies in the pastoral *Georgics* to promote a cyclical idea of historical *desolatio* and *renovatio* that is used in the service of an imperial *pax Romana*. Augustine translates that sentiment into a desire for temporal *desolatio* to be overwritten by spiritual *renovatio*. More than anyone, Augustine is responsible for combining the Classical idea of history as a series of cycles with the belief

<sup>45</sup> See John E. Curran, Jr., *Roman Invasions: The British History, Protestant Anti-Romanism, and the Historical Imagination in England, 1530–1660* (London: Associated University Press, 2002).

<sup>46</sup> On the Sibylline prophecies, see Jessica L. Malay, *Prophecy and Sibylline Imagery in the Renaissance: Shakespeare's Sibyls* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010). On prophecies and apocalypse more generally, see Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 162–184.

<sup>47</sup> See Frances Yates, *Astraea: The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century* (London: Pimlico, 1993), pp. 33–34, and Borris, *Allegory and Epic*, 13–52.

<sup>48</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God* . . . , trans. J.H. (London: George Eld, 1610), pp. 702–703. Augustine is unsure if the prophecies are by the Erythraean or Cumaean Sibyl, but opts for the former – see Yates, *Astraea*, p. 36.

<sup>49</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, p. 703. Augustine is not a millenarian, however, and the seventh age is spiritual, not temporal.

that history is also moving towards a predetermined end.<sup>50</sup> This idea of the six ages, as well as Augustine's sceptical view of Roman power, is important for early modern Protestants. They see themselves as living in a similarly transitional period when authority is shifting in uncertain ways. Empires may rise and fall, but there is a larger providential purpose at work in temporal affairs. Augustinian *renovatio* also allows Protestants to conflate opposition to the Roman Catholic Church with a prophetic narrative that either predates or opposes the Classical Roman *imperium*.

In his *The Historie of Great Britaine* (1611), John Speed argues that the historical moment of ancient Britain's subjection to Rome's 'vniuersall peace' sees the articulation of a promise. It is shown in the sibyl's prophecy from Virgil's fourth *Eclogue* and book one of the *Georgics*, from which Speed quotes, that Christ will come to reign over all and the 'vniuersall subiection' of Rome will be as nothing.<sup>51</sup> To oppose the state of Rome is also to undercut Rome's claims to historical authority. In late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England, the more sceptical view of Roman history found in Tacitus and Suetonius influences this kind of reading, as do debates about reason of state and the historical formation of national constitutions: Bullinger quotes both of these Roman authors approvingly in his commentary.<sup>52</sup> These arguments also apply to the inheritor of the Roman *imperium*, the Roman Catholic Church. Speed reinterprets the ancient prophecies so that the British state and Church can claim an authority that predates their historical emergence in the sixteenth century.<sup>53</sup> Reformed historiography is grounded in an imperially inflected eschatology. It offers a complete rethinking of 'Rome', ancient and Roman Catholic, an imperial legitimation of the Reformed state and monarch, and a promise of the revelation to come.

The most well-known practitioner of this kind of history, and one whose work is drawn on by Speed, is the Lutheran historiographer John

<sup>50</sup> 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. 106.

<sup>51</sup> John Speed, *The Historie of Great Britaine* ... (London: William Hall and John Beale, 1611), pp. 188–190.

<sup>52</sup> See Bullinger, *A Hvndred*, pp. 89, 169. For other uses of Tacitus in apocalyptic writing, see Thomas Brightman, *A Revelation of the Apocalypse* ... (Amsterdam: Iudocus Hondius and Hendrick Laurens, 1611), p. 474, and Thomas Thompson, *Antichrist Arraigned* ... (London: William Stansby for Richard Meighen, 1618), p. 144.

<sup>53</sup> See Felicity Heal, 'Appropriating History: Catholic and Protestant Polemics and the National Past', in *The Uses of History in Early Modern England*, ed. Paulina Kewes (San Marino: Huntington Library, 2006), pp. 105–128.

Sleidan (Sleidanus).<sup>54</sup> He develops an important Protestant Humanist version of the *translatio imperii*, the translation of empire, drawing on the prophetic language and discussion of empire found in the Books of Daniel and the Prophecy of Elias, the works of Virgil, Augustine, and, later, Joachim of Fiore.<sup>55</sup> Sleidan formulates a model in which ‘the culmination of God’s plan came with the last of the four great world empires, which reached its political pinnacle with Charles V and its religious perfection simultaneously with Luther’.<sup>56</sup> Spiritual and temporal history is interlinked but Sleidan emphasises the triumph of the former. He also uses the Joachimite idea of the last world emperor.<sup>57</sup> The political emergence of the Roman Catholic Church is seen in these terms. More radical millenarians such as the Fifth Monarchists would draw on some of these ideas during the English Civil Wars.<sup>58</sup> To interpret Revelation is to understand the usurpatory history of papal authority: ‘And so is the pope successively become a ruler above emperours and kynges, and al christendome vniuersallye.’<sup>59</sup> The establishment of the Reformation is a key stage in restoring the Church to its primal state of grace, so the argument goes. In freeing people from the thralldom and slavery of Roman Catholicism and establishing a reformed monarchy, the Reformation inaugurates the end of days. Some argue that this restoration will be led by a strong military leader. Throughout the seventeenth century in England, militant Protestantism invests various figures with the imperial hope of *renovatio* by arms. By contrast, other strands of Protestantism are more gradualist, trusting in the institution of monarchy or, during the Civil Wars, parliament, not putting

<sup>54</sup> Sleidan’s work is well known in early modern England. See Johannes Sleidanus, *A Briefe Chronicle of the Four Principall Empyres: To Witte, of Babilon, Persia, Grecia, and Rome . . .* (London: Rouland Hall, 1563).

<sup>55</sup> On the *translatio imperii* and *religionis* and the apocalyptic commentary tradition, see Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 2–8. On Daniel and Protestant apocalypticism, see 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. See too Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp. 13–22.

<sup>56</sup> Donald R. Kelley, ‘The Theory of History’, in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt, Quentin Skinner, Eckhard Kessler, and Jill Kraye (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 751. See more generally Daniel R. Woolf, *The Social Circulation of the Past: English Historical Culture, 1500–1730* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); The Uses of History in Early Modern England, ed. Kewes; and Antony Grafton, *What Was History? The Art of History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>57</sup> On Sleidan and the last world emperor, see Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 128. For the idea in Foxe, see Toenjes, *Islam, the Turks*, pp. 195–196.

<sup>58</sup> See Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*. These ideas are also used by messianic Roman Catholic writers – see Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore*, pp. 128–135.

<sup>59</sup> Walter Lynne, *The Beginning and Ending of All Poperie Being Taken Oute of Certaine Old Prophets . . .* (London: John Herforde, 1548), sig. C3r.

too much hope in any one figure, and stressing the end of days as a collective judgement. I will return to these ideas later.

In the Protestant exegetical tradition that develops during the sixteenth century, readings of Revelation foreground the intertwined nature of spiritual and temporal history. Alexandra Kess has shown that while Sleidan's historiographical model is intended to offer an account of 'salvation history', it is also flexible enough to allow Protestant writers 'to consolidate state and religion'.<sup>60</sup> Important examples of this kind of work include Johann Carion's *Chronicle* (1537), Andreas Osiander's *Conjectures of the Ende of the Worlde* (1544), Melchior Ambach's *On the End of the World and the Coming of Antichrist* (1550), Matthais Flacius Illyricus' *Magdeburg Centuries* (1559–1574) and *Catalogus testium veritatis* (1556) – a writer known to Bale and Foxe – as well as the extremely influential commentary on Revelation written by Heinrich Bullinger (1557) and published in England in 1572.<sup>61</sup> Here, Bullinger identifies the reign of the eighth-century Carolingian king Pepin as marking 'The beginniges and preludes of the empire translated'.<sup>62</sup> Similar arguments are made in the work of Protestant reformers such as John Bale's equally important commentary *The Image of Both Churches* (1545) and *The Pageant of Popes* (1574), his friend John Foxe's famous *Acts and Monuments* (multiple editions between 1563 and 1684), where, as one writer put it, 'the whole glory and power of his [the Pope's] *Babilon*, that is drunken with the blood of Saints and Martyrs, [is] vtterly defaced', and the marginal exegetical notes to the popular Geneva Bible, especially Francis Junius' commentary on Revelation, which was appended to all copies of this text from 1599.<sup>63</sup> In fact, the point at which Junius alludes to Virgil's *Georgics* in his commentary also marks the point that the Roman Empire is

<sup>60</sup> See also Alexandra Kess, *Johann Sleidan and the Protestant Vision of History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> For more on these texts, see Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 14–18, and 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), pp. 49–50. Carion's *Chronicle* was translated into English by Walter Lynne: *The Three Bokes of Cronicles* . . . (London: S. Mierdman for Gwalter Lynne, 1550). See too Andreas Osiander, *The Coniectures of the Ende of the Worlde* . . . (Antwerp: S. Mierdman, 1548), and Bullinger, *A Hvndred*. On Bale, Foxe, and Flacius, see Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman, *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: The Making of Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 73–79.

<sup>62</sup> Bullinger, *A Hvndred*, p. 199.

<sup>63</sup> William Middleton, *Papisto-Mastix, or the Protestants Religion Defended* . . . (London: T.P., 1606), p. 196. The most influential edition of Foxe's text is the 1570 edition (STC 2nd ed. 11223): *The First Volume of the Ecclesiastical History Contaynyng the Actes and Monumentes* . . . (London: Iohn Daye, 1570). On the centrality of the Geneva Bible in early modern England, see Hannibal Hamlin, *The Bible in Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 9–42.

‘translated into another’ and its authority ‘that before was ciuill became Ecclesiastiall’.<sup>64</sup> Given the popularity of this Bible in England, and of Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*, it is reasonable to suppose that many were familiar with this imperially framed apocalyptic historiography.<sup>65</sup> Certainly not all Protestants read Revelation in an imperial light. Nor does every exegete interpret this book in relation to temporal political events and figures. But this typological approach is widespread and well known during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

As Arthur Dent writes in his popular commentary on Revelation (1603): ‘we liue in an age wherein the most of the things prophecied in this booke are fulfilled’.<sup>66</sup> David Norbrook notes that this way of reading ‘challenged the Augustinian distinction between temporal and spiritual spheres, and in so doing it gave renewed importance to the active political life’.<sup>67</sup> This helps to explain the popularity and political capaciousness of many Protestant commentaries on Revelation. In addition to specific theological and philological exegeses inspired by the *studia humanitatis*, exegetes are able to relate the broad sweep of spiritual history to the contingent specifics of national and international politics. This includes the rise and fall of the major historical empires, the emergence of the spiritual and temporal authority of the papacy (seen as an ungodly usurpation), the persecution of the saints and martyrs under various wicked temporal rulers, the (re)emergence of the ‘true’ Protestant Church, its ongoing political travails, and its eventual triumph.<sup>68</sup> As Richard Bauckham notes: ‘Whereas the medievals still located the end of the Roman Empire in the future, the Protestants placed it firmly in the past, holding that the papacy has usurped the powers of the Empire and subjected Europe to itself rather than to the Emperor.’<sup>69</sup> John Napier’s *A Plaine Discouery* (1593) offers the reader a historiographical account of the rise and fall of empires that is folded into this providential narrative.<sup>70</sup> Yet his grand sweep does not preclude specific comments on contemporary politics. Writing for instance of the 1588 Spanish Armada, Napier says: ‘God hath by the tempest of his

<sup>64</sup> Junius, ‘Commentary on Revelation’, chapter 17, verse 8, notes 13 and 15.

<sup>65</sup> Numerous texts – commentaries, sermons, polemic, and popular pamphlets – draw on these ideas. See Walsham, *Providence*, pp. 170, 225–280, and Woolf, ‘The Social Circulation of the Past’, pp. 58–60.

<sup>66</sup> Arthur Dent, *The Ruine of Rome* . . . (London: Simon Waterson and Cuthbert Burbie, 1603), sig. AA3r.

<sup>67</sup> Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, p. 34.

<sup>68</sup> On the *studia humanitatis* and politics, see Tuck, *Philosophy and Government*, pp. 1–64.

<sup>69</sup> Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, p. 120. <sup>70</sup> Napier, *A Plaine Discouery*, p. 8.

windes, miraculouſlie destroyed the huge and monſtrous Antichriſtian flote, that came from *Spaine*.<sup>71</sup> Although an act of providence, God intervenes to destroy the enemies of the state. Protestant exegesis of Revelation serves eschatology, history, and the state alike.

In *The Image of Both Churches* Bale reworks Augustine's concept of the two cities. He draws a contrast between the 'true Christian Church' and 'the proud church of hypocrites, the rose coloured whore, the paramoure of Antichriſt, and the ſinfull ſinagoge of Sathan', enabling his readers to diſtinguiſh between the two Churches and warning them of the affective deceits employed by the Roman Church.<sup>72</sup> After detailing the 'perſecution, tyrannie, and murther' of Chriſtians under various Roman emperors, he interprets the opening of the fourth ſeal and the fourth horſeman of the apocalypse in Revelation as the moment when Pope Boniface III (607 CE) usurps imperial temporal powers from the Byzantine Emperor Phocas. Although Protestant commentators differ on precisely when the papacy's political emergence begins in earnest, Boniface's reign is often singled out in the commentary tradition. For Bale, Boniface's actions upset the balance between ſpiritual and temporal authority. As Popes gain in imperial authority ſo the people are enſlaved: 'Then were kynges deposed and made monkes, Emperours put downe & paryſhe preſtes ſet vp.'<sup>73</sup> This ſhift also paves the way for the emergence of 'Mahometes ſecte'. According to one popular argument, the Ottoman Empire is covertly working in the ſervice of the papacy's temporal ambitions.<sup>74</sup> Bale is ſceptical of the Roman Catholic Church. It is an anti-Chriſtian counterfeit, a ſpiritual front for temporal ambition – here is reaſon of ſtate writ large. This battle between the true and false Church reſounds throughout Protestant polemics. The Whore of Babylon emblematises the latter Church, her cup representing 'the false religion that ſhe daielye minyſtreth'.<sup>75</sup> To drink from her cup is to experience religious and affective diſorientation. Like many other Protestant commentators, Bale rejects the Roman Catholic idea that the antichriſt is a ſingle figure ſtill to emerge. He argues that there has been a ſucceſſion of antichriſts occupying the chair of St Peter, enemies of the

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 183. Napier also diſcuſſes the St Bartholomew's Day maſſacre in Paris at p. 184.

<sup>72</sup> John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* . . . (London: John Daye, 1550), ſig. A3v. See too Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium: Literature and Theology 1550–1682* (Dublin: Four Courts Preſs, 2000), pp. 26–56.

<sup>73</sup> Bale, *The Image*, ſig. L2v. See also Ggg4v.

<sup>74</sup> Not all Protestant commentators linked the power of the papacy to the Muſlim Ottoman Empire. See Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 93–99. See also Toenjes, *Islam, the Turks*.

<sup>75</sup> Bale, *The Image*, ſig. X4v.



true Church.<sup>76</sup> The important point is not so much the individual Pope but the ecclesial institution that he represents. As a later commentator puts it, the Church in England is ‘*the Church of Christ, and the Church of Rome the Church of Antichrist*’.<sup>77</sup> Only at the second coming can ‘the Romysh Pope and Mahomete’ be defeated and the ‘newe Hierusalem’ established.<sup>78</sup>

These apocalyptic and imperial foundations of the Reformed English Church are crucial.<sup>79</sup> In the case of Foxe, his martyrological narrative of a true Church (re)emerging from the darkness of persecution gives a prophetic cast to Tertullian’s old adage that ‘*sanguis martyrum est semen ecclesiae*’.<sup>80</sup> Foxe’s 1563 Preface to *Acts and Monuments* addresses Elizabeth as an imperial monarch and heir to Constantine.<sup>81</sup> She is not simply a national monarch. This is significant because the implication is that, like a Roman Emperor or a Pope, the queen’s spiritual authority transcends national borders. Commentators such as Bale, Foxe, and John Jewel are so interested in the early Church fathers like Tertullian and Origen, the history of the early Church and its martyrs, and in Constantine, because they see parallels between that period and the European Reformation.<sup>82</sup> They believe that their actions enable the restoration of the ‘Catholic’ Church’s apostolic purity by an imperially authorised monarch.<sup>83</sup> If done properly in England, theological reformation will then enable the broader

<sup>76</sup> Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*, p. 16. See too Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 91–112. There is no consensus on this subject, but virtually all Protestant commentators before the advent of Arminianism are in agreement as to the antichristian nature of the papacy as an institution, with many also identifying certain individuals, including various Popes and Roman Catholic monarchs, as antichrists.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Williamson, *The Sword of the Spirit to Smite in Pieces That Antichristian Goliath* (London: Edward Griffin, 1613), ¶15v-r.

<sup>78</sup> Bale, *The Image*, sig. Hl8v; sig. Ll2v.

<sup>79</sup> See Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity: Reformation to Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 51–80, especially p. 63. See also Yates, *Astraea*, pp. 39–42.

<sup>80</sup> For the use of Tertullian’s adage in an apocalyptic commentary, see Sir William Herbert, *A Letter Written by a True Christian Catholike, to a Romaine pretended Catholike* (London: John Windet, 1586), sig. F3v, and Dent, *The Ruine of Rome*, p. 65.

<sup>81</sup> See Dandalet, *The Renaissance of Empire*, pp. 255–259.

<sup>82</sup> On Foxe, apocalypse, and the ideological differences between the 1563 and 1570 editions of *Acts and Monuments*, see Thomas Betteridge, ‘From Prophetic to Apocalyptic: John Foxe and the Writing of History’, in *John Foxe and the English Reformation*, ed. David Loades (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1997), pp. 210–232. On the various editions of *Acts and Monuments*, see John N. King, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), and Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, esp. pp. 186–231, 278–319.

<sup>83</sup> Dandalet, *The Renaissance of Empire*, pp. 253–254.

European restoration of 'Christes vniversall Church'.<sup>84</sup> English apocalyptic historiography commonly sees the Church in both a national and a pan-national context.<sup>85</sup> It is not a narrowly nationalistic discourse. This view underlies important international political questions that come into focus during the second half Elizabeth's reign. Should England primarily be concerned with the defence of its own monarchy and Church? Or, as part of the Europe-wide reformed community, does it not also have political obligations beyond its borders?

Clearly the story of the Reformation does not end with Luther or Charles V, and so during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, writing on the end of the world develops sophisticated ways of carrying on. Apocalyptic writing is double edged and adaptable. It allows for prophecies to be made, remade, and reinterpreted, for the end point to be identified and then pushed back, and for interventions to be made in the political realm.<sup>86</sup> In Frank Kermode's succinct phrase: 'Apocalypse can be discomfited without being discredited.'<sup>87</sup> Protestants can discuss the imminent end while continuing to deal with worldly matters. Such a deferral is also, as John Parker has argued, implicit in Christ's own promises in the Gospels: 'The beauty of Christ's apocalyptic discourse arises . . . from the way the performance itself represents the nearest instance of the end it proclaims for the simple reason that it can make proclamations only so long as the end has not come.'<sup>88</sup> Less abstractly, this is another reason why the idea of 'history' is so important in early modern Protestantism and why anti-Catholic and apocalyptic writing regularly reflects on contemporary political events.<sup>89</sup> In anticipation of spiritual transcendence, the focus turns to the imminence of temporal politics. It also explains why the English Protestant commentary tradition encompasses a number of eschatological views, from covenant theology to

<sup>84</sup> John Foxe, *The First Volume of . . . Actes and Monumentes . . .* (London: John Daye, 1576), ¶12r. This problematises David Armitage's argument that early Elizabeth imperial ideology is Anglo-centric, insular, and defensive – he overlooks how writers like Foxe deliberately draw on national and European sources for their argument that imperial monarchy can institute a universal Church. See Armitage's 'The Elizabethan Idea of Empire', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 14, 2004, pp. 269–277.

<sup>85</sup> See Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*, pp. 63ff. On Foxe, see Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 73–88, and Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 69–110. See too Patrick Collinson, 'Truth and Legend: The Veracity of John Foxe's Book of Martyrs', in his *Elizabethans* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2003), pp. 151–177.

<sup>86</sup> Such an impulse drives the 'updating' of the history of the martyrs in subsequent editions of Foxe's *Acts and Monumentes* well into the twentieth century.

<sup>87</sup> Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending*, p. 8. <sup>88</sup> Parker, *The Aesthetics of Antichrist*, p. 15.

<sup>89</sup> See Bernard Capp, 'The Political Dimension of Apocalyptic Thought', in *The Apocalypse*, ed. Patrides and Wittreich, pp. 93–124. See also 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. 97.

millenarianism.<sup>90</sup> Writers from across the religious spectrum read and interpret Revelation and address a wide variety of audiences. The flexibility of this rhetoric and its political usefulness are two of the main reasons why dramatists use this language so often throughout the period.

## II

In his preface to *Samson Agonistes* (1671), John Milton writes, ‘The Apostle Paul himself thought it not unworthy to insert a verse of *Euripides* into the Text of Holy Scripture, 1 Cor. 15.33; and *Paraeus* commenting on the *Revelation*, divides the whole Book as a Tragedy, into Acts distinguished by Heavenly Harpings and Song between.’ Later he notes that the Church father Gregory of Nanzianus ‘thought it not unbecoming’ to write a tragedy called ‘*Christ suffering*’.<sup>91</sup> There are many medieval and early modern plays that explore ideas of *renovatio ecclesiae* and *mundus*.<sup>92</sup> One of the finest surviving high medieval plays, the so-called *Ludus de Antichristo* (c. 1150), dramatises the arrival, triumph, and eventual defeat of antichrist. ‘Ludus’ can mean a play, a game, and a joke or jest: this connection between apocalypse and laughter is a significant one as we see in Chapter 2. While spiritual history is important to the author of the *Ludus*, he also allegorically examines the twelfth-century political struggles between Emperor Frederick I Barbarosa, various secular monarchs, and the papacy.<sup>93</sup> The question of imperial power and who possesses it is at the heart of this play. The dramatic nature of divine judgement at the end of the world (as well as the odd jibe at ecclesiastical failings) is explored with great power in a number of later English medieval plays, such as the York and Chester Cycles, the latter of which includes an antichrist play.<sup>94</sup> Some biblical characters in the Cycles such as Noah’s wife, Herod, and devils are presented as comic figures, though the laughter that they produce ranges

<sup>90</sup> Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*. See too *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry Walls (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>91</sup> John Milton, Preface to *Samson Agonistes*, in *Milton: Poems*, ed. B.A. Wright (London: J.M. Dent, 1969), p. 439.

<sup>92</sup> Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 2–8.

<sup>93</sup> *The Play of Anti-Christ*, ed. and trans. J. Wright (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1967), pp. 24–40. See too Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, p. 92. Barbarossa’s struggles with Popes Adrian IV and Alexander III inform this play’s events.

<sup>94</sup> For the York Cycle Judgement, see *Everyman and Medieval Miracle Plays*, ed. A.C. Cawley (London: J.M. Dent, 1993). For the Chester Cycle, see *The Play of Anti-Christ, from the Chester Cycle*, ed. W.W. Greg (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935). On the connections between medieval and early modern drama, especially Shakespeare, see Helen Cooper, *Shakespeare and the Medieval World* (London: Methuen, 2010).

from jest to mockery to fear. In the York Judgement pageant, the elect and the damned are divided by the angels, judged by Christ, and cast into hell. Staging eschatology is central to medieval dramaturgy. It also informs Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, as in the final scenes of Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (c. 1588–1592) or Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure* (1604). Some Cycles continued to be performed well into the sixteenth century, and a number of early sixteenth century writers draw on these medieval dramatic models as they defend the Reformation on stage.<sup>95</sup>

In Thomas Kirchmeyer's anti-papal and apocalyptic Latin drama *Pammachius* (1536–1538) we see morality forms combined with those of Classical comedy.<sup>96</sup> The play features allegorical abstractions such as Truth alongside historical personations such as Pamachius and the apostles Peter and Paul.<sup>97</sup> As John Hazel Smith notes, this play is important for a number of English Reformers who see drama as a useful way of proselytising their religion.<sup>98</sup> Probably the earliest surviving anti-papal play written in English, John Bale's *King Johan* (c. 1537–1540), as well as John Foxe's later Latin *Christus Triumphans* (1556), are influenced by Kirchmeyer's play. They also combine allegorical abstractions and historical personifications to explore the connections between temporal and spiritual history. An intriguing-sounding play – now lost – called *De Meretrice Babylonica* was written in 1548, possibly by King Edward VI. One text that almost certainly influences Foxe is Bernadino Ochino's Edwardian dramatic dialogue *A Tragoedie or Dialogue of the vniuste vsurped primacie of the Bishop of Rome* (1549).<sup>99</sup> Both *Pammachius* and

<sup>95</sup> On the survival of medieval cycle and ecclesiastical drama into the seventeenth century, see Paul Whitfield White, *Drama and Religion in English Provincial Society, 1485–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008). See too Andrew B. Crichton, 'Kynge Johan and the *Ludus de Antichristo* as Moralities of the State', *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 4, 2, 1973, pp. 61–76.

<sup>96</sup> Kirchmeyer also went under the Latin surname Naogeorgus. A verse text by Kirchmeyer in 1570 that expresses similar ideas to *Pamachius* was published in London in 1570: *The Popish Kingdome, or Reigne of Antichrist, Written in Latine verse . . .*, trans. Barnabe Googe (London: Henrie Denham for Richard Watkins, 1570). A translation of the play, edited by C.C. Love, is available as part of the University of Toronto's REED project: <http://projects.chass.utoronto.ca/mlp/pammach.html>.

<sup>97</sup> The combination of allegorical abstractions and historical personations (the latter often biblical or Roman) has its roots in medieval drama. See the Middle English play of *Mary Magdalene* and the *Croxton Play of the Sacrament*, both in *Chief Pre-Shakespearean Dramas . . .*, ed. Joseph Quincy Adams (London: George G. Harrap, 1924), pp. 225–262.

<sup>98</sup> *Two Latin Comedies by John Foxe the Martyrologist: Titus et Gesippus. Christus Triumphans*, ed. and trans. John Hazel Smith (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press for the Renaissance Society of America, 1973), pp. 42–44. See too Ardolino, *Apocalypse and Armada*, pp. 51–52.

<sup>99</sup> On Ochino, see Mike Rodman Jones, 'The Tragical History of the Reformation: Edwardian, Marian, Shakespearean', *The Review of English Studies*, 63, 262, 2012, pp. 743–763.

*Christus Triumphans* were performed at Cambridge, the first in 1545, the second in 1562–1563.<sup>100</sup> These texts can be categorised generically as *comoedia apocalyptica*, a phrase found in the dedicatory material and Prologue to Foxe's play. *Comoedia apocalyptica* fuses the spiritual and the temporal, national and international concerns, through drama. Combining the Classical genres of Old and New Comedy with Christian allegory and typology, it invites readers to decode the play's political aims.

In Foxe's Prologue, the poet asks for 'silence of you, new spectators, while he brings onto the stage something new for you to see: to be precise, we bring you Christ Triumphant'.<sup>101</sup> The play dramatises the 'divine comedy' of creation, fall, rebirth, and salvation, allowing for a generic intermingling of tragedy and comedy. As in *Piers Plowman*, Ecclesia is oppressed by the forces of antichrist. Satan promises to seduce men with 'all manner of life's pleasure, the Circean cup as it were', to offer 'painted glories, worldly empires, and distinguishing titles', and to use Pseudamnus (the Pope) as his vehicle, enjoining him to bribe his way to the pontificate.<sup>102</sup> Foxe's play may not be funny in the way that Chaucer's *The Miller's Tale* or Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are. But it does display a bawdy, satirical humour that is reminiscent of the medieval Cycles and that anticipates Jonson. For instance, the fall of Pseudamnus and Pornapolis (the Whore of Babylon) is depicted through the apodioxis found in earthy Lutheran polemic: 'Men won't be led by the nose much longer', Pseudamnus is told; 'they're farting at your orders and shitting on your bulls. Your keys are worthless, but your thunder and triple crown are universally scorned, for they say Christ himself lives and that a body which sustains two heads is a monstrosity . . . they firmly believe that you are the Antichrist.'<sup>103</sup> Africus and Europa argue for a war to restore the true Ecclesia, but she demurs: 'Except by the coming of Christ, this beast cannot be destroyed.'<sup>104</sup> It is notable that Ecclesia plays down the temporal militant argument, preferring instead the spiritual war of the second coming. For Foxe drama can advance an imperial apocalyptic interpretation of history, even if only as a mirror of the divine revelation promised

<sup>100</sup> *Two Latin Comedies*, pp. 34, 43. For more on these plays, see Lily B. Campbell, *Divine Poetry and Drama in Sixteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), pp. 153–153, 174–188, and John N. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of the Protestant Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), pp. 422–423.

<sup>101</sup> *Two Latin Comedies*, p. 229. See also Evenden and Freeman, *Religion and the Book*, p. 79.

<sup>102</sup> *Two Latin Comedies*, p. 311. <sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351. <sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

at the end of the world.<sup>105</sup> At the play's conclusion, Ecclesia dresses for a wedding, but the arrival of the bridegroom is not staged. The drama ends instead with an Epithalamion sung by the company calling on Christ to come: 'Too long are the ages you have been away from the earth, oh saviour, while we your people groaned, mangled by wolves.' Only then, 'Babylon will fall, and the exalted power of kings: Christ alone will have power through all the world.'<sup>106</sup> This could be a radical conclusion: all temporal authority will eventually be as nothing. Yet it also points to the limitations of the *comœdia apcallyptica*: 'The Poet has shown what he could' yet these can only ever be 'marvellous preludes'.<sup>107</sup> Drama can promise the apocalypse, it can prepare the spectators for the second coming. But it cannot ultimately stage the End. In the absence of the Messiah, we are left with the compromises and contingencies of worldly politics.

The religious structure and dramatic rhetoric found in *Christus Triumphans* and, more importantly, repeated in commentaries, sermons, and numerous other writings influences the writing of drama. The Humanist practice of *imitatio* helps to disseminate key ideas: the *translatio imperii* and *studii*, opposition to Roman Catholicism, and the relationship between temporal and spiritual history are all exemplary and commonplace themes in Protestantism whose centrality is heightened by exegetical repetition.<sup>108</sup> Whatever their personal faith, post-Reformation dramatists clearly understood dominant Protestant methods of reading these themes. Other sixteenth-century plays and interludes that can be considered in this light include Lewis Wager's *The Life and Repentance of Mary Magdalene* (c. 1550–1562), William Wager's *The Longer Thou Livest the More Fool Thou Art* (c. 1559–1568) and *Enough Is as Good as a Feast* (c. 1559–1570), lost texts such as *Papists* (1559) (perhaps performed at court) and *Mock Mass* (c. 1563–1565) (perhaps performed at Cambridge), texts such as *King Darius* (c. 1565), Henry Cheke's *Free Will* (c. 1565–1572), *New Custom* (c. 1571), Nathaniel Woodes' *The Conflict of Conscience* (c. 1570–1581), and the lost *Pope Joan* (c. 1580–1592). In some of these dramas the characters are solely allegorical. Wager's *The Longest*

<sup>105</sup> For more on the connections between early reform and drama, see Paul Whitfield White, *Theatre and Reformation: Protestantism, Patronage and Playing in Tudor England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993). On Foxe and apocalyptic comedy, see Norbrook, *Poetry and Politics*, pp. 33–34.

<sup>106</sup> *Two Latin Comedies*, p. 367. <sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 371.

<sup>108</sup> On exemplarity, see Timothy Hampton, *Writing from History: The Rhetoric of Exemplarity in Renaissance Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990). On the *translatio imperii* and literature, see Heather James, *Shakespeare's Troy: Drama, Politics, and the Translation of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

*Thou Livest* contains abstractions such as Piety or Ignorance who invite audiences to perform a kind of religious decoding, encouraging them to reflect on Protestant doctrine. Many other plays and interludes follow Bale and Foxe in combining allegorical abstractions with historical characters. In *New Custom* the title page informs the reader that 'Peruerse Doctrine' is in fact 'an olde Popish Priest', and in Woodes' play we see Philologus (lit. Learned Man) alongside his sons – the realistically named Gisbertus and Paphinitius – confronting abstractions such as Horror and Theologus.<sup>109</sup>

In the last two decades of the sixteenth century, dramatists develop the relationship between allegorical abstraction and historical personation: the former mode does not disappear but the latter comes to dominate representation in the public theatres.<sup>110</sup> While it would be tempting to connect this shift to the general Reformist suspicion of allegory and a preference for a typological interpretation that is more obviously grounded in history, the first waves of reformist drama show us that the reality is more complex. As John Pendergast puts it: 'Although many Reformation exegetes were unwilling to acknowledge the prior nature of allegory to typology, and the resulting ontological dependence of typology on allegory, many of the same exegetes made room at least rhetorically for allegory.'<sup>111</sup> Typological reading, however historically situated it is, can never completely escape the pull of allegory. In the Reformed tradition apocalyptic history is, as we have seen, susceptible to a spiritual, even allegorical reading. The implications of this mode of reading have been underappreciated by scholars of early modern drama. An important play in this respect is Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus* (A Text c. 1588–1592). It draws on Woodes' *A Conflict of Conscience* and includes apocalyptic and anti-Catholic imagery. More than in Woodes' play *Faustus* deals with the effects of doctrine on individuals who occupy a historically identifiable time and place. Think here of Faustus' debates with Charles V or the famous (mis)reading of Scripture in Faustus' first soliloquy. Whether done wilfully or not, his exegesis is closely bound up with contemporary Calvinist debates about election,

<sup>109</sup> *A New Enterlude . . . Entitled Newe Custome . . .* (London: William Howe for Abraham Veale, 1573), title page, and Nathaniel Woodes, *An Excellent Newe Comedie Intituled, The Conflict of Conscience . . .* (London: Richard Bradocke, 1581).

<sup>110</sup> On key shifts in dramatic form during the sixteenth century, see David Bevington, *From 'Mankind' to Marlowe: Growth of Structure in the Popular Drama of Tudor England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), as well as his *Tudor Drama and Politics: A Critical Approach to Topical Meaning* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

<sup>111</sup> John S. Pendergast, *Religion, Allegory and Literacy in Early Modern England 1560–1640: The Control of the Word* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), p. 50.



reprobation, and predestination.<sup>112</sup> And yet the play does not completely forgo the allegorical implications of Faustus' fate. Through abstractions such as the Seven Deadly Sins and the Good and Evil Angels, audiences are reminded that the allegorical and the typological are related modes of reading. Another important example is Kyd's popular *The Spanish Tragedy* where a Classical abstraction (Revenge) and a Ghost (of Don Andrea) are embroiled in the political affairs of Spain and Portugal. The temporal machinations of Hieronimo, Lorenzo, Bel-Imperia, and Horatio are read through the dramaturgical frame occupied by Revenge and the Ghost, reminding the audience that politics also has a spiritual significance.

The fact that both of these plays continue to be performed regularly throughout the seventeenth century is important. They keep a form of dramaturgy that has direct roots in the reformist theatrical and exegetical tradition in the public consciousness. They also help us to see why allegory retains a theatrical hold throughout the century. Most obviously in allegorical plays written at moments of political tension such as Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon* (1605/6), Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624), and William Bedloe's *The Excommunicated Priest* (1679), there is a self-conscious return to older modes of reformist theatre. However, we also see allegorical figures appear intermittently in a number of other plays (such as Time at the beginning of act IV of Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*), in academic drama, in City Pageants, and in the Court Masque. Allegory is the exception rather than the rule in seventeenth-century theatre. Yet even in a Protestant interpretative culture that prefers the typological mode, the use of allegory on stage reminds audiences that typological readings are themselves a form of allegory, one that invests imaginative or past events with present meaning. Even in the more historically situated drama of the seventeenth century, politics can have a temporal and spiritual significance.

Of course the broader cultural assimilation of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic discourse in the seventeenth century does not preclude scepticism towards, or even mockery of, that language. Some of Shakespeare's early characters use anti-Catholic terms: King John's tirades against the papal legate Pandolf are a case in point, as are Gloucester's threats to the Bishop of Winchester in *1 Henry VI* (c. 1591). Hotspur in *1 Henry IV* (c. 1596) is a good example of a figure who uses religious and militaristic rhetoric but whose

<sup>112</sup> See Adrian Streete, *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 140–161.

belligerence also leads to his downfall.<sup>113</sup> In his later plays, Shakespeare presents these languages in a more detached, sceptical way. In *Antony and Cleopatra* (c. 1606) he explores how the Roman *imperium* problematically foreshadows the Christian *imperium* through numerous references to Revelation. And in *Macbeth* (c. 1606) – another play full of references to Revelation – he sceptically interrogates the Stuart evocation of the ‘imperial theme’ (I.iii.128). In Francis Beaumont’s *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), the language of the Spenserian would-be-knight Rafe is used to parody the inflated rhetoric of militant Protestantism, while also drawing attention to the potential for this group to mobilise independently of the state.<sup>114</sup> As mentioned, Ben Jonson has little time for hotter forms of apocalypticism and anti-Catholic language. He regularly mocks the Puritans, most famously in *The Alchemist* (1610) when Ananias criticises Surly for his ‘profane / Lewd, superstitious, and idolatrous breeches’ and concludes:

Avoid, Satan  
 Thou art not of the light. That ruff of pride  
 About thy neck betrays thee, and is the same  
 With that, which the unclean birds, in seventy-seven,  
 Were seen to prank it with on divers coasts.  
 Thou look’st like Antichrist in that lewd hat.  
 (IV.vii.49–55)<sup>115</sup>

For more extreme Puritans, the expression of anti-popery is a sign of election: this is precisely the logic that Jonson satirises here.<sup>116</sup> In *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), Zeal-of-the-Land-Busy’s thunderous uses of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language are undermined because of his hypocrisy, as well as his inability to beat a puppet in debate.<sup>117</sup> And in *Volpone* (1606) and *The Alchemist* Jonson derides the Hebraist and biblical commentator Hugh Broughton for his obscure style and apocalyptic enthusiasms. Despite the cultural centrality of apocalypticism and anti-popery, these ideas and their adherents can be exposed to Juvenalian scorn and Montaignean scepticism onstage.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>113</sup> For an argument that Shakespeare is generally sceptical of militant Protestantism, see Robin Headlam Wells, *Shakespeare on Masculinity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>114</sup> Francis Beaumont, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, ed. Sheldon P. Zitner (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004).

<sup>115</sup> Ben Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays*, ed. Gordon Campbell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

<sup>116</sup> Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 36.

<sup>117</sup> Jonson, *The Alchemist and Other Plays*.

<sup>118</sup> See also IV.v of Middleton’s comedy *A Trick to Catch the Old One* where the malevolent and drunken Dampit is described lying in his bed ‘like the devil in chains, when he was bound for a thousand years’ (7–8), a reference to Revelation 22:1–2. *A Trick to Catch the Old One*, ed. Valerie

Anti-Catholic and apocalyptic images are disseminated in a popular print culture underpinned by a providential view of the world.<sup>119</sup> Despite Protestant iconophobia, images of papal corruption or the Whore of Babylon are found throughout contemporary visual culture. They reinforce popular anti-Catholic sentiment, offering people a way of understanding their country's place in the world and defending their Church and state. It is unlikely that dramatists were unaware of this polemical visual imagery. One drama apparently indebted to contemporary visual depictions is Thomas Dekker's *The Whore of Babylon*. Written in the aftermath of the Gunpowder Plot, the play was not a success on stage, perhaps because its apocalyptic reading of recent European history is overly didactic, owing more to the commentary tradition and allegorical poetry than to the demands of the theatre.<sup>120</sup> Exploiting the political situation in 1605/6, Dekker represents his Whore verbally and visually. At the start of the play, the Empress of Babylon is shown as a spiritual and temporal ruler:

*Empresse of Babylon: her canopie supported by four Cardinals: two persons in Pontificall roabes on either hand, the one bearing a sword, the other the keies: before her three Kings crowned, behinde her Friers, &c.*<sup>121</sup>

This tableau depicting imperial Roman Catholic authority over spiritual and temporal rulers is similar to contemporary visual depictions.<sup>122</sup> Albrecht Dürer's influential *Apocalypse* of 1498 shows the Whore of Babylon seducing kings and merchants. In early modern England similar imagery of the Whore is found in printed books, engravings, woodcuts, and broadsides.<sup>123</sup> A striking example is found in Hugh Broughton's *A Concoct of*

Wayne, in *Thomas Middleton: The Collected Works*, ed. Gary Taylor and John Lavagnino (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). During the Civil Wars and Republic, Jonson is an important model for royalists who want to satirise apocalyptic and anti-Catholic enthusiasm.

<sup>119</sup> Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety 1550–1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*; Clare Haynes, *Pictures and Popery: Art and Religion in England, 1660–1760* (Aldershot: Ashgate 2006); and Malcolm Jones, *The Print in Early Modern England: A Historical Oversight* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010), pp. 133–159.

<sup>120</sup> See Susan E. Krantz, 'Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary in *the Whore of Babylon*', *Studies in English Literature*, 35, 2, 1995, p. 280. Dekker also wrote the anti-Catholic verse and prose polemic *The Double PP* in 1606.

<sup>121</sup> Thomas Dekker, *The Whore of Babylon*, in *The Dramatic Works of Thomas Dekker*, vol. 2, ed. Fredson Bowers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), p. 501. See Krantz, 'Thomas Dekker's Political Commentary'. On the Gunpowder Plot, see Philip Caraman, *Henry Garnet 1555–1606, and the Gunpowder Plot* (London: Longman, 1964); Gary Wills, *Witches and Jesuits: Shakespeare's Macbeth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); and Antonia Fraser, *The Gunpowder Plot: Terror and Faith in 1605* (London: Weidenfeld, 1996).

<sup>122</sup> The Empress calls her triple crown 'imperial', as does the king of Spain.

<sup>123</sup> Jones, *The Print*, p. 137. See more generally Watt, *Cheap Print*, pp. 88–90, 150–159.

*Scripture* (1590) (Figure 1). Similar to contemporary Dutch and Italian depictions of prostitutes, we see the Whore with her breasts bared. She holds the cup of fornication in her right hand and the sceptre of power in her left as she tramples over Babylon. Dekker's tableau evokes this kind of commonplace visual image. It also creates a problem for the viewer. As noted, reformed culture is generally wary of the image. Visual or theatrical representations of religious corruption must tread a fine line between iconophobia and iconophilia. Depicting the Whore in the public theatre reminds the audience of their common foe. Yet her presence, even as a negative representation, is dangerous: there is always the potential of seduction to the 'false' religion.<sup>124</sup>

More subtly drawn *politique* representations such as Pandolf in Shakespeare's *King John*, Ferdinand and the Cardinal in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* (1614), or Ignatius Loyola in Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* keep the image of the manipulative Roman Catholic in the public consciousness. They may also evoke visual polemics.<sup>125</sup> In *The Duchess of Malfi* images of wolfishness abound. Ferdinand suffers from lycanthropy and calls himself a 'sheep-biter' (Vi.ii.45), an image that taps into the polemical association of Roman Catholics as wolfish persecutors of sheep/martyrs: we may recall here Foxe's depiction of Christ's people 'mangled by wolves' in *Christus Triumphans*. Earlier, the Duchess appeals to heaven to 'cease crowning martyrs / To punish them' (IV.i.105).<sup>126</sup> In the image (Figure 2) from the title page of an abridgement of John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, the Pope is shown sacrificing sheep while martyrs burn in the background. Webster's verbal allusions draw their authority from such allegorical visual representations. Polemical and dramatic imagery occupy a common ground, allowing theatrical audiences to encounter the enemy of the state.

Like *Macbeth*, Barnabe Barnes' *The Devil's Charter* makes much of King James' interest in necromancy. As we saw in the previous chapter, the play starts with the Pope's pact with the Devil. Later the Pope conjures a king from hell who appears wearing an imperial crown, and in the final scene the Devil returns and, à la *Faustus*, drags Alexander off to hell. The

<sup>124</sup> Unlike various Popes and Cardinals, the Whore of Babylon appears infrequently in extant early modern drama. Aside from Dekker's play, she is most commonly depicted in anti-Catholic squibs and Pope burning pageants written during the Popish Plot of the 1670s–1680s.

<sup>125</sup> See Christina Marie Carlson, 'The Rhetoric of Providence: Thomas Middleton's *A Game at Chess* (1624) and Seventeenth-Century Political Engraving', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 67, 4, 2014, pp. 1224–1264.

<sup>126</sup> John Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, ed. Leah Marcus (London: Bloomsbury, 2009).





Figure 1 Hugh Broughton, *A Convent of Scripture* (London: Richard Watkins for Gabriell Simson and William White, 1590).

Image courtesy of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections, S.M. 229, sig. F5r.

AN  
ABRIDGEMENT  
OF THE BOOKE OF ACTS  
AND MONVMENTES OF  
THE CHVRCH:

Written by that Reuerend Father, Mai-  
ster Iohn Fox: and now abridged by Timothe Bright,  
Doctour of Phisicke, for such as either through  
want of leysure, or abilitie, haue not the  
vse of so necessary an history.

*All day long are we counted as sheepe for the slaughter. P'sal. 44.*



*How long Lord, holy and true? Apocal. Cap. 6, verse 10.*

Imprinted at London by *I. Windet*, at the assignment  
of Master Tim. Bright, and are to be sold at Pauls wharf,  
at the signe of the Crosse-keys. 1589.

*Cum gratia, & Privilegio Regie Maiestatis*

Figure 2 *An Abridgement of the Booke of Acts and Monumentes of the Church ...*  
(London: SN, 1589), title page.

Image courtesy of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections, BDF-f.6.



association of the Pope with the Devil is another visual commonplace that informs such polemical dramatic representations.<sup>127</sup> For instance, in a number of Pope-burning processions held during the Popish Plot, a devil is shown whispering to the Pontiff.<sup>128</sup> These events, like the Gunpowder Plot ceremonies held annually on 5 November, memorialise popish atrocities past and present through a kind of recursive cultural *imitatio*. Often accompanied by violence, these rituals shore up the powerful national myth of popish subversion and Protestant perseverance. This is vividly depicted in one image (Figure 3), printed after the Great Fire of London in 1666, which shows the Jesuits, aided by the Pope, indulging in pyrotechnic subversion of the state. The insistent repetition of such images in visual and verbal culture shows us just how much Protestantism needs the papal scapegoat as a form of representation. As René Girard has shown, the scapegoat possesses a ‘harmful omnipotence’.<sup>129</sup> Anti-papal iconography, burnings, processions, and plays offer a temporary outlet for laughter, mockery, anger, and violence. Yet the threat remains.<sup>130</sup> The anti-Catholic scapegoat haunts the seventeenth-century cultural imagination.

The performance of these symbolic rituals is a marker of national self-assertion and anxiety. Important work in the so-called new British history has shown how the political history of England in this period is intertwined with its major European neighbours, especially Spain, France, and Holland.<sup>131</sup> In the words of John Morrill, ‘one of the unfulfilled dimensions of the new British history is to examine the way different parts of Britain draw differentially on parts of Europe’.<sup>132</sup> Drama often mediates

<sup>127</sup> Jones, *The Print*, pp. 133–134. See Nathan Johnstone, *The Devil and Demonism in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>128</sup> See, for example, *The Solemn Mock Procession of the Pope . . .* (London: Nathaniel Ponder, Jonathan Wilkins and Samuel Lee, 1680). See also Joseph Monteyne, *The Printed Image in Early Modern London: Urban Space, Visual Representation, and Social Exchange* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 155–214.

<sup>129</sup> René Girard, *The Scapegoat*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 43.

<sup>130</sup> See David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1989).

<sup>131</sup> Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England, 1660–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Thomas Cogswell, *The Blessed Revolution: English Politics and the Coming of War, 1621–1624* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Paul Hammer, *Elizabeth’s Wars: War, Government and Society in Tudor England, 1544–1604* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); John Morrill, *The Nature of the English Revolution* (London and New York: Longman, 1993); Jonathan Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vols. 1 and 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>132</sup> John Morrill, ‘Thinking about the New British History’, in *British Political Thought in History, Literature and Theory, 1500–1800*, ed. David Armitage (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 46.



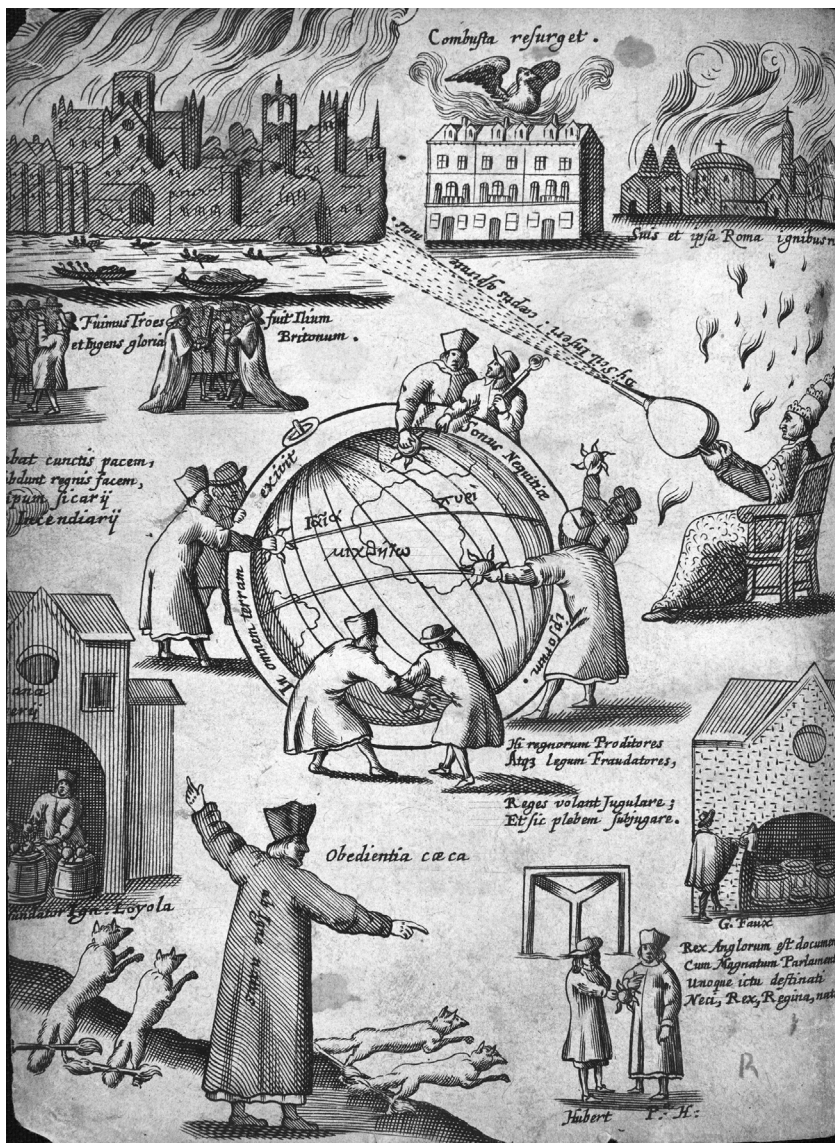


Figure 3 *Pyrotechnica Loyolana, Ignatian fire-works ...* (London: Printed for G.E., 1667), title page.

Image courtesy of University of Glasgow Library, Special Collections, Robertson Bf 68-d.20.

that relationship. We might think here of John Fletcher and Philip Massinger's contentious play on the Arminian controversy in Holland, *Sir John van Olden Barnaveit* (1619), or Middleton's scathing critique of international Roman Catholicism, *A Game at Chess*, both of which draw on polemics with a national and European focus. Spain and France are Roman Catholic countries, and the Protestant parts of the Netherlands finds itself under attack at various points from these two powers throughout the period. This helps to fuel English fears about overt or covert popish infiltration. Accusations of popish plots often go hand in hand with a critique of Spain or France's political ambitions and a defence of England's place within the Protestant international. The idea of a popish plot is first articulated in Elizabethan England in the aftermath of Pius V's Bull of excommunication against the Queen, *Regnans in Excelsis* (1570).<sup>133</sup> We see it emerge again at points throughout the seventeenth century, for instance after the Gunpowder Plot, during the marriage negotiations for James I's children, with the emergence of Arminianism during the 1620s and '30s, during the collapse of Charles I's personal rule, before and after the Irish Rebellion of 1641, after the Great Fire of London, and most notoriously during the Popish Plot.

This recurring perception that the Protestant state is susceptible to Roman Catholic assault is a mark of political vulnerability. This can be explained by reference to Jonathan Scott's important work on anti-Catholicism:

What one notices first about the seventeenth-century English fear of popery are its range and power: it spanned the century; it crossed all social boundaries; as a solvent of political loyalties it had no rivals. What one should notice next is that it is inexplicable in a purely national context. Within England in the seventeenth century catholics made up a tiny and declining proportion of the population: protestantism was secure, and was becoming more so. It was in Europe that the opposite was the case. Between 1590 and 1690 the geographical reach of protestantism shrank from one-half to one-fifth of the land area of the continent. The seventeenth century in Europe was the century of the victories of the counter-reformation, spear-headed by Spain in the first half of the century and France in the second. It was the century in which protestantism had to fight for its survival. This was the context for fear of popery in England, which found itself thrust into the front line against the European counter-reformation advance.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>133</sup> See, for example, Heinrich Bullinger, *A Confutation of the Popes Bull . . .* (London: John Day, 1572), p. 38; Thomas Lupton, *A Persuasion from Papistrie . . .* (London: Henry Bynneman, 1581), pp. 19–20; and John Jewel, *A View of a Seditious Bul* (London: R. Newberrie and H. Bynneman, 1582), pp. 67–75.

<sup>134</sup> Scott, *England's Troubles*, pp. 29–30.

Understood in this context, the fear of popish plots makes sense. At such moments, bellicose self-assertion and defensive insecurity jostle for pre-eminence. Certainly, this did not stop people from reading Roman Catholic books, conversing with their recusant neighbours, or, in the case of a number of aristocrats, being influenced by developments in Counter-Reformation and Baroque art, and in the more ephemeral spheres of fashion and manners. The Grand Tour exposed many individuals of means to Roman Catholic culture.<sup>135</sup> Moreover the expression of a more irenic attitude towards Roman Catholicism can be glimpsed haltingly at points during the period. Seventeenth-century anti-Catholicism is not a consistent discourse and this admixture is part of the story as other scholars have shown.<sup>136</sup> Yet when anti-Catholic rhetoric takes on a more embattled tone and binary structure, it reveals the fault lines that run through the Protestant state.<sup>137</sup>

How is that state to be best defended? Some argue for an insular, isolationist approach. Some argue for a limited engagement with their European neighbours mainly through trade. For those on the militant wing of opinion, Protestantism has to be asserted with martial vigour at home and abroad. The relationship between the Stuart monarchs and militant Protestant ideology is rarely a comfortable one. Many were concerned for example, by James VI and I's plans during the early years of his reign for a pan-European ecumenical Church council with the Pope at

<sup>135</sup> See Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography, 1600–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), and Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England*, pp. 13–66.

<sup>136</sup> Milton, 'A Qualified Intolerance', pp. 91–95; Questier, *Catholicism and Community*; and Alexandra Walsham, *Church Papists: Catholicism, Conformity and Confessional Polemic in Early Modern England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1993). On irenic approaches to Roman Catholicism, see Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp. 228–299.

<sup>137</sup> The scholarly literature on the connections between early modern Protestantism and national identity is large. But see Richard Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood: The Elizabethan Writing of England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); Hadfield, *Literature, Politics, and National Identity*; Clare McEachern, *The Poetics of English Nationhood, 1590–1612* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650–c. 1850*, ed. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Michael J. Braddick, *State Formation in Early Modern England c. 1550–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); David J. Baker, *Between Nations: Shakespeare, Spenser, Marvell and the Question of Britain* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); David J. Baker and Willy Maley, *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Cathy Shrank, *Writing the Nation in Reformation England, 1530–1580* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Wormersley, *Divinity and State*; and Patrick Collinson, *This England: Essays on the English Nation and Commonwealth in the Sixteenth Century* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2011).

its head: martial opposition to Roman Catholicism is preferable.<sup>138</sup> Charles I and his court are regularly criticised for perceived popish leanings and arbitrary rule, as is the regime of his son Charles II. The concern expressed at various points throughout the century that the Stuart monarchs are unwilling or unable to uphold the Protestant religion, or to guarantee the liberty of subjects, finds its mirror image in the claim that the Pope is a universal monarch who should be opposed. In the words of one text published in 1621: ‘the Pope commandeth Kings, curseth them, and killeth them; to that end he hath his triple Crowne, and claymeth soueraignty over the Church, and commandeth the treasure of the World: whereas *Peter* had neither gold, nor siluer’.<sup>139</sup> The Roman Church has fallen from its apostolic purity and is engaged in anti-Christian subversion. Only those of the militant Protestant persuasion fully realise the implications of this fact and are primed to put it right through force of arms, so the argument goes. Order can be guaranteed and liberty upheld only when kings command Popes. Or if, as it was suggested by some radicals during the Civil Wars, the king cannot uphold liberties because his rule is too close to popish tyranny, then he should be resisted.

Certainly, this kind of argument has more of the whiff of fantasy about it, one that encapsulates the paranoia of the conspiracy theorist throughout the ages. Scott’s claim that Britain found itself ‘thrust into the front line against the European counter-reformation advance’ overstates the degree to which the state was ever likely to be able to maintain this line. As Jason White has persuasively argued in his recent study of Jacobean militant Protestantism: ‘That there was a serious disjuncture between what many thought Britain should be – a Protestant and Continental power – and what it was in reality – formidable enough to avoid invasion but prone to neutrality and failure – created serious tensions between the early Stuart kings and a significant portion of the body politic.’<sup>140</sup> This is a key point. As we will see throughout this book, the militant internationalist perspective defines debate throughout the seventeenth century, even when it is a fantasy position. Moreover, militant rhetoric addresses some of the period’s most intractable political problems, especially the relationship between imperial monarchical authority and military power. Militant Protestantism returns again and again to ideas of imperial *renovatio* through force of arms.

<sup>138</sup> See W.B. Patterson, *King James VI and the Reunion of Christendom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 31–74.

<sup>139</sup> R.W., *A Looking-Glasse for Papists* . . . (London: TS for Nathaniel Newberry, 1621), p. 11.

<sup>140</sup> Jason White, *Militant Protestantism and British Identity, 1603–1642* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), p. 1.

Yet many polemicists also know that the Stuart claim to imperial monarchy is largely ideological, not material. An Empire is fuelled by the spoils of military conflict abroad: on this front, the Stuarts fall short. Militant calls to arms are made for many reasons, but one repeated theme is that a true imperial monarchy can be established only through the defeat of international Roman Catholicism. In examining how this and related problems are explored in the theatre, this book explores the sheer variety of opinion to which drama is capable of giving voice.

### III

It is no longer necessary to offer exhaustive defences of the claim that early modern drama is deeply implicated in the religious and political debates of the period. Scholarship over the past thirty-five years has definitively proved the case. Yet there is still more that can be said. Richard Helgerson pointed out a number of years ago that 'Apocalyptic was radically inclusive. Ordinary craftsmen and labourers, even women, had a significant part in it.'<sup>141</sup> We can make a similar argument about anti-Catholicism. In some hands, these religious languages can be fundamentally conservative, a polemical reinstatement of the status quo; modern criticism is good at identifying this phenomenon. Yet in other hands, this rhetoric can also be surprisingly flexible and fleet, a way of blurring the boundaries between competing ideologies; criticism is less good at explaining this fact.

As Helgerson implies, this language may also pose a subversive threat to established power and privilege. In a passage in his sermon on 2 Thessalonians 2:3, the Oxford academic John Rainoldes draws a contrast between the violent establishment of temporal rule and the papacy:

Wherefore as Princes when they haue subdued any people, to shew that they are their gouenours, are wont to change their customes, alter their state, abrogate their ancient laws &c and appoint new at their pleasure: so the Pope herein *sheweth himself as God*, in that occupying the place in Gods church he taketh vpon him to establish and make new and strange ordinances at his good pleasure<sup>142</sup>

This is an argument by analogy, but it also shows that early modern monarchies of whatever religious stripe are often uncomfortable mirror images of each other. Though Rainoldes is no firebrand, there is a

<sup>141</sup> Helgerson, *Forms of Nationhood*, p. 11.

<sup>142</sup> John Rainoldes, *The Discovery of the Man of Sinne* . . . (Oxford: Ioseph Barnes, 1614), p. 11. Rainoldes uses the language of reason of state, calling the Pope's actions a kind of 'necessity.'



radical core to apocalypticism that is subversive of political authority and that, at various times throughout the century, is accessed by a number of people. In a society where temporal politics is organised hierarchically, and where for most subjects individual liberty is invariably circumscribed, the 'promis'd end' (V.iii.262), as Kent puts it in *King Lear*, is ultimately the promise of a transcendent new order that will reduce those temporal hierarchies to nothing. Some make more of this promise than others. Yet as Martin Luther pointed out at the inception of the Reformation, Christian liberty is a fundamentally nonhierarchical and horizontal thing, a gift that ushers in the levelling inheritance of grace.<sup>143</sup> At the end of the world, the only true liberty is that extended to those who will be saved: 'the happie renewing of the whole world shalbe, when Christ the redeemer of the electe shall once appeare'.<sup>144</sup> Today we might view such thinking as a spiritual reinstatement of hierarchy, the very antithesis of what should properly be called freedom. Are the damned not like those temporal slaves who are deprived of their liberty? As the texts examined in this book make clear, this is not how most of our early modern forebears saw the matter. True liberty and freedom is a spiritual inheritance and will come only when the false church is defeated and when Christ comes to judge the quick and the dead. If such thinking paradoxically enables the halting emergence of more recognisably modern understandings of liberty, then our broader task here is to try to understand why it is that during the seventeenth century, the dramatic language of apocalypticism and anti-Catholicism can inspire both stasis and revolution alike.

<sup>143</sup> See Martin Luther, *The Freedom of a Christian in Martin Luther's Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989). See too Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>144</sup> Fulke, *Praelections*, sig. S6v.