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978-0-521-46701-8 - The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse: Religion, War, Famine and Death in  
Reformation Europe

Andrew Cunningham and Ole Peter Grell

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## The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

This book offers a new and exciting interpretation of early modern European history. Cunningham and Grell's point of departure, and a prism through which events of the period are interpreted, is Dürer's famous woodcut of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. This image came to characterise the outlook and expectations of most early modern Europeans, who experienced a dramatic rise in population, leading to repeated episodes of war, epidemics and famine. These were seen as indicating the imminent end of the world. The book is lavishly illustrated with fascinating contemporary images which, like many texts of the period, are preoccupied with apocalypticism and eschatological expectations. Lucidly written and carefully organised, it brings together religious, social, military and medical history in one survey, giving a unique insight into why the early modern world linked all the crises of the age to the Day of Judgement.

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They are general editors of the series 'History of Medicine in Context' published by Ashgate. Their numerous publications in early modern history include *Medicine and the Reformation* (edited by Grell and Cunningham, 1993); *Calvinist Exiles in Tudor and Stuart England* (by Grell, 1996); *The Anatomical Renaissance* (Cunningham, 1997); and *Health Care and Poor Relief in Counter-Reformation Europe* (by Grell and Cunningham, 1999).

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# The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

RELIGION, WAR,  
FAMINE AND DEATH IN  
REFORMATION EUROPE

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AND

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## Preface

The gestation of this book has been somewhat longer than we anticipated some eight years ago when we first discussed the subject. Unfortunately other duties and obligations had to take priority along the way. Considering our title and topic we are obviously relieved to have been able to finish it before the Millennium, even if we still have to rely on Cambridge University Press to publish it after that significant date!

Bearing in mind the broad coverage we intended, covering a considerable number of historical fields over more than a century and a half, and the geographical spread needed, our Four Horses(men) had to begin life in a less developed form, as foals so to speak, in a course of lectures in the Department of History and Philosophy of Science at the University of Cambridge, only to be expanded, modified and changed and then presented to students in the History Faculty in the same University. This provided us with an invaluable forum in which to test and develop our ideas, while the often enthusiastic response with which the lectures were received convinced us that we had got certain things right while other aspects had not yet been fully developed or thought through.

Considering the magnitude of the task before us we have gratefully relied on a number of colleagues at home and abroad to provide us with information, assistance and encouragement. Our thanks go especially to the late Professor Bob Scribner of the University of Harvard, USA, and to Professor Michael Müller, Martin-Luther University, Halle-Wittenberg, Germany, Professor Robert Jütte, Institut für Geschichte der Medizin der Robert Bosch Stiftung, Stuttgart, Germany, Professor Christopher R. Friedrichs, University of British Columbia, Canada, Professor Ernestine van der Wall, University of Leiden, The Netherlands, Professor Mark Greengrass, University of Sheffield, and Dr Sachiko Kusukawa, University of Cambridge, not to forget a number of constructive anonymous readers for the Press. The responsibility for the final product, however, remains ours alone.

We should like to thank Cambridge University Press and Richard Fisher in particular for taking on this project at an early stage and offering patient and helpful advice at several key stages in the process. We are also grateful to the

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many libraries and museums which have provided us with photographs of the  
broadsheets and illustrations used in this work.

ANDREW CUNNINGHAM

Cambridge, *The Feast of St Michael and All Angels*, 1999      OLE PETER GRELL

And there appeared another wonder in heaven and behold a great  
red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns, and seven  
crowns upon his heads. . . .

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought  
against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and  
prevailed not.

(*Revelation 12:3 and 7–8*)

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