

## APOCALYPSE AND ANTI-CATHOLICISM IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH DRAMA

This book examines the many and varied uses of apocalyptic and anti-Catholic language in seventeenth-century English drama. Adrian Streete argues that this rhetoric is not simply an expression of religious bigotry, nor is it only deployed at moments of political crisis. Rather, it is an adaptable and flexible language with national and international implications, offering a measure of cohesion and order in a volatile century. By rethinking the relationship between theatre, theology, and polemic, Streete shows how playwrights exploited these connections for a diverse range of political ends. Chapters focus on playwrights such as Marston, Middleton, Massinger, Shirley, Dryden, and Lee and on a range of topics including imperialism, reason of state, commerce, prostitution, resistance, prophecy, Church reform, and liberty. Drawing on important recent work in religious and political history, this is a major reinterpretation of how and why religious ideas are debated in the early modern theatre.

ADRIAN STREETE is Senior Lecturer in English Literature, 1500–1780 at the University of Glasgow. He works on early modern literature and religious culture and was awarded a Leverhulme Research Fellowship to write *Apocalypse and Anti-Catholicism in Seventeenth-Century English Drama*. He is author of *Protestantism and Drama in Early Modern England* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), editor of *Early Modern Drama and the Bible: Contexts and Readings, 1570–1625* (2012), co-editor of three other books, and author of numerous articles on early modern literature.

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ADRIAN STREETE

*University of Glasgow*



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*For Theresa, Ben, and Rory*  
Cor meum

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## *Note on Texts and Terminology*

Unless using a modernised, edited edition of an early modern text, I have generally quoted primary texts as they were originally written and punctuated, although I have modernised some letter forms in primary quotations (i.e. long ‘s’, j/i, and vv/w), and have silently expanded in some places for the sake of clarity. Unless otherwise noted, biblical quotations are taken from the Geneva Bible (*The Bible That Is, the Holy Scriptures* . . . [London: Christopher Barker, 1599]).

A note too on terminology: early modern Protestantism often makes a distinction between Roman Catholicism, seen as a corrupt religion headed by the Pope, and the Catholic Church, a primitive institution that existed before the supposed political usurpation of the papacy. The Catholic Church connects the elect to the apostolic founders of the Church. This is the ‘true Church’ reestablished at the Reformation. A good example of this distinction is seen in the title of a text published in 1586 by the Protestant Sir William Herbert called *A Letter Written by a True Christian Catholike, to a Romaine Pretended Catholike*. I use the terms ‘Roman Catholic’ or ‘Roman Church’ throughout in order to retain this distinction. I also use words such as ‘popish’, ‘popery’, and ‘papist’ at various points. Although these terms are now commonly understood as pejorative, my use of them reflects their early modern usage as contemporary synonyms for the practices and adherents of Roman Catholicism (some Puritans also use the first two terms to criticise Roman Catholic ‘remains’ within the English Church). The distinction between anti-popery as a *religious* criticism of the practices of Roman Catholicism and anti-papalism as a *political* critique of the activities of the Roman Catholic Church is an important one. However, my use of the term ‘anti-Catholic’ in the book generally implies, unless otherwise stated, the combination of these religious and political strands.