



Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640 (Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History)

Tessa Watt

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This book looks at how popular religious belief was reflected in the cheapest printed wares available in England in the century after the Reformation: the broadside ballad, the woodcut picture and the chapbook (a small pamphlet, usually of 24 pages). Dr. Watt's study is illustrated throughout by extracts from these wares, many of which are being reproduced for the first time. The production of this "cheap print" is an important chapter in book trade history, showing the increasing specialization of the ballad trade, and tracing for the first time the beginnings of the chapbook trade in the early seventeenth century. But much of this print was not only read; it was also to be sung or pasted as decoration on the wall. The ballad is placed in the context of contemporary musical culture, and the woodcut is related to the decorative arts--wall painting and painted cloth--which have been neglected by mainstream historians. At the same time, the book challenges the picture drawn by recent historians of a great gulf between Protestantism and "popular culture," showing the continuity of many aspects of traditional pre-Reformation piety--modified by Protestant doctrine--well into the seventeenth century.

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