

## The Poetics of History and the Destiny of Israel: The Role of the Jews in English Apocalyptic Thought During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

This essay is dedicated to the memory of Sir Geoffrey  
Elton, 1921–1994

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### I. The reconstruction of the Jews' image within Protestant apocalypse and eschatology

The Protestant Reformation was indeed a revolution, but as Sir Geoffrey Elton reminds us, "it is easy to mistake the nature of that revolution." The essence of the Reformation was "a religious revolution," a fundamental quest for the "restoration of God at the heart of religion and theology."<sup>1</sup> While vehemently attacking the usurpation by the Church of Rome of the means and modes of salvation by arrogating to itself the Power of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, Protestant reformers endeavored to restore God to the very center of religious life and experience. Furthermore, not content with restitution of the power of the Deity in religion and theology, Protestants also strove to restore God's glory within a theocratic universe, ruled directly and immediately by Divine providence and restore His direct role in time and history. Viewing history as the proper domain of 'the theatre of God's judgments', or as the dimension of time which is the subject of Divine revelation, the Protestant Reformation gave rise to a new mode of historical consciousness that was based upon a close reading of sacred Scriptural prophecies and their fullest correlation to concrete historical

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Elton, *Reformation Europe, 1517–1559* (London, 1963), pp. 274–76.

events. Consequently, directed by literal rather than the allegorical interpretation of divine prophecies, Protestants increasingly turned to history in order to construe a meaningful sacred historical context that would explain the significance of the Protestant Reformation within the entire course and progress of salvation history—*Heilsgeschichte*—the unfolding of God's plan of salvation and redemption—or within the annals of the Christian Church.

Protestant philosophy of history may ultimately be characterized as based upon an apocalyptic mode of historical thought, a unique ideology which interprets the whole course of history exclusively in the light of the sacred, prophetic revelations contained in the Book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse. The apocalyptic mode of historical thought views history as a special dimension of time that is subject to sacred prophecy, or as that span of time in which God continuously reveals His glorious plans for human salvation and redemption. Thus, with the restoration of the Deity to the core of religious faith and experience and to the essence of the historical process, Protestants increasingly endeavored to explain the whole progress of history in the light of the fulfillment of sacred prophetic revelations, such as the advent of Antichrist, Christ's Second Coming, the Millennium and the final transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, attempting as it were to show that within the confines of a theocratic universe it was exclusively the power of God's hand which directed the course of events. Within this apocalyptic and eschatological scheme of history, Protestant reformers also construed a universe of sacred, prophetic imagination concerning the Jews' role in providential history and they developed a unique vision concerning the destiny of Israel in the final stage of salvation history.

Broadly speaking, two distinct and mutually exclusive interpretations appeared within Protestant apocalyptic philosophy of history, concerning the theology of Israel or the destiny of the Jewish people in the final culminative process of salvation history. One interpretation, mostly associated with Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation in Germany, declared that like other dreadful symbolic apocalyptic agents such as the figures of Antichrist, the Whore of Babylon etc., on the Last Day of Judgment the Jews too would face God's terrible Divine wrath. Believing that he was living on the eve of the Last Judgment, Luther was deeply convinced that at that eschatological moment the devil was unleashing his final attack upon the true church and among the company of Satan's servants in this final assault were not only the papists and the Turks, but also the Jews. This judgmental apocalyptic view then argued that eschatological salvation could come only after defeat of Antichrist, Satan, the Jews and other dreadful apocalyptic symbols exemplifying the terrible enemies of Christ and his Church. Luther therefore did not foresee or even hope for the national salvation of Israel. In English apocalyptic tradition of the 16th and 17th Centuries on the other hand, the image of the Jew was uniquely reconstructed as a positive apocalyptic agent in providential history; Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic writers in England returned to St. Paul's and St. Augustine's orthodox theology

of Israel, which dwelt on the conversion of the Jews at the final stage of salvation history and indeed considered this sacred glorious event as an essential stage of Christ's Second Coming and his millennial rule with his saints on earth.

The formation of an English apocalyptic tradition gradually transformed the image of the Jew in England from that of a terrible apocalyptic agent, the enemy of Christ and his Church, into a most glorious one, inextricably associated with the final redemptive process of salvation history. Apocalyptic writers in England accorded the Jews a special dimension of sacred space-time in providential history and thus eventually came to consider the conversion of Israel as a crucial stage of Christ's Second Coming and the glorious period of the Millennium. This transformation of the Jewish image in English apocalyptic tradition is evident not only in many literary works produced during the English Renaissance but also, and most importantly, it crucially influenced the debates in Puritan England during the 1650's concerning the readmission of the Jews to England. In sum, the development of the apocalyptic tradition in Reformation Britain should be regarded as an essential ideological context for the transformation in the attitude there toward the Jews; this shift evidently contributed to debates during the Puritan Revolution regarding the Jews and eventually to a profound change in the Jews' image in England from one of a much hated and despised group of alien religious belief and experience into that of a tolerated and respected community.

## II. The return of the Jews to England as an ideological problem

In 1532 the German reformer Martin Luther, in clear words which for many generations were indeed to become a belief common among German Protestants, described why the destiny of Israel served as such a crucial eschatological symbol in the history of the Christian Church and why the Jew ultimately constituted such an important apocalyptic agent within the Christian universe of sacred apocalyptic and eschatological imagination. Luther explained that the destiny of the Jewish people was essential to the Christian drama of salvation and redemption,

For the Jews must needs remain as a 'sign' to the very last day; and though some of them be converted unto Christ, yet their generation shall not end but some shall still remain in the world till Christ shall come.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther, *The Signs of Christ's Coming and the Last Days* (London, 1661), p. 29. A marvelously imaginative description of Luther's attitudes toward the Jews can be found in Stephen Heym's famous novel *King Abasser, or The Wandering Jews*. Many of Luther's eschatological and prophetic writings

In this eschatological scenario, the possible conversion of the Jewish people was evidently rejected and the Jews were transformed instead into a dreadful apocalyptic 'sign' and witness of the Last Days. Most important, as the above passage shows, in the final culminative process of the history of salvation and redemption inaugurating Christ's Second Coming, the Jews would suffer God's imminent and most terrible Divine judgment. Convinced that "it is as easy to convert the Jews as the Devil himself," Luther denounced the glorious orthodox Christian vision of Israel's conversion to the Christian faith at the end of time and history.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, as one scholar says, "it is clear that, as far as the Jews are concerned," Luther "had no theology of hope" for Israel.<sup>4</sup>

Ultimately, for Luther the Jews were a rejected people, guilty of the murder of the prophets and of God's own Son, hence their revelatory and prophetic role in providential history lay in that they served as examples of God's terrible Divine wrath against those who had forsaken Him. Indeed, "Luther had given up all hope" of the conversion of the Jews: "a few of their number might yet be saved," he believed, "but the great majority of the Jews were so stubborn that to convert them would be like converting the devil into an angel, hell into heaven, death into life and sin into holiness."<sup>5</sup> Since he believed that the Kingdom of God would be fully consummated only with the Last Judgment and the end of the world and because he essentially numbered the Jews, together with Satan and Antichrist, among the worst enemies of Christ, Luther indeed had no theology of hope for Israel. On the Last Day however, God would make good the promise of deliverance from such terrible foes of Christ and His Church. Eschatological salvation and redemption was therefore no longer concerned with the conversion of the Jews; instead, according to Luther's judgmental apocalyptic and eschatological view they would face God's terrible Divine wrath.

Luther's most dreadful vision of the Jewish people's destiny within salvation history in fact constituted a radical departure from the more positive

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appeared in England. See, for example, *The Prophecies of the Incomparable Dr. Martin Luther Concerning the Downfall of the Pope of Rome and the Subversion of the German Empire to be overrun by the Armies of the Turks Together With Many Reasons That He Giveth For It* (London, 1664). On Luther's attitudes toward the Jews, see Mark U. Edwards Jr., *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531-46* (Ithaca, 1983) and Gerald Strauss, *Luther's House of Learning: The Indoctrination of the Young in the German Reformation* (Baltimore, 1978). For Jewish life in Germany in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, see R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven, 1988) and "Between State and Community: Religious and Ethnic Minorities in Early Modern Germany," in *Germania Illustrata: Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss*, eds. A. C. Fix and S. C. Karant-Nun (16th Century Essays and Studies, Vol. 18, Kirksville, Mo., 1992), pp. 169-180; Heiko A. Oberman, *The Root of Anti-Semitism* (Philadelphia, 1984) and Raymond Gannon's important essay, "Luther and the Jews," unpublished paper presented to Princeton Theological Seminary, May 11, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> A. Siirala, "Luther and the Jews," *Lutheran World*, 11 (July 1964), p. 334.

<sup>4</sup> Gordon Rupp, "Martin Luther and the Jews," cited in Raymond Gannon, "Luther and the Jews," p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Mark U. Edwards, Jr., *Luther's Last Battles*, p. 132.

and indeed glorious orthodox teaching of St. Paul and St. Augustine. St. Paul's theology of Israel stressed that at the final stage of the history of salvation and redemption, or at the end of time and history, "all Israel shall be saved" (Romans 11:25-26). Indeed, as one scholar puts it, Paul speaks of the "redemption of Israel as being accomplished not within the historical period of the apostolic mission, but at the end, directly by the Deliverer {Christ} himself."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, according to Paul's teaching the salvation of Israel is inextricable from Christ's message of redemption and the Jews were therefore an indispensable and necessary part of eschatological salvation. St. Augustine's theology of Israel similarly accorded the Jews a mysterious destiny within the history of the Christian Church. According to Augustine, "one day the vocation of the Jews for the salvation that comes from the Gospels, will become manifest. Then the Father must come out, to invite the elder son" i.e. the Jewish people. The return of the Jews to the Christian faith, the accomplishment of God's Divine design, would thus ensure their salvation and redemption. Consequently, Augustine saw the "destiny of the Jewish People in the light in which Paul had announced its fulfillment; namely, that 'all Israel shall be saved'."<sup>7</sup>

Unlike Paul's and Augustine's theology of Israel, which presented the inevitable redemption of the Jews during the time of eschatological salvation, Luther invoked the image of the Jew as a negative apocalyptic agent—the instrument of God's Divine wrath. "As all the prophets have foretold," declared Luther, "so I say, that the Jews will always blaspheme God and their king Jesus Christ."<sup>8</sup> Hence he strongly rejected the teaching of Paul and Augustine concerning the future conversion of the Jews and instead he thought that indeed "it is as easy to convert the Jews as the Devil himself."<sup>9</sup> And as the Devil or Satan was doomed to be cast into a lake of fire on the Last Day of Judgment, so indeed were the Jews; and as the devil was a negative eschatological agent, so the Jews were an ominous portent for the Last Days. Like other terrible apocalyptic signs and eschatological symbols, such as the advent of Antichrist, the Whore of Babylon, the Beast and Gog and Magog, whose fate it was to face God's terrible judgment in the final conflagration, for Luther the Jews were therefore a revelatory and prophetic agent of God's judgment and of His wrath towards those who had rejected Christ before the final culmination of redemptive history. Thus he transformed the Jews into a dreadful apocalyptic and eschatological 'sign', enabling Christians to recognize the near approach of the end of time in the overall Christian drama of salvation and redemption.

<sup>6</sup> E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, 1983), p. 194.

<sup>7</sup> Marcel Dubois, "Jews, Judaism and Israel in the Theology of Saint Augustine," *People, Land and the State of Israel: Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, a special edition of *Immanuel*, No. 22-23 (Jerusalem 1989), pp. 183-4.

<sup>8</sup> Martin Luther's "Letter to Spalatin," February 1514, cited by Raymond Gannon, "Luther and the Jews," p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Siirala, "Luther and the Jews," p. 334.

Luther's most terrifying judgmental reconstruction of the Jews' fate in Christian apocalypse and eschatology was evidently greatly influenced by the profoundly negative attitudes toward the Jews pervading Germany at that time. Indeed, he was writing in a land deeply affected by anti-Semitism, a place where during the early 16th Century turbulent crowds and pious congregations sang:

No city therefore can fare well  
until it's sent its Jews to hell.<sup>10</sup>

Heiko A. Oberman recently has shown how the impact of the recovery of Hebrew studies in Germany—*Veritas Hebraica*, or the true 'voice' of the Hebrew Scriptures—in fact reinforced the old negative attitudes toward Jews and greatly contributed to the growth of some of the darkest anti-semitic stereotype views voiced during the Protestant Reformation. "Unfortunately, the recovery of Hebrew [studies]," says Oberman, "occurred just at the time of the crucial premodern mentality shift that start to reinterpret social evil as human responsibility and accountability instead of as catastrophe and 'the will of God'." While the Jews "continued {traditionally} to be the *instruments* of the wrath of God, they were increasingly typecast as voluntary *agents* of evil."<sup>11</sup> This social and religious construction of the image of the Jews in Protestant Germany as a diabolical people who belonged to Satan, went together with Luther's dreadful apocalypse and eschatology of the destiny of Israel in the final stage of salvation history. This trend can easily be seen in many of Luther's apocalyptic writings, such as *The Signs of Christ's Coming and the Last Days*, 1532, *Against the Sabbatarians*, 1538, *On the Jews and Their Lies*, 1543 and *An Admonition against the Jews*, 1546. The rise of eschatological visions in the wake of the Protestant Reformation in Germany then increasingly led to the presentation of the Jew as a negative, dark and dreadful apocalyptic agent, the sign of God's impending judgment, as the Christian drama of salvation and redemption reaches its final culmination. Luther himself was convinced that the pouring out of God's judgment upon these sinful servants of the Devil was not only imminent before the Last Day of Judgment but might indeed be regarded as a crucial stage of that eschatological event in the final drama of providential history.

However, these negative apocalyptic judgmental visions and eschatological expectations assigned to the Jews were by no means the only attitudes prevalent among Protestants in Europe; not all of them shared Luther's 'the-

<sup>10</sup> Gerald Strauss, *Manifestations of Discontent in Germany on the Eve of the Reformation* (Bloomington, 1971), p. 128.

<sup>11</sup> Heiko A. Oberman, "Discovery of Hebrew and Discrimination against the Jews: The *Veritas Hebraica* as Double-Edged Sword in Renaissance and Reformation," *Germania Illustrata: Essays on Early Modern Germany Presented to Gerald Strauss*, p. 34. On Christian attitudes toward the Jews in Reformation Germany, see Stephen G. Burrent, "Distorted Mirrors: Antonius Margaritha, Johann Buxtorf and Christian Ethnographies of the Jews," *Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (Summer 1994), pp. 275–289.

ology of no hope' for the Jews or his negative Israelology, which proclaimed that God's Divine judgment upon the Jewish people is imminent before the Last Days and the end of history. This is especially true for the Protestant and later the Puritan movement in England of the 16th and 17th Centuries. During the Reformation, England also experienced a revival of Hebrew studies and an upsurge of eschatological expectations and apocalyptic visions, but there this phenomenon led instead to a crucial departure from Luther's gloomy vision of the destiny of Israel in the final stage of salvation history. In fact, the rise of a unique and well-defined apocalyptic tradition in Protestant and Puritan England led to a remarkably favorable shift in terms of the Jews' role in the history of salvation and redemption.

English Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic writers rejected Luther's position that before the Last Days and the end of history God would execute His terrible Divine judgment on the Jewish people. Instead, they systematically developed a radically more positive and glorious apocalyptic vision concerning the Jews, emphasizing their conversion and the salvation of Israel as a sure sign of the final culminative process of salvation history, inaugurating Christ's Second Coming and his millennial role with his saints upon earth. In English apocalyptic tradition of the 16th and 17th Centuries the Jews were therefore transformed from potential victims of God's dreadful judgment into a people capable of conversion and hence eventually of salvation. The destiny of Israel was therefore radically changed from being a terrible negative eschatological symbol into a most positive apocalyptic agent in the Christian drama of salvation and redemption. Returning to the orthodox teaching of Paul's and Augustine's theology of Israel, which stressed the conversion and eventual salvation of the Jewish people, apocalyptic writers in England accorded the Jews a glorious role in the final stage of salvation history. Thus the formation of a coherent and well-defined apocalyptic tradition during the English Reformation greatly contributed to a crucial transformation in the image of the Jew and eventually to a major shift in policy toward Jewish life and existence in England.

The return of the Jews to England at the height of the Puritan Revolution in the middle of the 17th Century has long attracted the historians' imagination. Under Oliver Cromwell's Protectorate, 1653-1658, over three hundred and fifty years after 18th July 1290 when Edward I had signed the royal decree expelling the Jewish community from England, Jews were again allowed to enter the British Isles.<sup>12</sup> Historically, the expulsion was just the

<sup>12</sup> Among the many works dealing with the expulsion of the Jews from England and their return, see: C. Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford, 1964); J. J. Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism* (Oxford, 1986); D. S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982), *The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850* (Oxford, 1993) and David S. Katz et al., eds., *Exile and Return: Anglo-Jewry Through the Ages* (Jerusalem 1993), (Hebrew); Yosef Kaplan et al., eds., *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World* (Leiden, 1989); Mel Scult, *Millennial Expectations and Jewish Liberties: A Study of the Efforts to Convert the Jews in Britain, up to the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Leiden, 1978).

climax of a long and painful process continuing throughout the 13th Century, during which the Jews had suffered many outbursts of persecution. For the next three centuries any thoughts of England aroused only bitter memories amongst the Jews of Europe and, although from 1492 there was in fact a fluctuating and inconsequential Marrano community in London, they renounced any hope of return.<sup>13</sup> However, with the rise of a unique apocalyptic tradition during the Protestant Reformation negative attitudes in England toward the Jews changed considerably and this trend culminated during the Puritan Revolution in the mission of Menasseh Ben Israel and the Whitehall debates of 1655 on the readmission of the Jews. These extraordinary debates, in which the ruling Puritan elite sought to wreak profound changes within the borders of a Christian commonwealth in England in the nature of Jewish life and existence, were indeed a remarkable historical event.<sup>14</sup>

The process which eventually brought about the re-admission of the Jews to England has been discussed in many important studies.<sup>15</sup> Today we know a great deal about the social, religious and political factors which influenced and facilitated this reversal in English policy toward the Jews. So far, however, little attention has been given to an important ideological aspect associated with this historical event: the ideological transformation which took place in England in the views regarding the destiny of Israel within the confines of Christian philosophy of salvation history and the unique role assigned to the Jew as a positive agent within English apocalyptic interpretation of history. Between the middle of the 16th and the middle of the 17th Century, the Jew became an important apocalyptic agent in Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic thought; during this span of time, Protestant and Puritan writers systematically worked out the ideological premises of this change of attitude towards his image, leading to a revolutionary transformation in England concerning the role of Israel in providential history. Analysis of the English Protestant and Puritan universe of sacred apocalyptic imagination, concerning the course of salvation history and the unique role accorded the Jews as positive revelatory agent in the all-time drama of salvation and redemption, could show how the image of the Jews was transformed in English apocalyptic tradition and how this transformation greatly contributed to the debates during the Puritan Revolution concerning their re-admission to the country.

Over the centuries, the image of the Jews in England naturally underwent numerous changes and this is reflected in many works of literature.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden, 1975), p. 149, n. 187.

<sup>14</sup> David S. Katz, "The Readmission of the Jews to England and the Establishment of Their Community," *Exile and Return: Anglo-Jewry Through the Ages*, eds. D. S. Katz et al., pp. 105-122 (Hebrew).

<sup>15</sup> See the important studies cited in note 12 above.

<sup>16</sup> Among the works dealing with the image of the Jews in English literature, see: Ester L. Pantiz, *The Alien in Their Midst: Images of Jews in English Literature* (London, 1981); Derek Cohen and Deborah



Analysis of some texts produced during the English Renaissance of the 16th and 17th Centuries shows that a crucial transformation of the Jews' image indeed occurred in this period and, most important, that the cause of this shift was to a large extent the creation of a unique and well-defined apocalyptic tradition in Protestant and Puritan England. Before the English Renaissance the image of the Jews was in fact generally very negative. In Matthew Paris' *Chronica Majora* of the middle of the 13th Century for example, the following stanza expresses the usual negative attitude:

The wicked Jews with scoffs and scornes  
Did daiye him molest,  
That never till he left his life  
Our Savior could not rest.<sup>17</sup>

In English medieval drama the Jews were condemned to hell because of their grave sin against Christ:

In helle to dwelle with-ouen ende;  
Ther ye schall neuere butt sorrowe see  
And sitte be Satanas the fende.<sup>18</sup>

The same attitudes can be found in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale* of the 14th Century, where the Jews were portrayed as

Sustened by a lord . . .  
For foule usure and lucre of vilenye,  
Hateful to Christ and to his company.  
(Lines 38-40)<sup>19</sup>

In Chaucer's most famous literary work, *Canterbury Tales*, written almost a century after the banishment of the Jews from England, there are "references to those who 'blaspheme treacherously,' 'worse than the Jews,' who by so doing mutilate Christ's body anew." The Jews of Chaucer indeed were capable of "atrocities because they were not like other humans."<sup>20</sup>

This attitude toward the Jews as villainous, hook-nosed money-lenders hankering after Christian blood also figures in Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta*, 1592, and in William Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, 1597. In Marlowe's play Barabbas the Jew declares:

We Jews can fawn like spaniels when we please:  
And when we grin we bite; yet are our looks  
As innocent and harmless as a lamb's.  
(II, 143-145)<sup>21</sup>

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Heller, eds., *Jewish Presence in English Literature* (Montreal, 1990); Montague F. Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England* (Cleveland, 1961) and Harold Fisch, *The Dual Image: A Study of the Jew in English Literature* (London, 1971).

<sup>17</sup> Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England*, p. 14.

<sup>18</sup> Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England*, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Panitz, *The Alien in Their Midst*, pp. 28-9, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England*, p. 21.

Shakespeare's Shylock is indeed a symbolically diabolic force of evil as strong as nature itself, symbolizing an inferno of evil and hatred. Thus in Antonio's eyes Shylock's lust for blood takes on the dreadful motive energy of satanic evil, totally opposed to reason and any sense of human dignity:

I pray you, think you question with the Jew  
 You may as well go stand upon the beach  
 And bid the main flood bate his usual height . . .  
 You may as well do anything most hard,  
 As seek to soften that—than which what's harder?—  
 His Jewish heart!

(IV, i, 70–80)

During the early 17th Century, however, there is increasing evidence in English literature of some identification with the miserable state of the Jews, of more sympathy and concern for the destiny of Israel and especially of strong and vivid expectations for their conversion to the Christian faith. In the early 17th Century, in his poem "The Jews," George Herbert wrote: "Poor nation, whose sweet sap and juice / Our scions have purloin'd and left you dry . . ." Herbert awaited the sound of the "Trumpet" of the Apocalypse which would proclaim that the Jews' "sweet sap might come again!" The reference here is of course to St. Paul's parable of the good olive tree which shall on the Last Day have its own branches, namely, the remnant of Israel (Romans, 11:13–25). As Harold Fisch writes, "This is a Christian poem, the theme of which is the conversion of the Jews to Christianity," a poem which "breathes a devout love of Israel as the people of God," and accords the Jews an important role in salvation history.<sup>22</sup> The same attitude, not of reproaching Israel but rather of identification and sympathy, is evident also in Henry Vaughan's apocalyptic poem "The Jews" 1655:

So by all signs  
 Our fulness too is now come in,  
 And the same Sun which here declines  
 And sets, will few hours hence begin  
 To rise on you again, and look  
 Toward old *Mamre* and *Eshcol's* brook.

(Lines 26–31)<sup>23</sup>

The belief that the future conversion of the Jews will bring glory to Israel is further expressed in Sir Henry Pinch's *The World's Great Restauration, Or The Calling of the Jews*, 1621, where he proclaims to the Jews that "In stead of that thou wast desolate and forsaken, and sattet as a widdow, thou shalt flourish as in the dayes of thy youth. Nay, aboue and beyond thy youth."<sup>24</sup> During the 1650's the poet Abraham Cowley was deeply convinced that the

<sup>22</sup> Fisch, *The Dual Image*, p. 41.

<sup>23</sup> Fisch, *The Dual Image*, p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Henry Pinch cited in David Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England*, p. 95.

final redemptive act in salvation history was about to take place: "There wants, methinks, but the *Conversion* of . . . the *Jews*, for the accomplishing of the *Kingdom of Christ*."<sup>25</sup> Finally, Milton too reflects the great transformation of the Jews' image taking place in England during the 17th Century. Thus, according to the Puritan poet, "while we detest Judaism, we know our selves commanded by St. Paul . . . to respect the Jews, and by all means to endeavour their conversion."<sup>26</sup>

As these various literary images testify, an important and indeed a revolutionary transformation of views regarding the destiny of Israel had taken place in England. Among English writers the fate of the Jewish people indeed became inseparable from the course and progress of salvation history, especially when Protestants and Puritans strongly felt that the history of salvation and redemption was reaching its final and last culmination. There is considerable evidence in England of an increasing shift away from Luther's negative image of the Jews as the subject of God's terrible Divine wrath towards the traditional teaching of St. Paul and St Augustine, which incorporates conversion of the Jews as an apocalyptic and eschatological event of enormous prophetic and revelatory proportion in the final stage of the drama of salvation history. These apocalyptic and eschatological visions of the Jews' role in providential history were no longer based upon God's judgment upon the people who had rejected Jesus' message of salvation, but rather on the utmost incorporation of the destiny of Israel within the confines of the sacred history of the Christian Church. In other words, as an important apocalyptic agent the Jew's image had once again become an essential part in the history of the Christian church, illuminating the near approach of the Last Days and the end of history.

Lying beyond these apocalyptic and eschatological literary images there was the crucial transformation, from Luther's negative vision of the Jews to St. Paul's and St. Augustine's theology of Israel's salvation in the final stage of providential history. Most important, the source of this revolutionary shift in Renaissance England during the 16th and 17th Centuries should be sought in the formation of English apocalyptic tradition. With the rise of this apocalyptic tradition in England as a unique mode of historical thought, a coherent and well-defined image of the Jews developed within the boundaries of eschatological expectations and millennial visions. This important ideological shift greatly influenced literary works because Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic writers during the English Renaissance had great impact on current perceptions of time and history. Ultimately and in clear contrast to Luther's negative view of the Jews, the development of an apocalyptic philosophy of history in England gradually but increasingly created a glorious vision for the Jews in providential history; it accorded the Jews a special sacred time space in the redemptive historical process, incorporated the

<sup>25</sup> Abraham Cowley cited in David Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England*, p. 89.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (London, 1964), p. 237.

symbol of the Jews' conversion as a crucial eschatological sign in the course and progress of the history of redemption and finally, it envisioned the Jew as a crucial positive apocalyptic agent within the drama of salvation history.

In a study devoting so much attention to an apocalyptic mode of historical thought and to apocalyptic historical imagery, and in order to illuminate its wonderful universe of sacred imagination and to provide an analysis of the nature and structure of the apocalyptic mode of historical thought, with its important future-structure narrative concerning the Last Days and the end of history, it is patently necessary to start with a clear definition of the Apocalypse as a unique Christian 'theological prophetic poem'. Following this discussion of the Apocalypse as a great Christian 'poetic vision of history' dealing with the end of time and history, or as 'a great eschatological fiction,' it is important to provide a short history of the attitudes in the Christian Church toward the apocalyptic mode of historical thought, especially regarding its rejection during the time of the Fathers of the Church and later, beginning in the 12th Century, its gradual acceptance and its greatest culmination in the Protestant Reformation of the 16th Century. This short survey of the role of the apocalyptic mode of historical thought is necessary in order to understand the revolutionary transformation which had taken place in the Protestant Reformation and later in Protestant and Puritan England, concerning the apocalyptic vision of history and the Jew's important role within the apocalyptic tradition in England as an eschatological agent of great portent.

### III. The poetics of time: the apocalyptic image and interpretation of history

In the preface to his remarkable book *A Rebirth of Images*, Austin Farrer suggested why Revelation, the enigmatic final book of the Scriptures, so deeply and profoundly captured the imagination of the Middle Ages: "It is the one great poem which the first Christian age produced, it is a single and living unity from end to end and it contains a whole world of spiritual imagery to be entered into and possessed." Consequently, he regarded the Apocalypse "as a great and singular theological poem" dealing with future history, the Last Days and the end of history.<sup>27</sup> To use Frank Kermode's words, for many centuries this prophetic and poetic book of "eschatological fiction" to a large extent determined "the sense of an ending," or the imaginative vision of the end of time and history among Christians in Western culture.<sup>28</sup> As Richard K. Emmerson writes, "the imaginative power" of the Apocalypse's "visual imagery, the poetic beauty of its heavenly liturgy

<sup>27</sup> Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (New York, 1986 [1949]), p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> Frank Kermode, *The Sense of Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction*, (Oxford, 1967), p. 35.

and its memorable symbolic representation of the cosmic battle between good and evil not only fascinated medieval artists . . . but also a wide range of poets, historians, homilists and theologians."<sup>29</sup> For historians of the Christian Church or for ecclesiastical historians especially, the Apocalypse's wonderful universe of sacred imaginings provided a unique sacred source for historical understanding, which eventually created a singular historical consciousness based upon vivid eschatological visions and profound millennial expectations. It provided the clue for the whole future course of salvation history and through its marvelous symbolic and visionary language it constructed the sacred, revelatory and prophetic scheme of the history of the Last Days. In sum, it offered the basis for an apocalyptic interpretation of history, an historical understanding based upon the apocalyptic mode of historical thought in which the whole progress of history until the last and final triumph of Christ and his Church over Satan and his minions is founded upon the sacred visions contained in this book.

Most modern scholars place the composition of the Apocalypse in the last years of the 1st Century, during the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. Because of the new apocalyptic situation—the belief in the resurrection of Jesus—in which John composed his Revelation, this sacred prophetic text strikingly makes a complete break with earlier Jewish apocalyptic tradition. Thus, instead of describing past historical ages which have already come to an end John, like many other Christians in his time, expressed the belief that only a brief interim period would elapse before the full manifestation of Christ, or Christ's Second Coming. Thus he described the apocalyptic scenario of crisis-judgment-vindication in order to announce what was to come to pass in the near future. In this way he constructed a marvelous sacred prophetic-poetic narrative according to which, through signs, symbols, judgments and many awe-inspiring images, Christians could interpret the meaning of their own time in terms of the sacred prophetic and revelatory process of Christ's imminent Second Coming and the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God.<sup>30</sup>

In recent years, Hayden White's studies in the 'history of narrative' have considerably transformed our awareness of the nature and structure of historical discourse.<sup>31</sup> As he reminds us, "the historian has to interpret his material in order to construct the moving pattern of images in which the form

<sup>29</sup> Richard K. Emmerson, "The Apocalypse in Medieval Culture," *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds., Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca, 1992), p. 293.

<sup>30</sup> Bernard McGinn, "John's Apocalypse and the Apocalyptic Mentality," *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, pp. 3-19.

<sup>31</sup> Hayden White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," *The Writing of History: The Literary Form and Historical Understanding*, ed. Robert H. Canary and Henry Kozicki (Madison, 1978), pp. 41-62; "The Structure of Historical Narrative," *Clio*, 1 (1972), pp. 5-20; *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore, 1973). (The term 'The Poetics of History' appears in the title of White's "Introduction" to *Metahistory*.) See also White's important study, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, 1987). On the important relationship

of the historical process is to be mirrored" or understood.<sup>32</sup> The fact that for many centuries (and even now) Christians profoundly believed in the Apocalypse's universe of sacred imagination should not prevent us from seeing that this sacred prophetic book is indeed the ultimate example of what White calls the "Poetics of History"—namely an imaginative construction of history in terms of "plot-structure or mythos".<sup>33</sup> For historical narratives or "the forms of historical representation",<sup>34</sup> the story of the progress of time "are not only models of past events and processes, but also metaphorical statements," which "endow" historical events "with culturally sanctioned meanings."<sup>35</sup> Historical narratives should therefore be understood as "symbolic structures" mediating "between the events reported" in them "and the generic plot-structures conventionally used in our culture to endow unfamiliar events and situation with meanings."<sup>36</sup> This important analysis of the nature of historical narrative eventually leads to the abolition of the distinction between 'historical narrative' and 'fictional narrative,' or between history and literature and thus it obliges us to consider the Apocalypse's universe of sacred imagination together with its prophetic narrative as the ultimate example of the poetics of history, or as a great Christian theological poem.

The narrative of 'eschatological fiction' in the Apocalypse with its future-revelatory description of the final stage in the redemptive process of salvation history has exercised enormous influence in the history of Christianity. To appreciate more fully the apocalyptic and eschatological mind-set and motivation, one should first look at the Christian philosophy of salvation history—*Heilsgeschichte*—the unfolding of God's plan of salvation and redemption through the annals of sacred ecclesiastical history, or the whole of Christ's Divine economy of salvation upon earth. With the conversion of Constantine during the 4th Century, turning Christianity into the official faith of the Roman Empire, Christians developed the idea of ecclesiastical or Church history as a unique mode of historical thought, according to which the whole course of history should be explained exclusively in the light of the progress of the Christian Church. The establishment of ecclesiastical history as a unique mode of historical thought thus coincided with the transformation of Christianity from a persecuted sect into the official church and faith of the Roman Empire. Consequently, with the rise of Christianity to predominance in the Western world, until the Enlightenment of the 18th Century ecclesiastical history constituted the most important and dominant mode of historical interpretation in Christian Europe.

between history and literature, see also Lionel Gossman, "History and Literature: Reproduction or Signification," *The Writing of History*, eds. R. H. Canary et al., (Madison, 1978), pp. 3-40. For the importance of the narrative form in the cognitive process, see Louis O-Mink, "Narrative Form as a Cognitive Instrument," *The Writing of History*, eds. R. H. Canary et al., (Madison, 1978), pp. 129-150.

<sup>32</sup> White, "The Historical Text as Literary Artifact," p. 51.

<sup>33</sup> White, p. 47.

<sup>34</sup> White, p. 41.

<sup>35</sup> White, p. 51.

<sup>36</sup> White, p. 52.

"Any history founded on Christian principles," wrote R. G. Collingwood, "will be of necessity universal, providential, apocalyptic and periodized."<sup>37</sup> Ecclesiastical history, by its very nature as the history of the progress of the Christian Church on earth, is obviously the supreme example of this mode of historical thought. It is universal history inasmuch as the church claims universal validity for its teaching of the Gospel of salvation and redemption, appealing to the whole world and not merely to one particular nation, dealing with the origins of man and the universal promise of God, with Creation and the end of history. And while ecclesiastical history considers the Church to be the central agency in the providential drama of human salvation and redemption, it has no particularistic center such as race, nation, or people. Ecclesiastical history is providential history because it espouses the belief that the whole universe is a theocratic universe ruled directly and immediately by God's Divine providence; hence history is God's domain, a space of time regulated and controlled by God's Divine providence, as a play pre-ordained and directed by God's hand. It is a periodized history because it divides history according to Divine prophetic revelations into past, present and future. In God's all-embracing Divine providence these epochs include the period before Christ, that after his First Coming and the glorious period which is to unfold after the anticipated Second Coming. Finally, ecclesiastical history is apocalyptic history, dealing with prophetic, redemptive revelations based on the eschatological and apocalyptic visions in the New Testament, especially in the Book of Revelation, founded upon belief in providence and anticipation of the fulfillment of Divine prophecies and revelations. Because it progresses in a continuum from historical revelation to the glory to be unveiled in the future, from the promise made in Christ's First Coming to its realization in the Second Coming, each age came to perceive this apocalyptic and eschatological dimension of history differently. Thus for example, according to William Blake, ". . . then the Last Judgment begins, & its Vision is Seen by the Imaginative Eye of Every one according to the situation he holds."<sup>38</sup>

Ecclesiastical history constituted the dominant mode of historical thought from the rise of Christianity to predominance in the Western world during the 4th Century until the "secularization of theological teleology of history announced by the Enlightenment of the 18th Century."<sup>39</sup> Founded upon a definite and coherent Christian conception of history or, more precisely, upon a historical economy of salvation, ecclesiastical history is a system of thought in which history is defined exclusively as the story of human salvation and redemption, comprising a special dimension of space and time in which progress is made from promise to fulfillment, from prophecy to real-

<sup>37</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (Oxford, 1961), p. 49.

<sup>38</sup> William Blake, "The Vision of the Last Judgment," cited as epigraph to Frank Kermode, *The Sense of Ending*, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *History and Eschatology* (Edinburgh, 1957), p. 65.

ization. In contrast to secular history which deals with peoples, societies and institutions during time, sacred history deals with the unfolding of God's Divine plan of salvation, or with God's saving work and His mighty redemptive act in history. Of course, all history, secular and sacred, profane and divine, displays the working of God's Divine providence. Yet it is only sacred, ecclesiastical history which can ascribe meaning and significance to historical events in the overall divine economy of salvation and redemption. The foundation of sacred, redemptive history is therefore the biblical narrative of God's saving work among His chosen people, the promise made in the Old Testament and the fulfillment in the New, as well as the prophetic revelations concerning Christ's Second Coming and the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God.

The main concern of ecclesiastical history is the relationship between sacred, prophetic revelation and the goal of history. From the beginning of time the grand design of God's miraculous providence has been unfolding, a Divine scheme, directing, conditioning and controlling each and every event in history. History is therefore linear and teleological. The task of ecclesiastical history is to record and illuminate the sacred, providential and redemptive course of events in the history of salvation. Within Christian ideology and philosophy of history, the past is thus perceived as replete with symbols and prophecies pointing to the glorious future, Christ's Second Coming, the millennium, the Kingdom of God, or the heavenly city of God—the New Jerusalem. These eschatological and apocalyptic visions and symbols appear in Revelation and it was through this work of Christian 'eschatological fiction' that Christians learned how to interpret the meaning of their time in the general context of the history of salvation and redemption.

Matters touching upon the relationship between prophecy and history obviously have far-reaching consequences for humanity and the meaning of history and it is not surprising that the apocalyptic and eschatological dimension of the goal of history and the end of time created a deep strain in ecclesiastical history. A pressing question, for example, was whether the apocalyptic hope concerning Christ's Second Coming and his millennial role with his saints should be situated within time and history or beyond it and whether Christians should regard it as a real and feasible historical goal or as a mere allegory for the state of Christ's saints after the Last Judgment and eschatological salvation. The apocalyptic scheme of history as it appeared in the Book of Revelation therefore encountered many objections in early Christianity and indeed for many years Church authorities viewed its prophecies with great suspicion, especially in relation to the apocalyptic and eschatological dimensions of history.

Before the Protestant Reformation in the 16th Century, Christian philosophy of history was largely based upon the legacy of the Fathers of the Church, most notably St. Augustine of Hippo, whereby eschatology and apocalypse were removed from the process of history and the entire culmination of the redemptive process was placed beyond time. Consequently,



the fulfillment of sacred prophecies and revelations—such as Christ's Second Coming, his millennial role with his saints upon Earth and the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God, once considered an intrinsic dimension of history itself, as reflected in the chiliastic and millennial expectations in early Christianity—was now sought outside the boundaries of history. During the patristic period, this 'de-eschatologization process' gradually replaced Christ's Second Coming from the stage of this world to the 'world to come' and irrevocably separated prophecy from history. No longer considered an intrinsic part of the historical process, eschatological revelation receded into some undefined realm outside the boundaries of history. Thus the eschatological Day of Judgment inaugurating Christ's Second Coming and the Millennium itself were removed from the dimension of history and were no longer considered an historical event.<sup>40</sup>

From the time of Augustine down to the late Middle Ages the Christian doctrine of salvation history tended to play down the historical significance of the apocalyptic scheme of history, or the apocalyptic mode of historical thought, especially regarding Christ's Second Coming and his millennial role with his saints upon earth. Following Augustine, Church authorities emphasized instead that, although the Advent of Christ indeed marked a new historical dispensation in the history of salvation and redemption, yet the promise of eschatological salvation had nothing to do with the course and progress of history. Again, following Augustine, the Church of Rome assumed the sole means and modes of salvation: no essential transformations would occur in history until the Last Judgment had taken place. Around the turn of the millennium, however, eschatological visions and apocalyptic expectations began to reemerge in Europe. Modern scholarship indeed holds that the year 1000 was not a major focus of vivid millennial expectancy,<sup>41</sup> but later, during the 12th Century, there is much evidence that apocalyptic ideas had caused a deep shift in historical consciousness, especially concerning the relationship between sacred prophetic revelations and the course and progress of history.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Avihu Zakai and Anya Mali, "Time, History and Eschatology: Ecclesiastical History from Eusebius to Augustine," *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (December 1993), pp. 393–417; Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 1–68; and "Reformation, History and Eschatology in English Protestantism," *History and Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (October 1987), pp. 300–318; H. Butterfield, *The Origins of History* (London, 1981) and *Christianity and History* (London, 1960); J. Danielou, *History of Early Christian Doctrine before the Council of Nicaea*, 3 Vols., (London, 1964); R. A. Markus, *Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine* (Cambridge, 1970) and *From Augustine to Gregory the Great* (London, 1983).

<sup>41</sup> Henry Focillon, *The Year 1000* (New York, 1969).

<sup>42</sup> On apocalyptic thought and apocalyptic imagery before the Protestant Reformation, see Bernard McGinn, *Vision of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1979); Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford, 1969) and *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (London, 1976); Norman Cohen, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists in the Middle Ages* (New York, 1961); Robert Lerner, *The Power of Prophecy: The Cedar of Lebanon Vision from the Mongol Onslaught to the Dawn of the Enlightenment* (Berkeley, 1983) and

From the 12th Century there is clear evidence of "the increasing interest" in "the 'historical' patterns of the Apocalypse," and growing efforts to correlate sacred prophecies and the course of history.<sup>43</sup> During that century writers like Rupert of Deutz (c.1075–1129), Otto of Fresing (d. 1158), Anselm of Havelberg (d. 1158) and Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173) contributed to the efforts made to correlate prophecy with history, or scriptural narratives and prophecies with actual historical events. These historians and many other less well-known writers at the height of the medieval period were responsible for the upsurge of dreadful speculations and terrible rumors concerning the appearance of Antichrist, the end of the world, the Last Judgment and related eschatological themes that became so increasingly common during the 12th and 13th Centuries.<sup>44</sup> Consequently and most important for our concern, the Bible came to be seen as a special prophetic repository essential to any understanding of salvation history. This growing tendency to apocalyptic imagery reached its peak in the 13th Century with the most original prophetic thinker of the high medieval period, the Calabrian Abbot Joachim of Fiore (1131–1202). Joachim's unique sense of time and his view of history radically transformed the static construction inherited from Augustine; more specifically, he abolished the Augustinian separation between prophecy and history, or between salvation and history, firmly placing history within the prophetic context of sacred revelations or, conversely, divine prophecy within a concrete historical context.

Joachim wrote that history was an emanation of the Godhead. He therefore interpreted history through the Bible, claiming it is an essential dimension of prophecy because it is based upon a progressive unfolding of three revelatory stages, each ruled over by one person of the Trinity. The Age of the Father and the Old Testament, an age of fear and obedience under the Law, was consummated in Christ's First Coming. The Age of the Son and the New Testament was the present epoch of faith and tutelage in which Joachim and his fellows lived under the Gospel. It would in turn be followed by the Age of the Holy Spirit and the *evangelium aeternum*, the fulfillment of spiritual freedom and love. According to Joachim, this third and last historical stage, in which human history would be consummated, was already dawning in the late 12th Century and he expected its full realization within a few generations following the year 1200. By claiming that the Age of the Holy Spirit was to be an integral part of history, Joachim in fact

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"The Black Death and Western European Eschatological Mentalities," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (June 1981), pp. 533–52; Richard K. Emmerson, *Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art and Literature* (Seattle, 1981).

<sup>43</sup> Richard K. Emmerson, "The Apocalypse in Medieval Culture," p. 300.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Lerner, "Medieval Prophecy and Religious Dissent," *Past and Present*, Vol. 72 (August 1976), pp. 18–20. See also Barbara Nolan, *The Gothic Visionary Perspective* (Princeton, 1977), as well as the works cited in note 42 above.

made history into an essential dimension of prophecy and prophecy a crucial dimension of history. Moreover, by arguing that the Age of the Holy Ghost was an historical phenomenon, Joachim expressed the idea that a wholly new historical dispensation was at hand. Not only did he invoke the notion of progressive history, but he held that history as a whole had a meaning and significance in the Christian drama of salvation and redemption. The chief significance of Joachim's work, however, lay in his attempt to interpret the deepest mysteries of Scripture in historical terms, thus correlating history and prophecy, or sacred revelations and time.<sup>45</sup>

As Marjorie Reeves has shown, the enormous influence of Joachim's work on apocalyptic imagination contributed to the dissemination in Christian Europe of eschatological visions and apocalyptic expectations up to the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, on the very eve of the Reformation, deeply alarmed by the many eschatological rumors and apocalyptic speculations, the Fifth Lateran Council (1512–1517) issued a statement strongly denouncing popular apocalyptic tendencies and Church authorities constantly warned preachers against overzealous and simplistic efforts to interpret biblical prophecies literally and historically. To a large extent it was this highly charged prophetic atmosphere, so full of eschatological visions and apocalyptic imaginings, that led to the outbreak of the Protestant Reformation. Indeed, it would be difficult if not impossible to deal with the Reformation without taking into account these eschatological and apocalyptic trends which constituted a crucial part of Protestant writings. "Much more than Catholics or Calvinists," according to a recent study, "Lutherans kept alive" eschatological visions and millennial expectations "that had characterized the late Middle Ages." Luther especially "believed in the imminence of the end of the world and the Last Judgment [and] this belief was widely shared by his colleagues and followers." Moreover, "for Luther, Christ stood poised to return, to deliver his own and to deal the final blow to a corrupt world. The faithful could rejoice in the recovery of God's Word and the nearness of their salvation."<sup>46</sup>

Apart from being a great theological and ecclesiastical revolution, the Protestant Reformation initiated a most revolutionary transformation in Christian philosophy of history.<sup>47</sup> Protestant historiography enthusiastically based itself upon a historical interpretation of divine prophecies and regarded the Apocalypse as the sole guide to the entire course of the history of salvation and redemption. Consequently, the Reformation gave rise to a new mode of historical consciousness, or a distinctly Protestant historiogra-

<sup>45</sup> Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages and Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future*.

<sup>46</sup> Rubin B. Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis: Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford, 1988), pp. 261, 3.

<sup>47</sup> Avihu Zakai, "Reformation, History and Eschatology in English Protestantism," *History and Theory*, Vol. XXVI, No. 3 (October 1987), pp. 300–318.

phy, based upon a unique apocalyptic interpretation of history, in which eschatology and the Apocalypse—and hence the Millennium—were once again firmly situated within the boundaries of time and history. Within this sacred, prophetic and redemptive interpretation of history the Reformation, as a great revelatory and eschatological event preceding that glorious moment when the whole mystery of salvation history would be resolved, stood at the end of time and history. Protestants' attitudes toward history were essentially influenced by an apocalyptic and eschatological imaginary: they discovered Antichrist in the bosom of the Church of Rome; they were fearful of the Turks and other open enemies of the Gospel who were threatening to destroy Christendom and they identified the Turkish invasion of Europe with the rise of Gog and Magog. They were indeed living in the final stage of providential history, a sacred eschatological time when the whole drama of salvation and redemption would be finally resolved. Thus, while Satan and his minions were ravaging the whole earth, Protestants believed Christ's Second Coming was imminent and his saints would be delivered. Obviously, within this universe of sacred imagination, when all prophecies would be realized, the prophecy concerning the Jews was necessarily incorporated into Protestant apocalypse and eschatology, and Israel was accorded a special role in God's last revelatory and redemptive act in the drama of human salvation and redemption.

#### IV. The Jew as a glorious apocalyptic agent in English apocalyptic tradition

In the ecclesiastical and theological controversies surrounding the forces of Reformation and Counter-Reformation during the 16th Century, Protestants turned increasingly to history, to the study of past events and to the interpretation of their significance in order to find meaning for the Protestant Reformation within sacred, providential history. The pursuit of religious reformation led to the creation of a unique mode of historical thought—Protestant historiography based upon an apocalyptic interpretation of history, or upon an apocalyptic mode of historical thought. Ultimately, being founded upon a close correlation between history and prophecy, this was primarily characterized by an apocalyptic view of history, which in turn gave rise to a new form of historical consciousness. Not only did the study of history now become a crucial dimension of the religious wars which the Protestants waged against the Church of Rome, but the whole attitude toward profane, secular history was radically changed from what had been traditionally accepted in Christianity. Protestant historiography was based upon a historical interpretation of prophecies and it stressed the apocalyptic scheme of events—that the Apocalypse was to be regarded as the sole guide to history. In this context the Protestant Reformation was situated at the end

of time and history, as an eschatological event preceding that moment when the whole mystery of providential history would be resolved.<sup>48</sup>

This new historiographic approach is especially prominent with regard to England, where the development of Protestant historiography signified the creation of a singular interpretation of English national history in which the Church of England, thanks to its apostolic origins, was to play a central role in the final stage of providential history that began with the Reformation. Expectations ran high among Protestants that the Reformation in England would reveal the full significance of the English nation's singular mission in providential history. Furthermore, by adapting the premises of Protestant apocalyptic interpretation of history, English reformers claimed that pure apostolic Christianity had been transferred intact to England, well before the intrusion of the Church of Rome to that realm during the 7th Century. In a most sophisticated interpretation of English history, they thus implied it was the Church of England which was founded upon apostolic origins and that Rome was the harmful usurper. From this point of view, English history appeared as an endless apocalyptic struggle of the pure English Church and monarchy against Rome's appropriation of regal and ecclesiastical powers.

From the beginning of the English Reformation the search for religious reform "stimulated a patriotic interest in the past, as well as a desire to justify the break with Rome."<sup>49</sup> It then comes as no surprise that from the very outset of the English Reformation "the new learning of humanists was put to the test of political and theological debate". "Increasingly, after the 1530s," when the official break with the Church of Rome took place, "scholars and statesmen turned to history to justify the ways of church and state to Englishmen."<sup>50</sup> Moreover, due to the special conditions of the Reformation in England as a national movement aiming to free both state and church from papal usurpation, ecclesiastical controversies in England "became more consciously historical," as the Protestants "had made purposeful use of history for specific polemical ends."<sup>51</sup> What eventually emerged in Tudor and Stuart England was in general terms the creation of "a unified Protestant literary tradition,"<sup>52</sup> or more particularly a distinct mode of his-

<sup>48</sup> For general studies of Protestant historiography, see A. G. Dickens, *The Reformation in Historical Thought* (Cambridge, Mass., 1985); James, W. Thompson, *History of Historical Writings*, 2 Vols. (New York, 1942); Denys Hay, *Annalists and Historians: Western Historiography from the Eighth to the Eighteenth Centuries* (London, 1977); Harry E. Barnes, *A History of Historical Writings* (New York, 1962); Donald R. Kelley, *Foundations of Modern Historical Scholarship: Language, Law and History in French Renaissance* (New York, 1970).

<sup>49</sup> J. R. Hale, *The Evolution of British Historiography* (London, 1967), p. 11.

<sup>50</sup> F. Smith Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought* (London, 1962), p. 17.

<sup>51</sup> Arthur B. Ferguson, *Clio Unbound: Perceptions of Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England* (Durham, 1979), p. 171.

<sup>52</sup> John F. King, *English Reformation Literature: The Tudor Origins of Protestant Tradition* (Princeton, 1982), p. 407.

torical thought—an English Protestant “apocalyptic tradition”<sup>53</sup>; this was based upon an apocalyptic view of English history which increasingly came to define the Reformation in England in eschatological and apocalyptic terms. English historical apocalyptic tradition exercised enormous influence on the Reformation in England, especially from Queen Elizabeth’s accession to the throne, until and during the Puritan Revolution of the 17th Century. It is within this wider apocalyptic and eschatological ideological context that one should look not only for the source of the essential difference between German and English Protestants regarding the destiny of Israel in the final stage of salvation history, but ultimately for the new and indeed glorious construction in Protestant and Puritan England of the Jews’ image as an important apocalyptic agent.

According to Protestant apocalyptic interpretation of history, knowledge of the historical process in general and of the significance of historical events in particular is essentially based upon an understanding of divine prophetic revelations such as Revelation and the Book of Daniel. These texts contain prophetic revelations and symbolic visions through which God’s providence foretells and directs the course and progress of history within the confines of a theocratic universe, providing the necessary sacred context within which to understand the meaning of time and history. Thus for instance, references to the menace of the Muslim invasion of Europe during the early 16th Century appear in many Protestant apocalyptic writings and the threats of the Turkish Empire “appear in virtually every commentary on the Apocalypse of John” written by English Protestants and Puritans; the armies of the Muslim world in general were identified with Gog and Magog, the mighty giant warriors against whom Christ will make the last battle according to Revelation.<sup>54</sup>

Among these revelations and visions few were as significant as the prophecy concerning the destiny of Israel, for according to the revelatory scheme of salvation history, the conversion of the Jews to Christianity was one of the surest signs for the approaching end of time and history, and yet it was precisely on the meaning of the prophecy regarding the future of Israel within salvation history that German and English Protestants developed contrasting interpretations and each of these groups construed a different eschatology. Luther and his followers believed in an ‘eschatology of judg-

<sup>53</sup> On the development of Protestant apocalyptic tradition in England, see Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645* (Oxford, 1979) and Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation, from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman*, (Oxford, 1978); C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds., *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Ithaca, 1984); Ernest Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England* (Austin, 1953); Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Vision from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto, 1978); Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse of the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge, 1992), *Theocracy in Massachusetts: Reformation and Separation in Early Puritan New England* (New York, 1994), and “Theocracy in Massachusetts: The Puritan Universe of Sacred Imagination,” *Studies in the Literary Imagination*, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (May, 1994), pp. 17–25.

<sup>54</sup> Peter Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel*, p 19.

ment,' based upon belief in the decay and collapse of the world, while Protestants and Puritans in England rather preferred to emphasize a 'theology of resurrection,' a belief in the renewal of the world.

Eschatological expectations and apocalyptic visions concerning the end of time were an essential feature of the Protestant Reformation. As a recent study observes, "Martin Luther would have been disappointed to know that his five-hundredth birthday would be celebrated on earth," because he "believed in the imminence of the end of the world and the Last Judgment."<sup>55</sup> In fact, Lutheranism "was the only major confession of the Reformation era to give a clear, virtually doctrinal sanction to a powerful sense of eschatological expectancy. Neither the other main branches of Protestantism nor the prevailing traditions of Catholic piety were as thoroughly rooted as Lutheranism in a sense of nearing Judgment."<sup>56</sup> Luther "himself was largely responsible for stamping his movement with this apocalyptic character," because for him "Christ stood poised to return, to deliver his own and to deal the final blow to a corrupt world."<sup>57</sup> In effect, Luther's eschatology "was mainly eschatology of judgment" emphasizing "the decay and collapse of the world," while "reformed eschatology was mainly an eschatology of resurrection," emphasizing instead "the renewal of the world," as in English apocalyptic thought.<sup>58</sup> Consequently, within Luther's dreadful eschatological scenario the Papacy was identified with Antichrist, whose appearance upon the stage of history signified the near approach of the end of time; the Turks were Gog and Magog, with whom Christ would fight the last battle upon earth before transforming the world into the Kingdom of God and contemporary Jewry was the remnant of a rejected people continuously suffering under God's wrath.<sup>59</sup> In Luther's eschatology, in the final stage of the drama of redemption the Jews, like other arch-enemies of Christ, were doomed to face God's terrible judgment.

Luther's views regarding the Jews' role in the last stage of salvation history contradict his earlier writings. In 1523 he accused "our fools, the popes, bishops, sophists and monks" for dealing "with the Jews as if they were dogs and not men."<sup>60</sup> He appealed to his fellow Christians, saying "if we wish to help them, we must practise on them not the papal law but rather the Christian law of love and accept them in a friendly fashion, allowing them to work and make a living, so that they gain the reason and opportunity to be with and among us [and] to see and hear our Christian teaching and life."<sup>61</sup> This missionary approach toward the Jews was however re-

<sup>55</sup> Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis*, p. 261.

<sup>56</sup> Barnes, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> Barnes, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> T. F. Torrance, "The Eschatology of the Reformation," *Eschatology, Scottish Journal of Theology*, No. 2 (Edinburgh, 1952), p. 40.

<sup>59</sup> Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles*, p. 16.

<sup>60</sup> Edwards, p. 121.

<sup>61</sup> Edwards, p. 122.

nounced when Luther's hope of converting them to the Protestant faith was disappointed. Later in his life Luther designated the Jews as the enemies of Christ and the Devil's children.<sup>62</sup> He found a proof of this in chapters 13 and 19 of Revelation, which described the destruction of the Beast, a clear promise that all the enemies of Christ would be crushed before the Last Days. Accordingly, in Luther's eschatology of judgment, in the Last Days the Jews, along with Antichrist, Satan and Gog and Magog would suffer God's Divine wrath. In England, on the other hand we saw that the Protestants and later the Puritans rejected Luther's negative views concerning the destiny of Israel, and instead they construed a glorious apocalyptic vision in which the Jews were accorded a marvelous role as important apocalyptic agent in the final stage of salvation history.

The first instance of the incorporation of the Jews within Protestant apocalyptic tradition in England can be found in the writings of the Protestant historiographer John Bale (1495–1563). Forced to leave his native country after the fall of his patron Thomas Cromwell during the reign of Henry VIII, Bale fled to the Continent and in 1540 he settled in Germany. There he took upon himself a mission of such proportion as would transform him into a major protagonist of English Protestant apocalyptic historiography. "I have considered it no less than my bound duty, under pain of damnation, to admonish Christ's flock" in England by exposing the "present revelation of their perils past, and the danger to come by the contempt of the Gospel."<sup>63</sup> The outcome took shape as the *Image of Both Churches* (1541–7), an ecclesiastical history of universal scope yet especially adapted to England. The book was, essentially, a history based upon "the most wonderful heavenly Revelation of Saint John the Evangelist," or the Apocalypse.<sup>64</sup> "So highly necessary, good Christian reader," thus opened Bale's book, "is the knowledge of St. John's Apocalypse or Revelation . . . to him that is a member of Christ's Church"; for this prophecy

containeth the universal troubles, persecutions and crosses, that the church suffered in the primitive spring, what it suffereth now, and what it shall suffer in the latter times by the suble satellites of antichrist, which are the cruel members of Satan.<sup>65</sup>

Having established the intrinsic connection between the prophetic text of the Apocalypse and historical events, or between prophecy and history, Bale then turned to the construction of a universal ecclesiastical history, based upon an apocalyptic mode of historical thought and singularly adapted to the historical context of the Reformation in England. A struggle takes place

<sup>62</sup> Edwards, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> John Bale, *Image of Both Churches* (1550), *Selected Works of John Bale*, ed. H. Christmas (Cambridge, 1849), pp. 254–55.

<sup>64</sup> Bale, pp. 252, 251.

<sup>65</sup> Bale, Bale, p. 253.



in time and history, he said, between the true and the false churches, between Christ and Antichrist. This apocalyptic struggle characterizes the essence of history, which is exclusively associated with the progress of the Church, and England holds a special role in this cosmic struggle. Bale described history as a space of time within which a struggle is waged between two Churches, the one belonging to Christ and the other to Antichrist: the first is "the true Christian church," and the other "the proud church of hypocrites, the rose-coloured whore, the paramour of antichrist, and the sinful synagogue of Satan" or in sum, the Church of Rome.<sup>66</sup> The apocalyptic struggle between the two is inherent in providential history and is played out and resolved within time. It is within the bounds of history, Bale argued, that "the two churches" receive their due fate: "The one turned over into the most fearful and terrible destruction, under the title of the old whorish Babylon, the other obtaining a most glorious raise under the name of the holy new Jerusalem."<sup>67</sup>

In Bale's apocalyptic interpretation the history of England indeed became a mirror of providential history, a nation in which historically two churches fought for predominance. He saw the entire course of English history from the beginning of Roman influence in the 7th Century as a continuous apocalyptic struggle between Christ and Antichrist, or between the pure, apostolic Church of England and the sinful Church of Rome. Bale therefore extended his "daily prayer" that "the most worthy minister of God, King Edward the Sixth" who, after his accession to the throne in 1547, "hath so sore wounded the beast," or the Catholic church in England, would continue to "throw [out] all superstition" in the Church of England, such as "monasteries, priors, convents, and priors' house."<sup>68</sup> He advised King Edward VI to make away with the bishops and "with all that the heavenly Father hath not planted" in terms of religious faith and experience, because he was deeply convinced that the time had come for God's judgment and "now is the axe laid to the root of the tree, to hew down the unfruitful branches, the withered reserved to the unquenchable fire."<sup>69</sup> In this eschatological and apocalyptic scenario, Bale thought that the English Reformation was indeed a pinnacle of English history, intrinsically associated with English nationalism and the turning away from Rome.

Ultimately, Bale saw his time and the Reformation in general as the period of the Sixth Seal of the Apocalypse, or as the sixth and penultimate age in the history of salvation and redemption. "Since Christ's ascension hath the church continued by six other ages . . . comprehended in the six seals, in the latter end of whom we are now."<sup>70</sup> After this would come the time

<sup>66</sup> Bale, p. 251.

<sup>67</sup> Bale, pp. 566-67.

<sup>68</sup> Bale, pp. 640, 485.

<sup>69</sup> Bale, p. 485.

<sup>70</sup> Bale, p. 449.

of the Seventh Seal with Christ's Second Coming and the Millennium. Most important to our discussion, according to Bale's apocalyptic interpretation, during the time of the Sixth Seal "the remnant of the Jews would be gathered together and converted" to the Christian faith, as foretold in Revelation.<sup>71</sup> Only then, proclaiming the time when the whole mystery of salvation history would be unveiled, the Seventh Seal would witness the final overthrow of Antichrist and the binding-up of the Dragon for a thousand years. Consequently, by placing the conversion of the Jews in the time of the Sixth Seal, before Christ's Second Coming and the Millennium, Bale rejected Luther's theology of no hope for the Jewish people and returned to the teaching of St. Paul and St. Augustine concerning the salvation of Israel as a crucial revelatory and redemptive event in the final stage of providential history.

It was left to Bale's young friend and fellow Marian exile, John Foxe, to articulate the Reformation in England as a national reformation. In his writings, most notably in *Acts and Monuments*, 1563, Foxe, the famous martyrologist, made explicit what Bale merely implied: he took "the grand [apocalyptic] scheme evolved by John Bale and developed it into a fully articulated church history."<sup>72</sup> With his great competence as historian and martyrologist, "John Foxe towers above all the Englishmen who contributed to shaping English history into Protestant mold" and he "significantly helped to create a national faith that was shared by the English reformers at large."<sup>73</sup> Furthermore, in the marvelous apocalyptic scenario depicted in *Acts and Monuments*, England played a singular part—as God's chosen and elect nation—almost to the point where English history and the entire sacred history of the Christian Church became inseparable. Given the prominent role Foxe assigned to his country in the drama of salvation and redemption, it is not surprising that his book became "almost the Bible of Protestant England and was ordered by Convocation to be placed in churches where everyone might have access to it."<sup>74</sup>

The prophetic and apocalyptic view of history animates Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, commonly called *The Book of Martyrs*. William Haller has summed up the simplicity of the assumptions which made the martyrologist's work so particularly appealing to Englishmen of his time: "All history, according to Foxe's *Acts and Monuments*, centered in the age-long struggle of Christ and Antichrist; and England, the elect champion of the true faith, was his chosen enemy, especially called by God to be the agent of his predestined overthrow."<sup>75</sup> Indeed, the entire thrust of *Acts and Monuments* was to demonstrate to English readers that theirs was a chosen nation which had received

<sup>71</sup> Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, p. 43.

<sup>72</sup> F. J. Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, p. 194.

<sup>73</sup> V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley, 1973), pp. 40, 38.

<sup>74</sup> James T. Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, I, p. 615.

<sup>75</sup> William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955), p. 191.

the pure Christian faith during the time of the apostles, had struggled increasingly against Rome and the papacy to preserve it undefiled and finally, with John Wycliffe during the 14th Century, had initiated the Protestant Reformation. According to Foxe the climax of England's unique role in sacred, providential history was reached with the accession to the throne of Elizabeth in 1558 and the consequent triumph of Protestantism through the English Reformation. England, wrote Foxe, should "render most ample thanksgiving to the mercifulness of God, who hath granted, conserved and advanced, the seat-regal of this realm, so good, godly and virtuous a queene."<sup>76</sup>

Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* reflects the supreme achievement of Protestant historiography, the shaping of English history to its own ends and the creation of a new historical consciousness among Englishmen. He succeeded in imparting to Englishmen a unique national ecclesiastical history, a Protestant view of English history centered exclusively on the Church of England, from its early apostolic origins until the time of Elizabeth. In "this account of Church history," wrote William Haller, Foxe showed that a "long succession of the native rulers down to Elizabeth" owed "their authority directly to Divine appointment" and "made plain by all signs to be found in Scripture and history the will of God was about to be fulfilled in England by a prince perfect in her obedience to her vocation, ruling a people perfect in their obedience to her authority."<sup>77</sup> The enormous popularity of *Acts and Monuments* merely underscored the book's great influence in creating a new historical consciousness in England during the second half of the 16th and the first half of the 17th Century, concerning the special place within the confines of salvation history to which God's providence had appointed the Church of England and hence England. Nowhere was English history more successfully described in terms of Protestant history, nor was the course of England through time more deftly delineated in terms of the history of the Church of England. Just as the history of the English Church had been placed within the apocalyptic dimension of time, so the entire course of English history was now imbued with apocalyptic, eschatological significance. Protestantism and English patriotism had now become inextricably joined, with the role of England as God's elect nation in sacred history based upon the independence of both the church and the crown.

In Foxe's articulation of his glorious apocalyptic vision for England he did not suggest any particular role for the Jews in sacred history and this in clear contrast to other apocalyptic writers in Protestant and Puritan England. Foxe evidently was not attracted by Jewish history and the only reference to

<sup>76</sup> John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, eds. G. Townsend and G. R. Cattle, 8 Vols. (London, 1837-41), VIII, p. 601, I, p. 94.

<sup>77</sup> William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963), pp. 224-25; and "John Foxe and the Puritan Revolution," in Richard F. Jones (ed.), *The Seventeenth Century* (Stanford, 1951), pp. 209-24.

the Jews in his work was the repetition of the story of young Christian boys crucified by certain English Jews on Good Friday.<sup>78</sup> He contended that the Seven Trumpets and the Seven Vials of Revelation signified God's judgment on the enemies of the Church; thus, because the first persecutors of the early Church were the Jews, he argued that the First Trumpet of the Apocalypse contained God's judgment against them,<sup>79</sup> and that divine vengeance is seen "in the universal dispersal of the seed of the Jewish people under Nero and Vespasian, after the crucifixion of the Lord and the martyrdom of the apostles."<sup>80</sup> This terrible fate came upon Israel because "the Jewes" did not recognize "God's Church, but did persecute it, till at length all their whole nation was destroyed."<sup>81</sup> Foxe therefore had no doubt that "Saracens, Jews and Infidels are excluded out of the bound of the Church."<sup>82</sup> This position is indeed a clear reminder of Luther's eschatology of judgment, though Foxe argued that God's wrath against Israel had already been exercised in the past. It is true that on other occasions, such as in a sermon at the baptism of a converted Jew during the 1570s, Foxe advocated conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith, "so that at the length, all nations, as well as Jews and Gentiles, [would be] embracing the faith and sacraments of Christ Jesus."<sup>83</sup>

Reconstruction of the Jews as an important apocalyptic agent in English apocalyptic thought may be seen further in the *Geneva Bible* of 1560, another major and influential work of Protestant historiography written in exile during the reign of Queen Mary. The product of zealous Protestant exiles who had taken refuge in Geneva in 1554 during the Marian persecution, the Geneva Bible marked the culmination of efforts by English Protestant scholars to provide a new translation of the Bible that was compatible with the new trends in Protestant biblical scholarship, as well as with the development of Protestant historiography on the Continent. The Geneva Bible gained enormous popularity in England; it was the most-read Bible in private use and no less than 120 editions appeared between 1560 and the publication of King James' Authorized Version of 1611. By the outbreak of the Civil War this number had reached nearly two hundred.<sup>84</sup> The great popularity of this Bible owed much to the utmost historization of sacred, prophetic revelations. For example, in contrast to Luther's eschatology of judg-

<sup>78</sup> Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, p. 94.

<sup>79</sup> Firth, p. 94.

<sup>80</sup> Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church*, p. 97.

<sup>81</sup> Olsen, p. 104.

<sup>82</sup> Olsen, p. 111.

<sup>83</sup> Olsen, p. 117.

<sup>84</sup> Olsen, p. 117.

<sup>84</sup> *The Geneva Bible, A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison, 1969); John Eadie, *The English Bible* (London, 1876), pp. 51–52; S. L. Greenslade, "English Versions of the Bible, 1525–1611," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present* (Cambridge, 1963; reprinted 1978), p. 159.

ment, the Geneva Bible plainly declared that the prophecy about the "new heaven, & new earth" signified that "all things shalbe renewed and restord into most excellent and perfect estate, and therefore the day of resurrection is called, The Day of Restauration of all things."<sup>85</sup> In contrast to Luther and Calvin, who interpreted the word 'Israel' in Romans 11:25ff. as referring allegorically to the Church of the Jews, the translators of the Geneva Bible understood it literally as the actual 'Jews.' According to the "Notes" in the Geneva Bible the word 'Israel' thus meant "the nation of the Jews," and the passage in Romans 11 literally meant the future conversion of the Jewish nation to the Christian faith.<sup>86</sup> This view was clearly expressed in the writings of such eminent Englishmen as the 'Talmudique' Hugh Broughton, the Puritan preacher William Perkins, the Elizabethan discoverer and statesman Sir Walter Raleigh and the apocalyptic writer Thomas Brightman.

The accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne in 1558 signified the final triumph of the Protestant religion in England. Consequently, during the second half of the 16th Century interest in understanding prophecies and their historical interpretation reached its zenith, accounting for the upsurge of eschatological and apocalyptic visions and the creation of a marvelous universe of sacred imagination during the English Renaissance; this may be seen for example in Keith Thomas' important study *Religion and the Decline of Magic*.<sup>87</sup> Especially the years preceding 1588, when the Spanish Armada attempted the invasion of England, were the subject of many prophecies. Many of these came not only from scriptural passages such as Revelation or the Book of Daniel, but also from the wealth of popular prophetic writings such as the prophecies of Merlin, of Mother Shifton or of Nostradamus.<sup>88</sup> In this context the rise of Hebrew studies in England was of great significance, hastening the positive incorporation of the Jews as an important apocalyptic agent in English apocalyptic tradition—in clear contrast to Protestant Germany.

In 1549 Cambridge University appointed the German Paul Fagius to the chair of Hebrew. By 1600 a small nucleus of recognized and able Hebraists had been established in England, of whom for example, King James made use in the translation of the Old Testament for the Authorized Version of 1611. These scholars made the rich tradition of Jewish apocalyptic and prophetic writing available for English intellectuals. Through their work the deep interest in the Old Testament provided an essential background for understanding the New Testament, and scholars were now able to follow Jewish exegesis and acquire a knowledge of Old Testament prophecies.<sup>89</sup> In sum, the growth of Hebrew studies in England facilitated the trend of con-

<sup>85</sup> *The Geneva Bible*, "Marginal Notes" to Revelation 21:1.

<sup>86</sup> Peter Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel*, p. 24.

<sup>87</sup> Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), especially Ch. IV, "Providence," pp. 78–112 and Ch. XIII, "Ancient Prophecies," pp. 389–434.

<sup>88</sup> Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 150.

<sup>89</sup> Firth, pp. 153–158.

vergence between Jewish and Christian apocalyptic tradition, as may be seen in the thinking of Hugh Broughton.

Broughton was among the few Englishmen of his time who had actually met and conversed with Jews, and this perhaps induced him to accord them a more positive and important role in his apocalyptic interpretation. Among the many continental scholars entertained by Archbishop Thomas Cranmer during the reign of Edward VI (1547–1553) was the Hebraist Antoine Chevallier; he fled to the continent on the accession to the throne in 1553 of the Catholic Queen Mary and became professor of Hebrew in Strasbourg. During Elizabeth's reign he returned to England and in 1569 he became a lecturer at Cambridge. Among his students there was Hugh Broughton, who later went on a visit to Germany, where he fiercely attacked popery. During his stay in Germany and in his many disputes with Jews, Broughton encountered the rich tradition of Jewish apocalyptic thought, especially the Book of Daniel. Later, while living in Basle and very often identifying himself as a "Talmudique," Broughton sought to further the conversion of the Jews. In 1610 he published his commentary on the Apocalypse, in which he highly praised the Talmud and Moses Maimonides. In his efforts to bring about the conversion of the Jews, he tried to translate the Revelation into Hebrew and convince the Turkey Company of English merchants to take upon itself to preach the text of the Apocalypse in Hebrew and convert the Jews of Constantinople. Broughton's interest in the Apocalypse sprang from his recognition of the similarities between Jewish and Christian apocalyptic writings. Thus, in contrast to the prevailing Christian view which used the Book of Daniel mainly to support interpretation of Revelation, Broughton's main purpose was to prove the Apocalypse was in fact a Gentile version of Daniel, or that the Revelation of St. John was an exposition of Daniel: "So *John* expoundeth *Daniel*, into Salvation of all Jews of grace."<sup>90</sup>

Thomas Brightman was one of the leading figures in the development of English apocalyptic tradition and his writing greatly influenced the attitudes of Englishmen toward the Jews. Brightman radically transformed the role of the Jews into that of a crucial positive apocalyptic agent in providential history and, due to his most prominent place within English apocalyptic tradition, his views concerning the destiny of Israel influenced generations of English Protestants and Puritans. Because of the revolutionary solution he offered in terms of the relationship between prophecy and history, Brightman occupied a singular place in English apocalyptic tradition, especially in view of his deep-seated conviction that the millennium was at hand in his own time and that it was therefore the duty of God's saints to come

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<sup>90</sup> Firth, pp. 159–161; Ball, *A Great Expectation*, pp. 76, 161; Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel*, p. 24.

to the aid of Christ in transforming the world into the Kingdom of God. For, as Brightman declared, "now is the time begun when Christ shall reign in all the earth, having all his enemies round subdued unto him and broken in peeces."<sup>91</sup> It is therefore not surprising that during the first half of the 17th Century, and especially during the Puritan Revolution, Brightman's apocalyptic interpretation of history was the most famous among Puritans, undoubtedly because it aroused a sense of imminent fulfillment of sacred prophetic revelations within time and history.

According to Brightman's apocalyptic interpretation, the sacred visions of the Apocalypse applied not only to the past history of the Christian Church but also to its future. He therefore argued that the pouring out of the first four Vials of the Apocalypse had already occurred in time and the last three would take place in the near future: the Fifth Vial which prophesied the destruction of the Beast, or the Church of Rome and the Papacy, and the Seventh in which the final battle of Armageddon between Christ and Satan would be fought. Most important, like John Bale before him he believed the Sixth Vial concerned the conversion of the Jews. Indeed, references to the re-calling of the Jews had appeared in earlier Protestant writings, but they were not applied to actual people. To Brightman however, conversion of the Jews referred to actual Jews; it occupied a concrete historical time and space and it signified a crucial stage in the progress of salvation history. So, according to his apocalyptic scheme of history, the conversion of the Jews followed the defeat of Antichrist, rather than preceding it, as claimed by Catholic apocalyptic writers like Francis Ribera and Robert Ballarmina. It is in this context that Brightman for the first time meant the actual Jews: "at the calling of the Jewes," he proclaimed, Antichrist or the Church of Rome shall be "utterly destroyed." Thus, "the Jewes shall be called straight after Rome is destroyed."<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the conversion of the Jews signified that the millennium was at hand: "We must also wait for some time longer before our brethren of the Jewes be converted to the faith. But after they shall have come in . . . Christ shall have reigned for some ages most gloriously upon earth."<sup>93</sup>

In English apocalyptic tradition before Brightman the vision of the Seven Vials or judgments was regarded as complementary to that of the Voice of the Seven Trumpets; each of which in turn announced the course and progress of salvation history, reaching its culmination with the voice of the Seventh Trumpet that proclaims the final transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God. Brightman however offered a radical interpretation

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Brightman, *Apocalypsis Apocalypsteos, or a Revelation of the Revelation* (Leyden, 1616), pp. 491, 502.

<sup>92</sup> Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 170-72; Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, pp. 46-55 and "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition," *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World*, pp. 31-44.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel*, p. 30.

of the Vials, arguing that this vision was consecutive to the Trumpets—that is, the time of the Vials started from the year 1558 with Elizabeth's accession to the throne—which, according to Brightman signified the sound of the Seventh Trumpet: "*Christ sent our most gracious Elizabeth to be Queene at the first blast of the Seauent Trumpet in the yeare 1558.*"<sup>94</sup> This apocalyptic view is significant ultimately in regarding events following Elizabeth's accession as a sure sign of the redemptive process of salvation history—or the realization of the Vials. According to this approach, beginning in 1560 four Vials or judgements had already been made. The Fifth Vial was related to the destruction of Rome which was to occur in 1650 and it would be followed by the Sixth Vial which concerned the impending conversion of the Jews. Thus, by correlating events described in Revelation with concrete historical time, Brightman envisaged the Kingdom of God within the framework of history; in consequence he believed the literal conversion of the Jews would follow rather than precede the defeat of Antichrist. With the millennium occurring within time and history, and with actual conversion of the Jews as one part of the providential course of the history of salvation and redemption, it follows within the same apocalyptic scheme that the Jews' conversion would occur literally at a point of time within history.<sup>95</sup>

The reason for this providential order of events arose not only from Revelation but also from the Book of Daniel. Like Broughton before him, Brightman incorporated Jewish prophetic writing into his apocalyptic scheme of salvation history, but in order to do so he had to show the prophecies of Daniel applied not only to past times or the period before the birth of Christ, as Broughton had thought, but they referred to the entire history of the Jews in past, present and future times. Thus, unlike Broughton who described the Apocalypse as a Gentile version of Daniel, Brightman viewed Daniel as a Jewish version of the Apocalypse, containing the entire history of the Jews until Christ's Second Coming. Since according to the logic of the Apocalypse, the Kingdom of Christ on earth must be established after the final defeat of Antichrist, it inevitably follows that the calling of the Jews and their conversion to the Christian faith must also follow the destruction of Antichrist.<sup>96</sup> Thus, as a consequence of making an actualization of the Jews' image and placing the Jewish nation within the boundaries of salvation history, Brightman accorded the Jews a glorious role as an actual historical redemptive agent in history.

This was indeed a moment of tremendous importance for recreating a positive Jewish image in English apocalyptic thought. Brightman's revolutionary apocalyptic interpretation, which *immersed* the millennium into time and history and made this sacred glorious vision a feasible and concrete

<sup>94</sup> Brightman, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, pp. 488, 490–91.

<sup>95</sup> Zakai, "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition," pp. 42–43.

<sup>96</sup> Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 172–73.



historical event, subsequently led to a radical rehabilitation of the Jews as having an actual historical role to play in salvation history. For the first time in English apocalyptic tradition real Jews had been given an important function by a major apocalyptic writer, who made a precise correlation in the revelatory progress of sacred history between their actual conversion to Christianity and concrete historical time. In English apocalyptic thought, the literal conversion of the Jews now appeared to be a feasible and indeed essential stage in the course of history. The Jewish people were therefore no longer an abstract and mysterious symbol but a real historical agent, capable of unveiling the final moment of salvation history. This revolutionary interpretation of apocalyptic history should be seen in the general context of Protestant eschatological thought. Thus for example the *Helvetic Confession* of 1566, an important Confession of Faith compiled by the forces of the Reformation in Europe, explicitly condemned millennial expectations and eschatological visions such as "Jewish dreams that there will be a golden age on earth before the Day of Judgement, and the pious having subdued all their godless enemies will possess all the kingdoms of the earth."<sup>97</sup> Brightman, who indeed strongly believed in a future Golden Millennial Age, not only transformed the course of the apocalyptic tradition in England concerning the realization of millennial expectations, but also the destiny of Israel—from that of a sinful nation awaiting God's terrible wrath to a singular apocalyptic agent in the unfolding drama of human salvation and redemption.

The ultimate achievement of apocalyptic tradition was undoubtedly the creation of a deep-seated conviction in 17th Century England that sacred prophetic revelations constituted the very heart and core of history. Under the powerful influence of apocalyptic tradition in England, "the millennium was now seen almost exclusively as a literal {historical} period of time, the chief characteristics of which were the binding of Satan and the reign of the church."<sup>98</sup> History was therefore placed within the sacred dimension of prophetic time, and sacred prophetic revelations within that of historical time. And since historical events were being interpreted as the realization of prophetic revelation while divine prophecy was seen as the sole source for explaining the progress of history, prophecy became history and history prophecy. The outcome of this process was nothing less than the sacralization of historical time, or the creation of sacred time—the view that history not only revealed but also fulfilled the realization of divine prophecies. Imbued with sacred meaning, history now constituted the medium by which divine prophetic revelations were to reach their last and final realization. In 1617 Richard Bernard, a famous Puritan divine, thus summed up the revolutionary character of the apocalyptic tradition in England:

<sup>97</sup> Firth, p. 175.

<sup>98</sup> Ball, *A Great Expectation*, p. 161.

The matter of this prophecies [the Apocalypse] is historical, as it cometh to be fulfilled. It is therefore not spiritual or allegorical, but an historical sense, which in this booke we must attend unto.<sup>99</sup>

For Joseph Mede, one of the leading figures in English apocalyptic tradition, divine prophecies should be explained historically:

For the true account therefore of *Times* in Scripture wee must have recourse to that *Sacred Kalender* and *Great Almanack of Prophecie* . . .<sup>100</sup>

The mystery of sacred, providential history can be explained only through divine prophecy which is “a Prophetical-Chronology of Times” from the beginning of time and history until the very end, or until “all the *kingdomes* of this world should become the *Kingdomes of our Lord and his Christ*.”<sup>101</sup> However, if prophecy gives meaning and significance to time, it is history which reveals the mystery of sacred prophecies. Thus, according to Stephen Marshall’s triumphant sermon before the Long Parliament in 1643, “time (one of the best interpreters of Prophecies) hath produced the *events* answering the types [or prophecy] so full and clear, that we have the whole Army of Protestant Interpreters agreeing in the general scope and meaning of it.”<sup>102</sup> This overt confidence regarding the course and progress of salvation history evidently led Puritans to the optimistic conviction that theirs was the epoch in which prophetic revelations would soon be realized. For example, writing in 1648 in New England, Thomas Hooker argued:

For these are the times drawing on, wherein Prophecies are to attain their performance: and it is received rule and I suppose most sane, when Prophecies are fulfilled they are best interpreted, the accomplishment of them is the best commentary.<sup>103</sup>

No wonder, then, that some could argue, as did the Puritan William Hicks in 1659, that “the Revelation is no longer a mystery, but a Book of History of memorable Acts and passage.”<sup>104</sup>

By the first half of the 17th Century, apocalyptic interpretation of history had gained almost universal acceptance in England. Jewish prophetic

<sup>99</sup> Richard Bernard, *A Key to the Knowledge for the Opening of the Secret Mysteries of St. John Myrricall Revelation* (1617), p. 123.

<sup>100</sup> Joseph Mede, *The Apostasy of the Latter Times* (1641), *The Works of . . . Joseph Mede*, ed. J. Worthington, 2 Vols. (1664), II, p. 807.

<sup>101</sup> Mede, p. 807.

<sup>102</sup> Stephen Marshall, *The Song of Moses the Servant of God, and the Song of the Lambe* (1643), p. 1.

<sup>103</sup> Thomas Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline* (1648), preface.

<sup>104</sup> William Hicks, *The Revelation Revealed: Being a Practical Exposition on the Revelation of St. John* (1659), preface.

writings such as the Book of Daniel and the Prophecy of Elias had been incorporated within this apocalyptic interpretation. A new spirit of millenarianism was introduced in the land and with it, inevitably, new visions concerning the Jews' role in sacred history. The image of the Jews had now become inseparable and inextricable from eschatological visions pertaining to the fall of Antichrist and the millennium. For example, John Henry Alsted in *The Beloved City, or the Saints Reign on Earth a Thousand Years*, 1627, spoke about the "millenarianism of Daniel and John," and his computation that the beginning of the millennium would be in 1694 was based on both the numbers in Daniel and on the Seals, Trumpets and Vials of Revelation.<sup>105</sup> The conversion of the Jews would accordingly take place during the millennium, after the fall of Antichrist: "Therefore if the Jews should but see the wonderfull overthrow of *Antichrist*, without doubt it would afford them a great occasion of their Conversion. Upon this ground, the overthrow of Antichrist shall immediately go before, not the *last judgment*, but the *happinesse of the Church* which shall happen in this life."<sup>106</sup>

These views were not mere abstract ideas, but lent themselves to action. Sir Henry Finch, a lawyer and Member of Parliament, in his book *The Worlds Great Restaurations, or The Calling of the Jews*, 1621, promised his Jewish readers that it was indeed God's ultimate intended purpose "to bring thee home againe, & to marry thee to himselfe by faith euermore . . . To be the joy of the earth, the most noble Church that euer eye did see."<sup>107</sup> Believing in the imminent literal conversion and restoration of the Jewish people, Finch was among the first to advocate the restoration of the Jews to Palestine. Joseph Mede, who was one of John Milton's Cambridge tutors, thought like Finch that conversion of the Jews would take place before Christ's Second Coming. In his *Calvis Apocahypse*, 1627, he argued that the Sixth Vial, which signified the expected conversion of the Jews, would be followed by the Seventh and last Vial, symbolizing Christ's Second Coming and the beginning of the Millennium.<sup>108</sup> Like Broughton and Brightman, Mede expected "a parallel development of the Jewish Church and the Christian, which with the conversion of the Jews would unite them in New Jerusalem."<sup>109</sup>

For many years Englishmen were conditioned by Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic writers to look for the imminent fulfillment of sacred prophetic revelations, most notably among them the conversion of the Jews as a sure sign of Christ's Second Coming and his millennial role with his saints upon earth. Belief in the sure and close fulfillment of eschatological and apocalyptic visions was never more evident than during the Puritan Revolution of 1640–1660. In this period of great millennial expectations, interest in

<sup>105</sup> Firth, *The Apocahptic Tradition*, p. 211.

<sup>106</sup> Firth, pp. 211–12.

<sup>107</sup> Ball, *A Great Expectation*, p. 146.

<sup>108</sup> Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdom of God*, p. 40.

<sup>109</sup> Firth, *The Apocahptic Tradition*, p. 225.

the destiny of Israel reached its highest point in England. Christopher Hill, the prominent historian of Puritanism, has noted that "many of the sects with Fifth Monarchist tendency interested themselves greatly in things Jewish."<sup>110</sup> Yet, as modern studies show, this belief in the Jewish role was not limited to enthusiastic radical groups. There was wide interest in the destiny of Israel as can be clearly seen in the debates on the readmission of the Jews to England during the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell in the 1650s.<sup>111</sup> In the late 1640's, with the triumph of Parliament over the royalists, a movement closely associated with eschatological and millennial expectations began to work for the readmission of the Jews into England. Among its members were such prominent Puritans as Cromwell, Hugh Peters, John Dury, Edward Nicolas, John Sadler and Henry Jessey. These people not only believed the Jews to be worthy of toleration but they were deeply convinced that Christ's Second Coming would follow only after the conversion of the Jews.

The climax of apocalyptic visions and eschatological expectations concerning the destiny of the Jews during the Puritan Revolution received great encouragement during the 1650's from the wave of Jewish Messianic expectations. Many theologians in England found evidence in Menasseh Ben Israel's *The Hope of Israel*, 1650, of the growing and deep-seated belief that the coming of the Messiah was imminent and at hand: "Wee cannot exactly shew the time of our redemption," wrote Ben Israel, "yet we judge it to be very neer," or "about the end of this age."<sup>112</sup> The second edition of the book appeared a year later, bound with Moses Wall's *Consideration Upon the Point of the Conversion of the Jews*, 1651, in which Wall said that "the age in which we live, hath been eyed by many Generation past, for the time wherein the Iewes shall be received to mercy," because many Jewish "writers and also Christian Authors have pitched upon it."<sup>113</sup> The acceptance of the Christian Gospel of salvation by the Jews was considered an indispensable prelude to Christ's Second Coming. Thus, Christopher Love in 1653 looked for an "eminent and general conversion" of the Jews, adding that this event would be a sure sign that the time of Christ's return "was not far off."<sup>114</sup> And the *Savoy Declaration of Faith and Order* of 1658, composed by the congregationalist churches at their Savoy Conference, announced that: "according to" God's "promise we expect that in the latter days Antichrist being destroyed, [and] the Jews called . . ."<sup>115</sup>

The discussions in the Whitehall Conference of late 1655 concerning the Jews' readmission to England should be seen within this universe of sacred

<sup>110</sup> Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (New York, 1964), p. 141.

<sup>111</sup> Ball, *A Great Expectation*, p. 147.

<sup>112</sup> Ball, p. 147.

<sup>113</sup> Ball, p. 148.

<sup>114</sup> Ball, p. 107.

<sup>115</sup> Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium, and the Future of Israel*, p. 37.

eschatological and apocalyptic imaginings. As David Katz's important study shows, this conference was only a phase in the long debate between 1649 and 1655 on the Jews in England. Although Cromwell wanted this meeting to finally "conclude the issue," as the result of strong opposition among its members, the Whitehall Conference failed "to come to any definite conclusion about the readmission of the Jews." But in spite of this failure, an "open Anglo-Jewish community" was settled in England in the wake of these debates in 1656, and by Cromwell's death in 1659, "the Jews were firmly established in England." With the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660, "Jews were granted a formal statement of toleration" in 1664. Thus, as Katz concludes, "although the Jews in England would not become fully emancipated until the middle of the 19th Century, their residence rested on a secure foundation with the admission of the Whitehall Conference that 'there is no Law that forbids the Jews' return into *England*'."<sup>16</sup>

Almost a hundred years after the the triumph of Protestantism in England in 1558, the Jews were once again allowed to enter and live in the country. This event of great historical proportion may ultimately be seen in the context of the formation of a unique, coherent and well-defined apocalyptic tradition in Protestant and Puritan England, which slowly and steadily transformed the image of the Jews from that of a sinful nation, the devil's children, Christ's dreadful enemies and the target of God's terrible Divine judgment, and instead accorded Israel a glorious role in the final stage of salvation history. This essential transformation from the "theology of judgment" concerning the destiny of the Jews into a 'theology of hope and renewal' for Israel is indeed one of the most characteristic features of the apocalyptic tradition in England. Thus, in contrast to the construction of the Jews' image in Protestant Germany and in many literary works during the English Renaissance as an 'agent of evil,' in English apocalyptic tradition the Jews became a glorious revelatory redemptive agent in the final stage of salvation history. Analysis of Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic philosophy of salvation history is therefore necessary in order to understand the ideological context which led to the shaping of a sacred apocalyptic role for the Jews in England and their eventual return to that country. Radically different apocalyptic imaginative reconstructions of the Jews' image within the Protestant eschatology and apocalypse in Germany and England, therefore, led to radically differing views concerning the future of Israel in sacred, providential history. To English Protestants and Puritans the destiny of Israel meant renewed efforts towards the conversion of the Jews, which ultimately led them to see the Jew as a human being capable of understanding and experiencing the mystery of Christian salvation and redemption.

<sup>16</sup> David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England*, pp. 228, 235, 238, 242-43.

The great transformation in England regarding the Jews can be seen in Milton's *Paradise Regained*, 1671, where he refers thus to Israel's conversion and restoration:

Yet he at length, time to himself best known  
Remembering Abraham, by some wondrous call  
May bring them back repentant and sincere,  
And at their passing cleave the Assyrian flood,  
While to their native land with joy they haste,  
As the Red Sea and Jordan once he cleft  
When to the Promised Land their fathers pass'd  
To his due time and providence I leave them.

(Book III, 433-440)

Milton indeed left it solely and exclusively to God's Divine providence to decide when the realization of prophetic revelations concerning the Jews would take place within time and history. But as the development of English apocalyptic thought concerning the Jews reveals, the readmission of the Jews to England was ultimately based upon unique apocalyptic modes of conviction and persuasion which in turn led to new modes of action and conduct.