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MENASSEH BEN ISRAEL  
AND HIS WORLD

EDITED BY

YOSEF KAPLAN, HENRY MÉCHOULAN  
AND RICHARD H. POPKIN



E.J. BRILL

ed as the Scottish-generated British order inspired the world with knowledge and righteousness. In such a world the Jews would prove crucially important, for they promised to play a unique role – not only in the triumph of truth and justice – but in what it meant to be a Briton and a Scot. With the exception of Patrick Forbes who was in part concerned to excise the narrowly English character from Brightman's vision (and who ran into difficulties with his London publisher as a result), Scottish writers confronted the same problem as did Hector Boece a century earlier, the problem of developing a vocabulary for articulating Scottish experience and Scottish value. Scotsmen might join with Welsh and Rutherford and see their country raised from the "dunghill", and made "the Lordes delite . . . and married to Him", or "made the spectacle of his mercy unto all the nations and above all others", and thereby minimize the significance of the Scottish past to the Scottish future<sup>59</sup>. After all, who were the Jews before Abraham? Alternatively, with Maxwell and Alexander, they might emphasize Scottish history and genealogy and find within it their realm's prophetic destiny. But whether past-affirming or past-denying, whether revolutionary or traditionalist, Scottish self-understanding in the seventeenth century largely turned on apocalyptic expectations, at the heart of whose fulfillment stood the Jews. In more than one sense, the extreme covenanting perspective can verge on the implication that to become a Scot one had first to become a Jew. But from almost all perspectives, Scotsmen looked to the Jews to assure their culture's vitality and agency.

<sup>59</sup> *E.g.*, Welsh, *op. cit.*, sig. B6v, C1v. Reinforcing the implications of geography were etymologies derived from the Greek *σκοτος*, understood as meaning obscure, desolate, dark. In a single Mosaic moment of apocalyptic significance, all of that had changed, and in fact Scottish poverty could actually accentuate the status and implications of the Covenant. By 1606 Scots defended their church by claiming that it "makes Scotland, called otherwise but darknesse, the honorablest natioun under heaven" (David Calderwood, *History of the Kirk of Scotland*, ed. by Thomas Thomason, Wodrow Society [Edinburgh, 1842-1849], VI, p. 538; cf. pp. 528, 530. Also note William Camden, *Britannia*, trans. by Philemon Holland [London, 1610], p. 119). But Rutherford characteristically said it best: "The Lord hath changed the name of Scotland; they call us now no more 'Foresaken' nor 'Desolate', but our land is called 'Hephzibah' and 'Beulah', for the Lord delighteth in us, and this land is married to Himself" (*Letters*, p. 459).

## THOMAS BRIGHTMAN AND ENGLISH APOCALYPTIC TRADITION

AVIHU ZAKAI

In English apocalyptic tradition of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Thomas Brightman held a unique and important place. His exegesis of the Book of Revelation had a tremendous influence on the course of the Puritan movement in England before and during the Puritan Revolution, and the revolutionary solution he offered in terms of the relation between prophecy and history singularly inspired radical Puritans in England as well as in New England to attempt to realize in time and actions their millennial expectations and eschatological visions. Brightman's interpretation of Revelation in fact constituted a unique philosophy of history which supplied the Puritans with coherent perceptions concerning both the meaning of their time in providential history and the crucial role of the saints in the time of the millennium at hand. His essential assumption that through time and history the Kingdom of God would rise on earth, and that this world and not the next was the true field on which the whole mystery of the providential drama of all times would be revealed, created a new sense of religious and political obligations among the Puritans regarding their own decisive role in the cosmic battle between Christ and Antichrist. Brightman succeeded in replacing St. Augustine's dualistic view of the world by finding a point in time and history when the heavenly city and the earthly city would coalesce, or when the visible and invisible church would unite, and thus he immersed the millennium in time and history. Ultimately, Brightman's work raised a new historical consciousness in England in the first half of the seventeenth century. It aroused a sense of the imminent fulfillment of the prophecies of Revelation within time and history, a deep-seated conviction within the individual that his time was the time of the millennium at hand, and, consequently, a belief that it was the duty of the saints to engage themselves in aiding Christ to transform the world into the Kingdom of God<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In the following discussion of the Book of Revelation, I owe much to William Lamont's important study, *Godly Rule, Politics and Religion, 1603-1660* (London, 1969), which shows how essential Revelation was to the Puritan movement in England in the early seven-

The apocalyptic tradition in historiography is as old as the history of biblical text. Its essence is the interest in the relation between prophecy and history, or the relationship between sacred history and secular, profane history, and its aim is to reveal that the full meaning and validity of the latter derive solely from the providential pattern of the former. The goal of this tradition, therefore, is to liberate sacred history from the secular dimension of time – a liberation which occurs upon the fulfillment of prophecy. Among apocalyptic writings, the place of the Book of Revelation, or the Revelation of St. John the Divine, which is the last book of the New Testament and the only one which is an Apocalypse, is dominant and crucial. For with its prophecies and visions, this book unveiled the course of sacred history as a hidden history unfolding its pattern in world events and directed toward time and history to come, toward the future of the Christian faith, the destiny of the Church, Christ's Second Coming, the Millennium and the End of the World. It is important to note that the Book of Revelation is not a history of past events; it is, rather, prophetic history, envisioning the future. Contrary to other books of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation does not deal with the "golden age" of Christianity in the past, of those events surrounding the first coming of Christ, but with the "golden age" of Christianity to come, with the second coming of Christ and his reign on earth alongside his saints. In this scheme, the history of the church is liberated from the secular dimension of time, or profane history, wherein the church suffers in a world denying God as its creator and is projected into the sacred dimension of time, into that time when God or his Son makes the profane world holy again. The singularity of the Book of Revelation, therefore, rests in the fact that it directs attention away from the Christian drama of the past toward the Christian drama of the future. In the process, past history *per se* is de-emphasized, taking on significance only insofar as it relates to the unfolding drama of the future<sup>2</sup>.

Centuries of European history have been influenced by the Book of Revelation, for the meaningful solution it offers to the paradox of God's people being persecuted in God's world. In effect, in Revelation, St. John circumvents the entire problem posed by present persecutions: their meaning, obscure at the moment, will be made clear by events to come.

teenth century, and to the excellent study of J.G.A. Pocock, "Time, History and Eschatology in the Thought of Thomas Hobbes", in his *Politics, Language and Time* (New York, 1973). See also Pocock's essay "Modes of Action and Their Pasts in Tudor and Stuart England", in *National Consciousness, History and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Orest Ranum (Baltimore, 1975).

<sup>2</sup> On the issue of prophecy and history, see Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1969).

History has meaning, but that meaning will be determined by the future, not by the events of the present. And so, John concludes, far from constituting evidence of a grand paradox, the persecution and suffering of this world are part of God's plan yet unknown to man. Herein lies the profound impact of the Book of Revelation upon European history, for it directed believers to view their present experience in the light of Christ's second coming, the millennium, and the triumph of the Church – and hence in the context of providential history soon to be realized. Thus, for example, in his book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Norman Cohn vividly traces the "millennarianism that flourished amongst the rootless poor of western Europe between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries", and the persistent belief in those centuries that "beyond the extermination of all evils lay the Millennium"<sup>3</sup>. For each age, then, the prophecies and visions of Revelation offered an interpretation according to which time and experience could be regarded within a providential context in which hidden sacred history unfolds in world events.

In the forming and shaping of apocalyptic tradition, which is based on the interpretation of time and history according to Revelation, the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century held a singular place. The break from the Roman Catholic Church generated new strength in the apocalyptic tradition. Thus, G.H. Williams shows in his book *The Radical Reformation*, the power of the millennial impulse among the many movements and groups of radical reformers of the sixteenth century, and the connections pertaining between their search for religious and social reform and the prophecies of the Book of Revelation. England was not outside this world of sixteenth-century millennial expectations, in which the struggle for religious reformation against Rome and the Pope was cast along lines derived from a reading of Revelation.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, from the very beginning of the Reformation in England, Prot-

<sup>3</sup> Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium, Revolutionary Millenarian and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages*, rev. ed. (New York, 1970), pp. 17, 213.

<sup>4</sup> George H. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1962), *passim*. On millennial expectations and apocalyptic visions in England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see: Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation, Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden, 1975); Peter Toon, ed., *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology* (Cambridge, 1970); Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1646* (Oxford, 1979); Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, Medicine and Reform 1626-1660* (London, 1975); Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon, English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto, 1978); and Joy B. Gilsdorf, *The Puritan Apocalypse: New English Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century*, Diss. Yale, 1964. For the association between the millennial and utopian thought, see: Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1949) and J.C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society: A Study of English Utopian Writing 1516-1700* (Cambridge, 1981).

estants found in Revelation a source for explaining the rift with the Catholic Church. Viewing this book as true prophecy, Englishmen, like Protestants on the continent, tended to draw from it the context of their own time and history. "Starting in the 1530s with John Bale, English reformers found in the apocalyptic mysteries of the Book of Revelation a framework for reinterpreting the history of Christianity and explaining the break from the Roman Catholic Church. Identifying the papacy with Antichrist and the Roman Catholic Church with Babylon, they pictured the reformation as a departure from the false church that derived its jurisdiction from the devil"<sup>5</sup>. Applying the prophecies of Revelation to the special conditions of England at that time, English reformers developed through their Biblical exegesis a unique philosophy of history, based on the apocalyptic visions presented by the Book of Revelation, in which England occupied a special position in the battle between Christ and Antichrist.

Most notable among sixteenth-century English Protestants attempting to relate contemporary historical events to the Book of Revelation was John Foxe, who used Revelation as the basis for his influential book *Actes and Monumentes*, commonly known as "The Book of Martyrs" (1563). In this religious classic of Elizabethan England, Foxe set his stories within an apocalyptic framework, one which was based on the Book of Revelation.

According to Foxe, England had always fought Antichrist, even from its earliest days. But along with many Marian exiles who had fled England during the reign of the Catholic Queen Mary, Foxe looked upon his own period as the one in which the fight between the godly and Antichrist would finally reach a climax. In his book he traced the ecclesiastical history of England from the apostolic times until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, emphasizing the unique role of England as the Elect Nation in God's divine plan. 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 that by all the 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>6</sup>.

Indeed, to Foxe, as to many other Protestants of that time, the early reign of Elizabeth offered renewed evidence of the destiny of England as the Elect Nation: the true reformation in England was being fulfilled through the imperial instrument – the prince – who was leading the fight against Antichrist in the world. But what if the prince failed to fulfill

his or her divine mission to lead the true reformation in England and the nation as a whole against Antichrist? "The certainties of one age", noted R.H. Tawney, "are the problems of the next", and toward the end of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, many Protestants and Puritans in England faced nothing but obstacles. For in spite of all their efforts, the prince had failed in the long-expected reformation of the Church of England<sup>7</sup>.

For the mass of English Protestants or Puritans, England had traditionally been accepted as the stage for the working out of the millennium, with the Church of England and its head, the English monarch, as the central agency in the drama. However, with the Puritan failure under Elizabeth, this "orthodox" relationship among the Church of England, the Prince, and the millennial prospect underwent a reassessment, and millennial expectations focusing on the Prince began to decline. This shift in the early seventeenth century toward centrifugal millenarianism was to a large extent the effect of the writing of one of the most famous contemporary commentators on the Book of Revelation – Thomas Brightman.

Foxe had influenced generations of Englishmen to look on England as the Elect Nation and to look to the Prince as God's instrument in the redemption process. Brightman likewise believed England to be the Elect Nation, but as he made clear in his *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos, or A Revelation of the Revelation* (1609), he no longer considered the Prince as occupying the decisive role in the English Reformation. "Brightman argued against expecting too much from a Godly Prince" because for him "the Godly Ruler frustrates, not advances, Godly Rule". Therefore, instead of looking to the Prince as the main instrument in the realization of England's singular role in providential history, Brightman rather described the duty of the believers as engaging themselves to advance the Reformation in England, and in this way he conditioned generations of Puritans to look upon themselves as God's elect people, or as the saints with a vital role in the time of the approaching millennium. Behind this turn-about lies the Puritan experience in Elizabethan England. The story of "the Elizabethan Puritan Movement" is in the first place the story of "the politics of the attempt, and of the failure" of Puritans "to secure reform in the whole body of the Church, and by means of public authority . . . to complete the English Reformation"<sup>8</sup>. Brightman's book can be seen on the one hand as evidence of the failure, in Puritan terms, to reform the Church of Eng-

<sup>7</sup> R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York, 1954), p. 231; Lamont, *Godly Rule*, p. 25.

<sup>8</sup> Lamont, *Godly Rule*, p. 51; Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*, book jacket.

<sup>6</sup> William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London, 1963), pp. 224-225.

land under Elizabeth. On the other hand, however, his book is more than a mere description of the Prince's failure to lead the religious reformation. For his exegesis of Revelation offered, above all, a radical interpretation of the Revelation prophecies, an interpretation, moreover, that constituted a unique view or philosophy of history. And up to and during the Puritan Revolution, Brightman's interpretation of Revelation and his philosophy of history had a profound influence on Puritans.

Brightman's special role in English apocalyptic tradition resided in the fact that he had proposed a radical solution concerning the relation between prophecy and history, or between the prophecies of Revelation and the Puritan experience in England at the turn of the sixteenth century. The essence of his solution was the attempt to extract from the Book of Revelation the possibility, always present in the text, of a correlation or union between the Visible and the Invisible Church, and to place this relationship – always latent in the text – within the English historical context. In the English apocalyptic tradition preceding Brightman, John Bale, in his *The Image of Both Churches*, 1550, had taken "St. Augustine's idea of the two cities and transformed it into that of the two churches – one headed by Christ and the other by antichrist". Bale, in other words, retained strictly within time and history the realms between heaven and earth and made this dualism the essential feature of history until the second coming of Christ. Likewise, Foxe in his book followed Bale's dualistic view of history and time, adding to it his stress on England as the Elect Nation. However, as to the answer to the mystery of time or the fulfillment of Revelation, both Bale and Foxe saw this as lying in the future. That is, "Bale awaited the opening of the seventh seal, the opening of that time when the elect would glory in the fall of Babylon and the erection of New Jerusalem"; and Foxe likewise foresaw the role of the Elect Nation, led by a Protestant Prince, in fighting Antichrist in future times to come<sup>9</sup>.

With Brightman, the English apocalyptic tradition was transformed. For according to him, the age of millennium had already begun within time and history:

"for now is the time begun when Christ shal raigne in all the earth, having all his enemies round about subdued unto him and broken in peeces".

Brightman believed this in contrast to Bale, for example, because for him the voice of "last trumpet" had already sounded and blasted in history. Following Revelation, which states that "in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished", or more specifically, that

<sup>9</sup> Gilsdorf, *The Puritan Apocalypse*, p. 33; Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*, pp. 15, 18.

"the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, the Kingdom of this world are become *the kingdoms* of our Lord, and his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 10:7; 11:15).

Brightman indeed thought himself alive in the time of the seventh trumpet which in Revelation followed the opening of the seventh seal. That is, he believed himself part of that time in history when the whole mystery of time and history would be revealed and the Kingdom of God would reign on earth. He identified the year 1555 as "some two or three years before the Seaventh Trumpets blast". Thus, to him the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 was the year in which this trumpet sounded in history, and from Elizabeth's accession onward was the time when the whole holistic drama of history would unfold:

"For now is the last Act, begun of most log & dolefull Tragedy, which shall wholly overflow with scourges, slaughters, destructions, but after this Theater is once removed, there shall come in roome of it most delightfull spectacle of perpetual peace, joynd with abundance of all good things"<sup>10</sup>.

Of course, the millennium might not finally arrive until long after Brightman's lifetime, but the importance of his interpretation lay in the fact that he fixed for himself – and for many Puritans in the early seventeenth century – the early reign of Elizabeth as the period of the seventh trumpet. This period, it will be recalled from Revelation, is that time in which the entire dualistic structure of the universe is broken: a war, begun in heaven, spreads to earth, so that earth finally becomes the scene of the whole cosmic drama out of which emerges the Kingdom of God. This is the period, then, in which after many apocalyptic events, including the destruction of Babylon, the millennium is at hand. Thus, according to Brightman,

"*The time is at hand*; the Event of things immediately to be done . . . the things to come are no lesse certaine; But for us, who have seene the consent between the event and the Prophecy for the spacee of a thousand & five hundred yeares, that is, ever since the dayes of John, we can not possibly doubt, any longer touching those few events which yet remaine to be accomplished"<sup>11</sup>.

This sense of the millennium at hand, so characteristic of Brightman's exegesis of Revelation and so different from previous apocalyptic commentaries, stems from the historical perspective he gave to the prophecies of Revelation. For according to Brightman, during the rule of Constantine – who made Christianity a church state in the Roman Empire – "the

<sup>10</sup> Thomas Brightman, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos, or a Revelation of the Revelation* (Leiden, 1616), pp. 491, 502. (All quotations from Brightman are from the Leiden, 1616 edition.)

<sup>11</sup> Brightman, p. 1135.

Divell was bound . . . for thousand years'. In 1300, he maintained, the Devil or Satan had escaped from captivity and begun to wage war against Christ and his saints. And he cited the late seventeenth century as the time of the end of Antichrist ("the last end of Antichrist shall expire at the year 1686"). Thus, it was between these two periods that the battle between Christ and Antichrist transpired, in which the saints gathered around the Lord in his wars on Mount Zion. Throughout this period, therefore, the church paraded as the "Militant Church", gradually spreading the kingdom of Christ on earth through religious reformations against Satan and the Antichrist. But since according to the Book of Revelation Satan and his agents were to wage war against Christ for only 390 years, Brightman calculated that at the end of the seventeenth century, after the final destruction of Antichrist, the saints with Christ would rule on earth. Then, "all nations shalbe at the Churches command, & that at a becke, requiring & taking lawes & ordinances from it, whereby they may be governed"<sup>12</sup>.

It is evident, then, that Brightman, as it were, immersed the millennium in the realm of history. From 1300 onward, he claimed, Christ and the Saints were engaged in the apocalyptic drama as foretold by Revelation, and world history from then on revealed the spreading of God's kingdom on earth. Consequently, by interpreting time and history on the basis of Revelation, Brightman emphasized the crucial role of the saints in this world. For the saints, reformation and a renewed covenant with the Lord no longer signified man's salvation alone but became a vital act in the cosmic battle on earth between Satan and Christ. Thus, when Brightman calculated that the blast of the seventh trumpet proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth occurred in the year 1558, he infused a strong eschatological impulse into early seventeenth-century Puritan millennial discourse. Three decades after Brightman, Thomas Goodwin could write: "This is the last time because it is the perfection of the other . . . and therefore seeing these are the last days, the nigher the day approacheth, the more shall we endeavour to do God service"<sup>13</sup>. Yet in order to infuse the millennium into the dimension of historical time, Brightman had to interpret the Book of Revelation in different ways from his predecessors.

According to E.L. Tuveson, "the Protestants of the sixteenth century" accepted St. Augustine's interpretation of Revelation, in which he stressed the view that "the reign of the saints . . . is not to be earthly; it refers only to their glorified state in heaven". But not Brightman. He in fact replaced

St. Augustine's dualistic view of the world by finding a point in time and history when the heavenly city and the earthly city would coalesce, or when the visible and invisible Church would unite. For this reason he constantly warned against reading Revelation in dualistic cosmological terms: "Heaven here is not distinguished from earth in distance of places, but in the holiness of faith and manner". Or in another place:

"Heaven doth every where in this Book, signify the *universal Church* . . . because . . . it can have no more expresse image than this upon earth".

And when Brightman faced in Revelation the sentence, "And the armies *which were* in heaven followed" Christ (Rev. 19:14), he glossed, "that is, the Citizens of the Holy Church upon earth". Accordingly, to him the New Jerusalem was not in heaven and descending to earth from there,

"But as touching this *new-Jerusalem* . . . it is not that *Citie* which the Saintes shall enjoy in the Heaven . . . but that *Church*, that is to be looked upon earth, the most noble and pure of all other, that ever have been to that tyme"<sup>14</sup>.

By identifying the heaven of the Book of Revelation with earthly phenomena, Brightman was able to replace Augustine's dualistic heaven/earth view of the cosmos with his own view of a cosmos marked by an essential dualism *within* the earthly realm. Thus, the angels in Revelation were to him "those Ministers of the truth", while "the Person of Antichrist" was "not any certaine & singular man: but a long succession of many men". This reduction to the plane of earth of the dualistic outlook also carried important implications concerning the battle on earth between godly and profane people. When the Book of Revelation stated that "the Dragon was cast out upon the earth" (Rev. 12:9), Brightman identified those cast out as all

"out of the borders of true and Holy Church, not only among the profane nations, but also among the rest of Christian people, that was any wayes disagreeing from, or contrary to sincere piety . . . That which called heaven and earth, was called the Temple and the Court".

Thus the apocalyptic war that once pertained to the dualism of earth and heaven was now being played out within human society on earth. By replacing the old apocalyptic dualism of Augustine with his own *intra*-human mundane apocalyptic vision, Brightman generated new meanings in the search after true reformation in England in the early seventeenth century. In this new dualism, the Church struggled against those who "disagree to sincere piety" because they belong to Satan. In this view, the Dragon or Satan was within the present church, and the reforming church must cast

<sup>12</sup> Brightman, pp. 519, 569, 852, 1119.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Goodwin, "Three Sermons on Heb. I, 1, 2", in *The Works of Thomas Goodwin*, ed. J.C. Miller (Edinburgh, 1861-1865), V, pp. 533-534.

<sup>14</sup> Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia*, p. 17; Brightman, pp. 526, 300, 1118, 115.

him out. Thus, according to Brightman, "obstinate sinners, which will not yeald to admonitions, are given up to *Satan* by the ecclesiastical censure, and are cast out of the Church"<sup>15</sup>. With this reformulation, Brightman bestowed upon the next generation of Puritans a formidable weapon.

But in order to transport the millennium into time and history, and to uphold his own dualistic view, Brightman also had to show that the Book of Revelation not only described events to come but also contained prophecies with actual historical substance. This he did by arguing that the events in the Book of Revelation, or the image of the seven churches there, corresponded to historical events in past and present. Hence, his claim that the seventh trumpet had indeed blasted in 1558. "These seaven Epistles", wrote Brightman, "respected not onely the present condition of the seaven Cities, but do . . . comprehend the ages following for a long tyme"<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, if in Revelation the churches, except Philadelphia, moved from the ancient purity of apostolic times into decline, they also moved in time – according to the holistic pattern of this book – toward history's climax and the apocalyptic events of the second coming of Christ. Likewise, according to Brightman, the history of the Church on earth was the story of the Church's approach toward that time when the visible and invisible Church would unite on earth.

Brightman's holistic interpretation of history is significant for its enormous influence in England<sup>17</sup>. It was through his interpretation of the Book of Revelation that Puritans grasped the meaning of their time and their unique place in history. By correlating visions described in the Book of Revelation with events in time and history, Brightman envisaged the Kingdom of God to be within the framework of history; and through his construction of the Church's history according to the Book of Revelation, from the first until the second coming of Christ, Brightman inspired Puritans to look upon their time as that of the seventh trumpet.

With Brightman's novel interpretation that with the accession of Elizabeth to the throne in 1558 the seventh trumpet blew, a new historical consciousness arose in England in the early seventeenth century concerning

<sup>15</sup> Brightman, pp. 618, 585, 520, 143. In chapter eleven of Revelation, an angel says to St. John: "Rise, and measure the temple of God . . . But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not, for it was given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot" (Rev. 11:1, 2).

<sup>16</sup> Brightman, p. 155.

<sup>17</sup> A holistic interpretation of history is one that sees history as moving towards a redemptive, eschatological goal in or beyond history. That is, a view that charges history with religious significance and, given the fact that history has been created by God, is guided by Divine Providence from beginning to an end. See, in relation to this kind of historical interpretation, K.R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (London, 1969) and Sir Isaiah Berlin, *Historical Inevitability* (London, 1955).

the imminent fulfillment of the prophecies of Revelation and a sense of the millennium at hand. It was still left to Brightman, however, to describe the role that England would assume in the providential history which was about to reach its zenith with the approaching millennium and the establishment of the Kingdom of God upon earth. In his delineation of church history, Brightman endeavored to link each church in Revelation to an actual historical counterpart. Thus, he applied each epistle of Christ to his churches in Revelation to a particular historical period of time. Each church in Revelation, then, symbolized for him a certain period in the history of the church from Christ's first coming until the Second Coming, yet when he came to identify the sixth church of Revelation, Philadelphia, God's only true reformed church and the one to which Christ promised that he "will write upon [her] the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is New Jerusalem" (Rev. 3:12) – he cited a historical correlation not of England, but rather of "the Church of Helvetia, Suevia, Geneve, Franncce, Scotland"<sup>18</sup>. Brightman's refusal to associate the Church of England with Philadelphia is perhaps the clearest indication of his radical departure from the apocalyptic tradition in England preceding him, and especially of his distance from Foxe's vision of England as the Elect Nation in providential history.

Writing almost half a century after the accession of Elizabeth and the establishment of the Elizabethan Settlement, Brightman was fully aware of the Puritan failure to reform the Church of England, and, disappointed by the Prince's unwillingness to reform the church, he chose to identify the Church of England not with Philadelphia but rather with Laodicea. In this manner, Brightman radically transformed England's role in providential history from Foxe's Elect Nation into that of the sinful church in Revelation which rejected God's word and will and was therefore warned by the Lord that He would "spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:16). If Laodicea was England, as Brightman believed, then Christ's prophecies about Laodicea in Revelation applied equally to England. In that case, a special punishment awaited England – the historical Laodicea – in addition to the general destruction promised by God in Revelation to all who refused to acknowledge him. For in the end, all churches but Philadelphia would be destroyed in the final judgement. Yet Laodicea faced a double specter: Christ would cast it from his mouth to Satan, and it would be consumed in the general conflagration along with other churches not implementing full reformation.

Ultimately, in terms of the Puritan movement, Brightman's correlation between England and Laodicea raised a deep sense of crisis concerning

<sup>18</sup> Brightman, pp. 139, 140, 142-145, 155.



England's role in providential history. And indeed this was a crisis of terrifying proportions, for with the Puritans' hopes in the reforming zeal of the monarch fading rapidly during the reign of James I and Charles I, and with the Church of England being corrupted, many feared that England would soon be called to account. In the scenario described by Brightman, with England as Laodicea, England could expect nothing but the righteous ire of God. Fear before this divine wrath was very real to generations of Puritans who regarded the Book of Revelation as God's word and as historical prophecy. Yet it is the prevalence with which England is associated with Laodicea in Puritan writings which suggests just how important a part Brightman played in transforming the role of England in providential history from Foxe's concept of the Elect Nation to that of doomed Laodicea upon which the final judgement of God was merely a matter of time. To a large extent, the entire course of the Puritan movement up to and during the Puritan Revolution was determined by Brightman's correlation between England and Laodicea.

In the first place, his correlation led to the migration to New England of thousands of Puritans during the 1630s with the aim of saving themselves from doomed Laodicea, or England. In the second place, the Puritan Revolution in England must be viewed in the light of the Puritans' attempt to bring England back to the center of providential history, from corrupt Laodicea to Philadelphia, and consequently to build in England the New Jerusalem. Thus, by identifying England with Laodicea, and given the fact that he already refused to accord the Prince the dominant role in the reformation of England, Brightman directed Puritans to take upon themselves – the godly – the main responsibility for executing the true reformation. In short, the Puritan commonwealth in New England and the Puritan Revolution in England are evidence of efforts made to fulfill the role of the Saint in providential history by aiding Christ against Antichrist.

We cannot conclude our discussion of Brightman's role in English apocalyptic tradition without mentioning his views concerning the Jews. These views were later to constitute a determining factor in the Jews' readmission to England during the Protectorate. As we have seen earlier, the crucial issue in apocalyptic interpretation is the question of the nature of time, and its relation to the apocalypse, since if the Book of Revelation is to have any real significance it must be understood within the context of the relationship between apocalyptic prophecies and the process of history. Related to the concept of time in the Book of Revelation is the matter of the seven Vials, or judgements, which are to lead to the final judgement before the millennium. In English apocalyptic tradition preceding Brightman, the vision of the seven Vials was regarded as complementary to that

of the voice of the Trumpets. Brightman, however, offered a radical interpretation: according to him this vision is rather consecutive to the Trumpets – that is, from 1558 onward. The significance of this view lies in the fact that it directed one to look upon events following Elizabeth's accession to the throne as a sign of the Vials. According to this approach, four Vials, or judgements, had already fallen, beginning in 1560; the fifth Vial was related to the destruction of Rome which was to occur in 1650; and after this would come the sixth Vial, which concerned the future conversion of the Jews. Thus, by correlating events described in Revelation with historical time, Brightman envisaged the Kingdom of God within the framework of history; and he consequently believed that the literal conversion of the Jews would follow rather than precede the defeat of Antichrist. With the millennium occurring in time and history, and with the conversion of the Jews but one part of the providential drama, it follows in the same scheme of things that conversion should literally occur at one point of time within history<sup>19</sup>.

Ultimately, Brightman's exegesis of Revelation constituted a unique and influential philosophy of redemptive history in which the millennium, or the advent of the Kingdom of God, was considered to be within time and history. According to Brightman's apocalyptic interpretation, England played a crucial role in providential history. His refusal to accord the Church of England the title of Philadelphia was responsible for the urgent need felt by the Puritans to re-evaluate their country's role in this history. And his correlating England with Laodicea was the main cause for the rise of Puritan fears that God's Judgement upon England was imminent. The very extent to which Brightman's identification of England with Laodicea was quoted in England before and during the Puritan Revolution demonstrates how greatly it alarmed the Puritans, who were thus led to fear the impending punishment of England by God in his boundless wrath.

It is Brightman's interpretation which was also largely responsible for the migration, prior to the Puritan Revolution, of thousands of Puritans who removed themselves from foredoomed Laodicea – or England – with the aim of building in the wilderness of America the New Jerusalem. Reformation or destruction, this was the clear application Puritans drew from Brightman's exegesis. Therefore, when the road was later re-opened in England for Puritans to engage in experiments in holiness toward fulfilling England's role in providential history, they turned without hesitation to the task of reforming England. They did this with the urgent sense of the millennium at hand and with an awareness of the singular role of the saints at that specific point in time. For the seventh trumpet had already

<sup>19</sup> Brightman, pp. 711, 851, 836.



blasted in time and history, proclaiming the approach of that blessed end in which the whole mystery of time would be revealed and Christ with his faithful would reign on earth, a time in which the kingdom of earth would become the Kingdom of God. This was the sense that Brightman infused into English apocalyptic tradition in the early seventeenth century.

POLITICAL CONCEPTS IN THE WORLD OF THE  
PORTUGUESE JEWS OF AMSTERDAM DURING THE  
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY: THE PROBLEM OF  
EXCLUSION AND THE BOUNDARIES OF  
SELF-IDENTITY

YOSEF KAPLAN

During the seventeenth century the Portuguese Jews of Amsterdam brought the heritage of Iberian culture with them into the bosom of Judaism. That culture was rich, varied, and encompassed many intellectual and social fields. Transposed to new conditions, sometimes with the admixture of traditional Jewish concepts, that tradition sometimes caused tension and even conflicted with certain Jewish values.

Perusal of the lists of books owned and read by those Jews shows that they were extremely interested in political literature. Daniel Swetschinski, who analyzed the catalogues of books owned by Jean Cardoso and Joseph Jenes, and who also noted the books referred to in works written by members of the Jewish community, reached the following conclusion: "Contemporary political thought may have been a more or less general Portuguese-Jewish interest whose depth and focus varied according to the individual's educational background"<sup>1</sup>. Indeed while Spinoza's systematic approach is quite different from the eclecticism of merchants and property owners among the community, they too displayed lively interest in political thought, and increasingly one realizes that such an interest was an integral part of the cultural life of the Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam.

Naturally the political thought of Spain at that time occupied a central place in their worldview. Not only were the works of Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, Antonio Pérez, Francisco de Quevedo y Villegas, and Baltasar Gracián y Morales found in Spinoza's library<sup>2</sup>, but whole passages of the Spanish political writing of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are

<sup>1</sup> D.M. Swetschinski, "The Portuguese Jews of Seventeenth Century Amsterdam - Cultural Continuity and Adaptation", in F. Malino and Ph. Cohen Albert, eds., *Essays in Modern Jewish History. A Tribute to Ben Halpern* (London and Toronto, 1982), p. 66.

<sup>2</sup> Y.H. Yerushalmi, "Spinoza's Remarks on the Existence of the Jewish People", *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities*, VI (1984), pp. 195 ff. (in Hebrew).