

FROM JUDGMENT TO SALVATION:
THE IMAGE OF THE JEWS IN THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

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The return of the Jews to England at the height of the Puritan Revolution in the middle of the seventeenth 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.¹ Historically, the expulsion was just the climax of a long and painful process continuing throughout the thirteenth 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.² 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 had a profound impact not only on the Christian commonwealth in England but also on the nature of Jewish life and existence.³

The process which eventually brought about the re-admission of the Jews to England has been discussed in many important studies.⁴ Today we know a great deal about the social, religious and political factors which

¹ Among the many works dealing with the expulsion of the Jews from and their return to England, see: Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964); Jonathan Irving Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Merchantilism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986); David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), *The Jews in the History of England, 1485-1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), and David S. Katz et al. eds., *Exile and Return: Anglo-Jewry Through the Ages* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1993)—Hebrew; Yoseph Kaplan et al. eds., *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 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: Brill, 1978).

² Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectations: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 149, note 187.

³ David S. Katz, "The Readmission of the Jews to England and the Establishment of Their Community," *Exile and Return: Anglo-Jewry Through the Ages*, 105-122 (Hebrew).

⁴ See the important studies cited in note 1 above.

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 of English 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 sixteenth and the middle of the seventeenth century, the Jew became an important apocalyptic agent in Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic thought; Protestant and Puritan writers systematically worked out the ideological premises of this new attitude towards the Jews, 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 agents in the drama of salvation and redemption, reveals how this transformation greatly contributed to the debates during the Puritan Revolution concerning their re-admission to the country.⁵

Over the centuries, the image of the Jews in England naturally underwent numerous changes and this is reflected in many works of literature.⁵ Analysis of some texts produced during the English Renaissance of the sixteenth and seventeenth 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 thirteenth century, for example, the following stanza expresses the usual negative attitude:

The wicked Jews with scoffs and scornes
Did dailye him molest,
That never till he left his life
Our Savior could not rest.⁶

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

⁵ Among the works dealing with the image of the Jews in English literature, see: Ester L. Panitz, *The Alien in Their Midst: Image of the Jews in English Literature* (London: Associated University Presses, 1981); Derek Cohen and Deborah Heller, eds., *Jewish Presence in English Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1990); Montague F. Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England* (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961), and Harold Fisch, *The Dual Image: A Study of the Jew in English Literature* (London: Lincoln-Prager, 1971).

⁶ Modder, *The Jew in the Literature of England*, 14.

In helle to dwelle with-outen ende;
Ther ye schall neuere butt sorrowe see
And sitte be Satanas the fende.⁷

The same attitudes can be found in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale* of the fourteenth 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).

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."⁸

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).

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 seventeenth 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 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

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13, 16, 21.

⁸ Panitz, *The Alien in Their Midst*, 28-29, 17.

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.⁹ 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 *Eshcols* brook. (Lines 26-31).

The belief that the future conversion of the Jews will bring glory to Israel is further expressed in Sir Henry Pinch's *The Worlds 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 sattest as a widdow, thou shalt flourish as in the dayes of thy youth. Nay, aboue and beyond thy youth."¹⁰ During the 1650's the poet Abraham Cowley was deeply convinced that the 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*."¹¹ Finally, Milton too reflects the great transformation of the Jews' image taking place in England during the seventeenth 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."¹²

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 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 a crucial shift which gradually but increasingly 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

⁹ Fisch, *The Dual Image*, 40-41.

¹⁰ Henry Pinch cited in David Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England*, 95.

¹¹ Abraham Cowley cited in Katz, *Philo-Semitism*, 89.

¹² Michael Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdoms of God* (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), 237.

longer based upon God's judgment of 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 become an essential part in the history of the Christian church, illuminating the near approach of the Last Days and the end of history.

The source of this revolutionary shift in Renaissance England should be sought ultimately in the formation of English apocalyptic tradition as a unique mode of historical thought.¹³ With the rise of this apocalyptic interpretation of history in England, 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. 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 symbol of the Jews' conversion as a crucial eschatological sign in the course and progress of the history of redemption, and finally envisioned the Jew as a crucial positive apocalyptic agent within the drama 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 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

¹³ On the development of Protestant and Puritan apocalyptic tradition in England, see Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation, from John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978); C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds., *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); Ernest Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1953); Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Vision from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978); Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and Apocalypse in the Puritan Migration to America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); idem., *Theocracy in Massachusetts* (Lewiston: Mellon University Press, 1994); idem., "Reformation, History and Eschatology in English Protestantism," *History and Theory*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (October 1987), 300-318; Avihu Zakai and Anya Mali, "Time, History and Eschatology: Ecclesiastical History from Eusebius to Augustine," *Journal of Religious History*, 17 (December 1993), 393-417.

contempt of the Gospel."¹⁴ 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.¹⁵ "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 subtle satellites of antichrist, which are the cruel members of Satan.¹⁶

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 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.¹⁷ 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."¹⁸

In Bale's apocalyptic interpretation the history of England 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 seventh 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."¹⁹ 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."²⁰ In this 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."²¹ After this would come the time of the seventh seal with Christ's second coming and the millennium. Most important to our discussion, according to Bale's apocalyptic interpretation, was the sixth seal when "the remnant of the Jews would be gathered together and converted" to the Christian faith, as foretold in Revelation.²² 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 envisioned 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 meaning of the Reformation in England. 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."²³ With great competence as historian and martyrologist, "John Foxe towers above all the Englishmen who contributed to shaping English history into Protestant mold" and "significantly helped to create a national faith that was shared by the English reformers at large."²⁴

¹⁴ John Bale, *Image of Both Churches* (1550), *Selected Works of John Bale*, ed. H. Christmas (Cambridge, 1849), 254-55.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 252, 251.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 253.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 251.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 566-67.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 640, 485.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 485.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 449.

²² Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, 43.

²³ Levy, *Tudor Historical Thought*, 194.

²⁴ V. Norskov Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973) 40, 38.

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.”²⁵

A 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.”²⁶ Indeed, the entire thrust of *Acts and Monuments* was to demonstrate to English readers that theirs was a chosen nation which had received 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 fourteenth century, had initiated the Protestant Reformation. According to Foxe the climax of England’s unique role in sacred 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.”²⁷

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.²⁸ 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 sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries, concerning the special place within the confines of salvation history to which God’s providence had appointed the Church of England and, hence, the nation. Nowhere was English history more successfully described in

²⁵ Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing*, 1:615.

²⁶ William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955), 191.

²⁷ John Foxe, *Acts and Monuments*, eds. G. Townsend and G. R. Cattley, 8 Vols. (London, 1837-41), 8:601, 1:94.

²⁸ William Haller, *Foxe’s Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: J. Cape, 1963) 224-25; and “John Foxe and the Puritan Revolution,” in *The Seventeenth Century*, ed. Richard F. Jones (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951) 209-24.

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 the Jews in his work was the repetition of the story of young Christian boys crucified by certain English Jews on Good Friday.²⁹ 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, 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.”³⁰ 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.” Foxe therefore had no doubt that “Saracens, Jews and Infidels are excluded out of the bound of the Church.” It is true, however, 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.”³¹

Reconstruction of the Jews as an important agent in English apocalyptic thought may be seen further in the *Geneva Bible* of 1560, another major and influential work of Protestant historiography written 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’

²⁹ Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain*, 94.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 94; Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church*, 97.

³¹ Olsen, *John Foxe and the Elizabethan Church*, 104, 111, 117.

Authorized Version of 1611. By the outbreak of the Civil War this number had reached nearly two hundred.³²

In contrast to Luther's eschatology of judgment, the *Geneva Bible* plainly declared that the prophecy about the "new heaven, & new earth" signified that "all things shall be renewed and restored into most excellent and perfect estate, and therefore the day of resurrection is called, The Day of Restauration of all things."³³ Furthermore, the translators of the *Geneva Bible* understood the word "Israel" in Rom 11:25ff. as referring literally to the actual "Jews." For according to the "Notes" 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.³⁴

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 sixteenth 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*.³⁵ 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.³⁶ In this context the rise of Hebrew studies in England was of great significance, hastening the positive incorporation of the Jews as an important agent in English apocalyptic tradition.

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 OT provided an essential background for understanding the NT; and scholars were now able to follow Jewish exegesis and acquire a

knowledge of OT prophecies.³⁷ In sum, the growth of Hebrew studies in England facilitated the trend of convergence 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 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 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."³⁸

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 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 and that it was

³² *The Geneva Bible, A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); John Eadie, *The English Bible* (London, 1876), 51-52; S. L. Green-slade, "English Versions of the Bible, 1525-1611," in *The Cambridge History of the Bible: The West from the Reformation to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963; 1978) 159.

³³ *The Geneva Bible*, "Marginal Notes" to Revelation 21:1.

³⁴ Peter Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 1970) 24.

³⁵ Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York, 1971), especially Ch. IV, "Providence," 78-112 and Ch. XIII, "Ancient Prophecies," 389-434.

³⁶ Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, 150.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 153-58.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 159-61; Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 76, 161; Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel*, 24.

therefore the duty of God's saints to come 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 shal raigne in all the earth, having all his enemies round subdued unto him and broken in peeces."³⁹

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 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 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 Ballarina. It is in this context that Brightman for the first time meant the actual Jews: "at the calling of the Jewes," he proclaimed, the Antichrist or the Church of Rome shall be "utterly destroyed." Thus, "the Jewes shall be called straight after Rome is destroyed."⁴⁰ 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."⁴¹

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 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

³⁹ Thomas Brightman, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos, or a Revelation of the Revelation* (Leyden, 1616) 491, 502.

⁴⁰ Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, 170-72; Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom*, 46-55 and "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition," *Menasseh Ben Israel and His World*, 31-44.

⁴¹ Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel*, 30.

blast of the Seavent Trumpet in the yeare 1558."⁴² 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 judgments 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 the 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.⁴³

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 the Antichrist, it inevitably follows that the calling of the Jews and their conversion to the Christian faith must also follow the destruction of the Antichrist.⁴⁴ 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 interpretation, which *immersed* the millennium into time and history and made this sacred vision a feasible and concrete historical event, subsequently led to a radical rehabilitation of the Jews as having an actual 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

⁴² Brightman, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos*, 488, 490-91.

⁴³ Zakai, "Thomas Brightman and English Apocalyptic Tradition," 42-43.

⁴⁴ Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, 172-73.

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."⁴⁵

The ultimate achievement of apocalyptic tradition was undoubtedly the creation of a deep-seated conviction in seventeenth-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."⁴⁶ 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 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:

The matter of this prophecies {the Apocalypse} is historicall, 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.⁴⁷

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

⁴⁵ Ibid., 175.

⁴⁶ Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 161.

⁴⁷ Richard Bernard, *A Key to the Knowledge for the Opening of the Secret Mysteries of St. John Mysticall Revelation* (1617) 123.

For the true account therefore of *Times* in Scripture wee must have recourse to that *Sacred Kalender* and *Great Almanack of Prophesie* . . .⁴⁸

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*."⁴⁹ 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."⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

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."⁵²

By the first half of the seventeenth century, apocalyptic interpretation of history had gained almost universal acceptance in England. Jewish prophetic writings such as the Book of Daniel and the Prophecy of Elias had been incorporated within this apocalyptic interpretation. A new spirit of millennialism 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 "millennialism of Daniel and John," and his computation that the beginning of the millennium would be in 1694 was

⁴⁸ Joseph Mede, *The Apostasy of the Latter Times* (1641), *The Works of . . . Joseph Mede*, ed. J. Worthington, 2 Vols. (1664), 2:807.

⁴⁹ Mede, 807.

⁵⁰ Stephen Marshall, *The Song of Moses the Servant of God, and the Song of the Lambe* (1643) 1.

⁵¹ Thomas Hooker, *A Survey of the Summe of Church Discipline* (1648), preface.

⁵² William Hicks, *The Revelation Revealed: Being a Practical Exposition on the Revelation of St. John* (1659), preface.

based on both the numbers in Daniel and on the Seals, Trumpets and Vials of Revelation.⁵³ 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."⁵⁴

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."⁵⁵ 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 Apocalypse*, 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.⁵⁶ 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."⁵⁷

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 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."⁵⁸ 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.⁵⁹

⁵³ Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, 211.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 211-12.

⁵⁵ Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 146.

⁵⁶ Fixler, *Milton and the Kingdom of God*, 40.

⁵⁷ Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, 225.

⁵⁸ Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1965) 141.

⁵⁹ Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 147.

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."⁶⁰ 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 Jewes shall be received to mercy," because many Jewish "writers and also Christian Authors have pitched upon it."⁶¹ 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."⁶² 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. . . ."⁶³

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

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 147.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 148.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁶³ Toon, *Puritan, The Millennium, and the Future of Israel*, 37.

“although the Jews in England would not become fully emancipated until the middle of the nineteenth 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’.”⁶⁴

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 that country. This event must 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. 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 an apocalyptic role for the Jews in England and their eventual return to that country. Finally, to English Protestans 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.

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 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.

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⁶⁴ Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England*, 228, 235, 238, 242-43.