

Chapter 2

Hermeneutics and the Jews in Protestant Thought

In Genesis 12:7 God promises Abraham the land of Canaan as an eternal possession. Three chapters later the exact boundaries of this possession are laid out more clearly. Abraham's descendants are pledged all the land from "the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates". Throughout the Old Testament this promise is repeatedly described as an "everlasting covenant" (1 Chr. 16:16–17, Ps. 105:10); Israel's ownership of the land as an "everlasting possession" (Gen. 17:8, 48:4). Although God will sometimes exile his people, he will bring them back "and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them" (Amos 9:15); "I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel . . . I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant. I will establish them and increase their numbers, and I will put my sanctuary among them for ever" (Ezk. 37:22a, 26). Although these promises appear to contain clear predictions of the future of the restored Jewish nation, those writing on these verses in early modern England were at pains to show that the prophecies of a restoration to the land should not be taken literally. How was it, asked Nicholas Gibbons in his 1601 *Questions and Disputations*, that the Jews were "long agoe expelled [from] the land of Canaan, seeing the Lord here promiseth it to Abram and his seed forever"? The answer to this problematic question was found in the fact that "forever" did not necessarily mean "eternal" in scripture – the same word signifying either a never-ending period or signalling a dispensation that would be ended by the coming of the messiah. Secondly, "the promises of God, besides the litterall meaning, containe also a spiritual understanding . . . God promises herein by word the land of *Canaan*, he giveth therein to *Abraham* the inheritance of the world: meaneth by *his seed*, not onelie those that were derived from his bodye, but also those that should be partakers of his faith".¹

¹Nicholas Gibbons, *Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture* (London, 1601), pp. 497–498.

Recognition of the fact that English Protestants generally favoured the “literal” sense of scripture is uncontroversial.² Yet such a straight-forward observation can mask the fact that a preference for the “literal” presumed a number of complex hermeneutical rules and theological presuppositions that were set out at length in sermon manuals, anti-Romanist polemic and biblical commentaries across the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The way in which the “literal” was understood is especially pertinent when dealing with the interpretation of biblical prophecy, and in particular, with the question of the role played by the Jews in future events. When modern commentators such as Avihu Zakai claim that puritan eschatology was often based “upon the literal interpretation of prophecy”,³ the presumption remains that there was an easily understandable, self-evident reading of the text which would be agreed upon by both seventeenth-century and contemporary readers. Yet as the snapshot of Gibbons’ view above suggests, while the “literal” sense was maintained in interpreting the prophecies of Jewish restoration to the Holy Land, this sense did not necessarily mean the words exactly as written. To maintain the literal sense a commentator must be aware of the whole flow of biblical prophecy, the current position of the Jews and the spiritual meaning of carnal predictions. This was no arbitrary interpretation, but rather built upon a foundation of patristic, medieval and reformation exegesis that was developed in the distinctive ecclesiastical situation of sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England. As I suggested in the introduction, it is my contention that a particular hermeneutical position, built upon an understanding of the literal sense through the “analogy of faith”, was developed by Thomas Brightman and later writers, leading to a new understanding of prophecies of Jewish restoration to Palestine. Before looking at the way in which English writers constructed this hermeneutical tradition, it is necessary to examine the building blocks they used – in particular the patristic (and especially Augustinian) roots of their thinking.

2.1 The Literal and Allegorical Senses of Scripture

One of the key questions for Christian authors has always been the way in which Old Testament promises made to Israel were to be read after Christ’s coming. This was a topic which inevitably touched upon relations between Christians and Jews. Christian writers were anxious to show that Christ’s death and resurrection had been clearly predicted in the Hebrew Bible. A strategy present in the New Testament itself was to adopt Christological interpretations of Old Testament events, rituals and institutions as types prefiguring Christ. This allowed for the fulfilment of the tabernacle (Heb. 9), the law (Mt. 5:17) and the priesthood (Heb. 2:17) in Christ. Although messianic typology had been popular with rabbis of the Palestinian

²See for example, Killeen, *Biblical Scholarship*, especially pp. 1–64.

³Zakai, *Exile*, p. 45.

school from the third century BCE onward,⁴ its use in early Christian texts often had a polemic purpose. Christian writers, frequently surrounded by hostile Jewish communities, sought to defend their faith as the true continuation of Judaism and Christ as the fulfilment of Israel's promises. The early second century Epistle of Barnabas argued that Christians enjoyed the true fulfilment of the covenant made to Abraham on the basis that the examples of Esau and Jacob, and Manasseh and Ephraim demonstrated God's will to bless the younger son as opposed to the older, natural heir.⁵ The Jews were therefore criticised for their role in Christ's death and for failing to see the spiritual types hidden in Old Testament prophecies. "The Jews lose heavenly blessings, by confining their hopes to earthly ones"⁶ wrote Tertullian. "Christ is the Israel and the Jacob," argued Justin Martyr, "even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowels of Christ, are the true Israelitic race".⁷ The Jews were seen to have been rejected as God's people, with the Christian Church inheriting the blessings made to Israel. This meant an active typological interpretation being applied to the Old Testament.

Nonetheless, hopes for the conversion of a large number of Jews persisted. These were largely based upon Paul's discussion of the issue in Romans 9–11, which concluded with the statement that: "Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved" (Ro. 11:25b–26a). As Jeremy Cohen has shown, whether "all Israel" meant all Jews or only a small remnant was an open question for exegetes in the first centuries of Christianity.⁸ From an early date hopes for such a conversion were bound up with apocalyptic speculation. This was partly due to the eschatological language used by Paul in linking the salvation of Israel with the "fullness" of the Gentiles, but could also be attributed to both Old Testament promises and passages such as Revelation 7 which predicted the sealing of 144,000 from "all the tribes of Israel" (Rev. 7:4). Similarly influential was the most problematic apocalyptic passage in the New Testament, Revelation 20:1–6. This text appeared to predict the earthly reign of Christ with his saints for a period of a thousand years while Satan was bound. This concept of an earthly "millennium" of Christ's rule was reminiscent of Jewish messianism, which imagined the reign of the messiah in a restored Jerusalem. Some Christians embraced exactly that position. Irenaeus argued for both the literal desecration of the Jewish temple by the Antichrist

⁴R.P.C. Hanson, *Allegory and Event: A Study of the Sources and Significance of Origen's Interpretation of Scripture* (London: SCM, 1959), pp. 13–25.

⁵*The Epistle of Barnabas XIV.*

⁶Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*, Trans. Peter Holmes, in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers Vol. II*, eds James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 564.

⁷Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, Trans. James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts, in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers Vol. I*, eds James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 267.

⁸Jeremy Cohen, "The Mystery of Israel's Salvation: Romans 11:25–26 in Patristic and Medieval Exegesis", *Harvard Theological Review* 98:3 (July 2005), pp. 247–281.

and an earthly kingdom based in Jerusalem. Those who attempted to allegorise such prophecies were, in his opinion, inconsistent and confounded by the clear predictions of scripture.⁹ Yet the restoration should not be used to argue for a Jewish kingdom: “the Church is the seed of Abraham”.¹⁰ Similarly, Justin Martyr claimed that “I and others, who are right-minded Christians on all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built, adorned, and enlarged, [as] the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare”.¹¹ Justin’s claim that all “right-minded Christians” acquiesced in this belief was something of an exaggeration. Belief in a literal millennium, especially one based in Jerusalem, proved contentious. It had particularly problematic links to the beliefs of the gnostic Cerinthus, who had argued that the millennium would be a thousand year period given over to the satiating of fleshly appetites. The fact that such readings of this passage were possible un-nerved some commentators and led them to seek “spiritual” readings of the book of Revelation.

This sort of interpretation was evident from the first extant commentary on Revelation by Victorinus, Bishop of Petau (d. c. 304 CE) which made active use of Origen’s allegorical method. Using the dichotomy in 2 Corinthians 3:6 between the killing letter and life-giving spirit, Origen had argued that taking scripture as written was tantamount to superstition.¹² He suggested a threefold sense of scripture. As man had body, soul and spirit, a passage may have a literal, moral and tropological sense.¹³ In contrast to the “Jewish” interpretation of the literal sense,¹⁴ the allegorical sense was for the mature Christian.¹⁵ The Holy Spirit had left clues hidden within biblical narrative in the form of nonsensical statements to shock the reader, with the aim of pointing to the importance of allegory.¹⁶ Using this method, Victorinus read Revelation for its spiritual value. Thus the seven churches in Asia that receive instruction from Christ (Rev. 2–3), were seen not as seven, historical churches, but rather as describing seven classes of saints. The text did not depict the future in a sequential fashion, but rather repeated a number of themes and spiritual

⁹Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* v.35.1, trans. James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts in *The Anti-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1*, eds James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), pp. 560–66.

¹⁰Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* v.34.1.

¹¹Justin Martyr, *Dialogue*, p. 239. See also discussion of Irenaeus’ *Against Heresies* above.

¹²Beryl Smalley, *Studies in Medieval Thought and Learning: From Abelard to Wyclif* (London: Hambledon Press, 1981), p. 122. See also Farrar, *History of Interpretation*, p. 193.

¹³de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis, Volume 1*, pp. 90, 211–222; See also Bernard Ramm, *Protestant Biblical Interpretation: A Textbook of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1970) p. 32. Origen did not find all senses in each passage, but was guided by the context.

¹⁴“Ἰουδαϊξωσ”. Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, p. 237.

¹⁵See August Zöllig, *Die Inspirationslehre des Origenes* (Freiberg: Herder, 1902), p. 108 n1 for a list of phrases used by Origen for the allegorical sense. The Latin translations show this to some extent, where the sense was variously described as the *sensus mysticus*, *Allegoricus*, *Actior*, *Spiritualis Intelligentia*.

¹⁶Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, pp. 264–265.

realities which ran through all salvation history. This repetition of events, known as “recapitulation”, would prove particularly important in the way in which Revelation was read.¹⁷

The most important figure for the development of both later hermeneutic and apocalyptic thought remains Augustine (354–430). While influenced by Victorinus, he made greater use of seven hermeneutical rules developed in the Donatist Tyconius’ commentary on Revelation. Tyconius’s commentary has not survived, but his “Book of Rules” has. Tyconius’s first rule noted that there may be additional meanings hidden beyond the literal sense. For example, when the Bible spoke of the Lord, it could be speaking of the Lord directly, or of his body. The second rule urged recognition that within the body of the Lord there was a twofold nature, of both the good and the wicked. The third rule noted the importance of the law both for Israel, and now, the church. In the church the law was at work arousing good works, as opposed to the work of condemnation it achieved within Israel. The fourth rule admitted that the text often expressed a general truth “through seemingly simple reference to particular persons and events”.¹⁸ The fifth looked to understand chronological figures of speech within narratives. Tyconius suggested that a day in prophecy could, in fact, be equal to a year. The sixth rule established that scriptural chronology was not straightforward. Rather, events seemingly in chronological order may be placed as such simply to reiterate other events. As with the first rule, the final noted that when scripture referred to the Devil, the reference may in fact be to his followers.¹⁹ These rules remained an important part of Reformed exegesis of Revelation into the sixteenth century, as Irena Backus’s work has shown.²⁰

Augustine’s writings on exegesis proceeded with Tyconius’s rules as a backdrop. For Augustine, the main aim of the exegete was to grasp the intention of the author.²¹ Often, Augustine argued, the author of a text had intended a figurative, rather than a literal interpretation. The Song of Songs, for example, was beneficial when read according to the letter, but much more so when the images presented led the reader to a contemplation of the things signified beyond the words.²² Allegory was therefore sometimes necessary to enable the reader’s sinful mind to contemplate the eternal

¹⁷*Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Revelation*, ed. William C. Weinrich (Leicester: IVP, 2005), pp. xx–xxi.

¹⁸Paula Fredriksen, “Tyconius and Augustine on Apocalypse” in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds Richard K., Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca and London: Cornell, 1992), p. 26.

¹⁹Fredriksen, “Tyconius”, pp. 26–27.

²⁰Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. xii–xiv. Tyconius’s commentary is lost, but Gennadius of Marseille (d. c. 496) recorded that he had read nothing “in the carnal, but all in a spiritual sense”. See *Ancient Christian Commentary*, ed. Weinrich p. xxiii.

²¹Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana*, Trans. R.P.H. Green (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 61.

²²Augustine, *De Doctrina*, pp. 61–63.

God.²³ If the figurative was taken as literal, the soul was killed: “subjecting it to the flesh according to the letter”.²⁴ It was ignorance of the allegorical sense that led the Jews, “devoted to signs as if they were things”, to kill Christ.²⁵ The interpreter should therefore be careful when approaching scripture that he understood which parts existed purely as signs and which as actual things. Thus, “when something meant figuratively is interpreted as if it were meant literally, it is understood in a carnal way . . . the intelligence, which is what raises the soul above the level of animals, is subjected to the flesh by following the letter”.²⁶ This was especially pertinent when interpreting difficult passages of the Old Testament. Particularly in the law, signs could exist as both a sign and an actual thing (for example, an ox in the law was both an actual ox and could refer to ministers),²⁷ or could refer only to the thing signified and have no literal sense. It was therefore possible for the “literal” to dissolve into nothingness to reach the “true” meaning of the text. Even when the sense was apparently clear, as with the laws given to the Israelites, the historical reality of the text could become unimportant: it was the meaning cloaked beneath the literal sense which took priority. This is not to suggest that Augustine’s method was arbitrary. To correctly read difficult passages it was necessary to submit them to the rule of the virtues. This was the extent to which a given passage built up the interpreter in love for God and for his neighbour.²⁸ If the interpretation did not build the reader up in this way, then the passage should be taken in the figurative sense. Thus, “Any harsh and even cruel word or deed attributed to God or his saints that is found in the Holy Scriptures applies to the destruction of the realm of lust. If the message is clear, it should not be treated as figurative and related to something else”.²⁹ Morally difficult passages were to be understood “not only historically and literally but also figuratively and prophetically, and interpreted according to the aim of love, whether it be love of God or love of one’s neighbour, or both”.³⁰ The text should only be read “as written” when a passage was clearly edifying.

This rule was important for later Protestant hermeneutical development. Augustine had allowed texts which seemed absurd in their literal sense to be read in a figurative fashion. This was known as the *analogia fidei*, the “analogy (or rule) of faith”, which allowed exegetes to reinterpret a text which was immoral or nonsensical in its literal sense by reference to a much “clearer” text of scripture.

²³ Augustine, *The Spirit and the Letter in Later Works*, Trans. John Burnaby (London: SCM Press, 1955), p. 225.

²⁴ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, p. 141.

²⁵ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, p. 143.

²⁶ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, p. 141.

²⁷ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, p. 71.

²⁸ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, p. 51.

²⁹ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, p. 151.

³⁰ Augustine, *De Doctrina*, pp. 153–155.

The phrase itself had first been used by Tertullian,³¹ though it was through Augustine that it was primarily transmitted to the Protestant tradition. Of course, the question of *who* judged whether a text could be considered absurd or immoral was a pregnant one. For Augustine both other (clear) passages of scripture and the church together had the authority to determine this. For Protestants, it would remain a live issue.

Using these interpretative rules to read Revelation, Augustine was led to agree with Victorinus that the book described the history of the church from Christ's first coming until his return. This reading included the dismissal of any "carnal" reading of Rev. 20:1–6. While once a millenarian himself, he now believed that any literal reading of the passages was too materialistic: "such beliefs can only be held by carnal people".³² Instead, the thousand years referred either to the final thousand years before Christ's return, or to a spiritual reign of Christ, binding Satan from attacking believers or deceiving Christian nations. The first resurrection was figurative, referring to the spiritual participation of dead believers as members of the universal church. However, Satan would be unleashed in the last three and a half years of human history (based on the "time, times and half a time" in Dan. 7:25 and 12:7),³³ when he would persecute the church through the Antichrist, an individual who would act as his vice-regent on earth.³⁴ While he was uncertain of the timing of events, Augustine believed that the Jews would also be converted by the bodily return of Elijah (Mal. 4:5–6), who would expound the spiritual meaning of the law to them. As he summarised his reading: "Elijah the Tishbite will come; the Jews will believe; Antichrist will persecute; Christ will judge; the dead will rise; the good will be separated from the wicked; the world will be destroyed by fire and renewed".³⁵

Augustine's denial of a literal millennium was to prove particularly important due to his continuing influence on both Catholics and Protestants into the seventeenth century. As with all his readings of scripture, he had used the *analogia fidei* to interpret Revelation 20, and finding it dangerous in its literal sense, had read it allegorically. For Augustine, therefore, the "literal" sense of the Bible was not necessarily the surface reading of the text. While his hermeneutic was focused on interpreting the intention of the original author, in practice he was often led to downplay the historicity of the scripture he was examining. The "literal" for

³¹Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, Trans. Peter Holmes, in *Anti-Nicene Fathers Vol. II*, pp. 249–50.

³²Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, Trans. R.W. Dyson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 979.

³³Augustine, *City of God*, pp. 1021–24.

³⁴Augustine, *City of God*, pp. 1007–11 His reading here was particularly based on "the lawless one" of 2 Thes. 2:1–12. Augustine was far from the first to broach this subject (see, for example, Irenaeus above) but the influence of *City of God* was to have a major impact on the acceptance of the idea.

³⁵Augustine, *City of God*, pp. 1042–43.

Augustine was therefore not the text's meaning for its original recipients, but rather the spiritual truth it imparted to the church. This position was central to readings of both hermeneutics and eschatology over the medieval period.

2.2 Hermeneutics, Eschatology and the Jews in the Middle Ages

Mainstream readings of Revelation remained mostly within the Augustinian pattern in the medieval period. There was, however, an increasing interest in the figure of the Antichrist and the role that he would play. A detailed "Antichrist legend" had developed which suggested that the Antichrist would be a Jew masquerading as the Messiah. In this role he would lead the Jews to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple and be enthroned there. Enoch and Elijah would prophesy against him, before being killed and ascending to heaven, at which point Christ would intervene. While there would be a minor Jewish conversion at this point, there was no general restoration expected – the very idea of a restored Jewish kingdom now being intimately linked with the lies of the Antichrist.³⁶ This maintained the hermeneutic strategy followed by Augustine and the majority of patristic commentators, of reading the physical promises of Jewish restoration as references to the spiritual promises of the church.

These interpretations developed through the archetypal method of exposition in the medieval church: the *quadriga* or fourfold sense of scripture. Although Henri de Lubac's work has done much to highlight the complexities and potential diversity within this system,³⁷ it is nonetheless useful to use the *quadriga* as a baseline from which to understand medieval exegetical practice – particularly as it was the hermeneutic position most often attacked by English reformers. The *quadriga* presumed that a passage of scripture may have a literal sense (the grammatical-historical meaning), an allegorical sense, a tropological (or moral) sense and an anagogical (eschatological)³⁸ sense. This method of exegesis received considerable emphasis in the medieval period. As Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) stated:

That first meaning whereby the words signify things belongs to the sense first mentioned, namely the historical or literal . . . That meaning, however, whereby the things signified by the words in their turn also signify other things is called the spiritual sense; it is based on and presupposes the literal sense.³⁹

³⁶Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978), pp. 17–31; Curtis V. Bostock, *The Antichrist and the Lollards: Apocalypticism in Late Medieval and Reformation England* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 22–47.

³⁷de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis Vol. 1*, pp. 82–83.

³⁸This may be in either the sense of the eschatological hope of the individual soul, or the church in general.

³⁹Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* (London: Blackfriars, 1964–73) 1a. 1,10.

This spiritual sense could be divided into three further senses: “the allegorical sense is brought into play when the things of the Old Law signify things of the New Law; the moral sense when the things done in Christ and in those who prefigured him are signs of what we should carry out; and the anagogical sense when the things that lie ahead in eternal glory are signified”.⁴⁰ When applying this sort of exegesis to Old Testament promises to the Jews it was straightforward for an interpreter to look beyond the “historical” sense of the words and instead concentrate on the spiritual meaning of the text for Christians.⁴¹

There were occasional challenges to this reading of apocalyptic events however. The most important was that of Calabrian Abbot Joachim of Fiore (1145–1202).⁴² While his hermeneutic was firmly within the medieval tradition,⁴³ his re-reading of Revelation was unique. Joachim adopted a Trinitarian view of history, dividing it into three *status* (epochs): one of the Father, one of the Son and one of the Holy Spirit. History could also be subdivided into seven *etates* (ages) spanning the two testaments. The final *status* of the Spirit would be inaugurated through a special dispensation of God, a “spiritual coming” of Christ.⁴⁴ Through his reading of Romans 11, Joachim became convinced that the third *status* would be marked by Jewish conversion. As Robert E. Lerner has observed, Joachim saw “the conversion as marking the onset of a new ‘status’ – humanity’s greatest fulfilment on earth”.⁴⁵ Similarly, Joachim dismissed the idea of a Jewish Antichrist. His ideas of a major Jewish conversion were adapted by some to include the idea of a physical return of the Jews to the Holy Land in glory, though these interpretations were rare and had little influence.⁴⁶

⁴⁰Aquinas, *Summa* 1a. 1,10 He directly credits Augustine as the originator of this system.

⁴¹E. Ann Matter, “The Apocalypse in Early Medieval Exegesis” in *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, eds Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn (Ithaca and London: Cornell, 1992), pp. 49–50.

⁴²See Marjorie Reeves’ works, *Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); “English Apocalyptic Thinkers (c. 1540–1620)”, in *Storia e Figure Dell’Apocalisse fra ‘500 e ‘600*, ed. Roberto Rusconi (Rome: Viella, 1996), pp. 259–273 and *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999) for the English connection. Joachim was particularly popular due to the (perhaps apocryphal) story of his identifying a future pope as Antichrist to Richard the Lionheart. Bullinger noted with pleasure that Joachim “likewise calleth the Pope, Antichrist” (Bullinger, *Hundred Sermons*, sig. Bⁱⁱⁱⁱv).

⁴³“For the abbot, the basic or child’s level of understanding scripture pertains to the letter (*secundum litteram*)”, Delno C. West and Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Perception and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p. 43. Nicholas M. Healy finds Aquinas’ distaste for Joachim to be in part inspired by the abbot’s opposition to the literal sense. See Healy’s “Introduction” in *Aquinas on Scripture: An Introduction to his Biblical Commentaries*, eds D.A. Keating, T.G. Weinandy, and J.P. Yocum (London: T&T Clark, 2005).

⁴⁴Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: The Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 207.

⁴⁵Robert E. Lerner, *The Feast of Saint Abraham: Medieval Millenarians and the Jews* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), p. 31.

⁴⁶The heretic Rupescissa (1310–1365), for example, saw the conversion of the Jews in 1370 under a new Emperor who would destroy Rome. The Jews would survive and flourish until the end of

There were, however, some significant changes in the way in which the Antichrist was viewed occurring in England by the thirteenth century. Many of these were polemically motivated. This is perhaps best seen in Lollard thought, which focused predominantly on the literal sense. The Wycliffite Bible stated that “Ghostly understandings” should be rejected, unless “grounded openly in the text of holy scripture”.⁴⁷ Lollards therefore emphasised the historicity of the “literal” sense. This was sometimes taken to extremes: some argued that even parables had a literal occurrence in history beyond their parabolic meaning. The key to understanding was not simply to grasp what the human author had meant, but also what the divine author intended. Thus the literal sense was now “the originally full sense of a passage in God’s mind”.⁴⁸ This led Lollards to re-read Revelation. The Antichrist was not seen to be an individual, but rather an institution which had infected the church. While Wyclif himself believed the Antichrist to be both personal and corporate,⁴⁹ the influential Lollard study *Opus Arduum* pointed its finger directly at the papacy: “[Antichrist] must not be associated with a person but with an office and a seat of power which opposes, even tramples upon the evangelical law”.⁵⁰ While there was no place for Jewish conversion in this reading, later Lollard interpreters did touch upon it. The early fifteenth-century work *Lantern of Light* predicted that Jewish conversion would occur once Antichrist was defeated.⁵¹ The debate on the extent of Lollard influence on English reformation thought (and therefore later English Protestant thought) is one that continues and any direct line of influence is not easily traceable.⁵² Nonetheless, it is significant that the major apocalyptic concerns expressed so clearly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries should have been espoused by Lollard thinkers at a much earlier date. At the very least, this should be considered as a potential influence upon later apocalyptic thought along with the continental background that will be examined below. The move to identify the Antichrist as the representative of an organisation rather than an individual was not necessarily entirely new, but it was a trope that took on a life of its own in Reformation England. Combined with an active focus on the “literal” sense of scripture, English apocalypticism was able to pick up influences from both European and native traditions to form a particularly important understanding of the book of Revelation.

the world, enduring the onslaught of Gog and Magog, with Jerusalem as the centre of faith and of a new world empire. There is no evidence of his ideas having any great influence. Lerner, *Feast*, pp. 79–82.

⁴⁷Kantik Ghosh, *The Wycliffite Heresy: Authority and the Interpretation of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 35.

⁴⁸Ghosh, *Wycliffite Heresy*, p. 42.

⁴⁹Bostock, *Antichrist*, pp. 60–64.

⁵⁰Quoted in Bostock, *Antichrist*, p. 93.

⁵¹Bostock, *Antichrist*, p. 122.

⁵²For a summary of recent contributions see Peter Marshall, “(Re)Defining the English Reformation”, *Journal of British Studies* 48:3 (July 2009), pp. 582–3.

2.3 Hermeneutics and the Book of Revelation in the Reformation

Much of this influence was obviously derived from continental thought, particularly that of the mainstream reformers. Reforming thought often focused upon the issues of scriptural translation and interpretation, and it is unsurprising that reformers were actively critical of those exegetes who had gone before them. Martin Luther thus viewed Origen's work as guilty of over allegorising, in that his readings never allowed the text to be taken in "the Jewish tradition". He believed that this had contributed to a misunderstanding of 2 Cor. 3:6 – the "letter" and "spirit" did not refer to the "literal" and "spiritual" sense, but rather to the aim of the law. The letter of scripture was always death if read without grace, which opened the reader's eyes to the spiritual truth contained within.⁵³ This provided an interpretive key. If the interpreter was still under law, any exegesis he produced would necessarily be corrupt. If, however, the interpreter was under grace (and thus endowed with the Spirit) he could bring forth a correct interpretation of the text. This led Luther to place a greater emphasis on both pneumatology and the literal sense than previous commentators. The Bible's words were "to be retained in their simplest meaning as far as possible. Unless the context manifestly compels it, they are not to be understood apart from their grammatical and proper sense, lest we give our adversaries occasion to make a mockery of all the Scriptures".⁵⁴

Unsurprisingly, this led to a greater emphasis on the importance of the *analogia fidei*. Where Augustine had emphasised the witness of the Church in forming the analogy, Luther focused on the role of scripture. Scripture was to be compared with scripture in order to reach the correct understanding: "If words are obscure in one place, they are clear in another. What God has so plainly declared to the world is in some parts of scripture stated in plain words, while in other parts it still lies hidden under obscure words".⁵⁵ The law/grace dichotomy was the key factor governing Luther's hermeneutical thought. All scripture should lead the reader to a contemplation of his sins, either in a way which damned (law) or a way which pointed towards Christ (grace): "Take Christ from the scriptures – and what more will you find in them?"⁵⁶ This shifted the focus which Augustine had placed on the "virtues". The primary rule in interpretation was no longer concerned with the way in which the text encouraged the reader to grow in love for God and

⁵³Martin Luther, *Luther's Works* (St Louis: Concordia and Philadelphia: Fortress, 1955–86) Vol. 27, p. 313. de Lubac claims this view on 2 Cor. 3:6 for Augustine (de Lubac, *Medieval Exegesis Vol 2*, p. 55), though he does not mention Luther's view in his discussion. For Luther's views on "Jerome and his friend Origen" see Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will* Trans. J.I. Packer and O.R. Johnston (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1957), pp. 240–247 and Luther, *Works* vol. 39 p. 178.

⁵⁴Luther, *Works*, vol. 36, p. 30.

⁵⁵Luther, *Bondage*, pp. 71–72.

⁵⁶Luther, *Bondage*, p. 71.

their neighbour. Rather, the aim of the Bible was to make the reader aware of their current soteriological status before God, whether saved or lost. The law/grace dichotomy allowed Luther to argue that passages which might previously have seemed “absurd” could in fact be taken literally or as historically true. As Luther reminded Erasmus, controversial doctrines such as election were no less “absurd” than the Virgin birth or incarnation.⁵⁷ The effect of Luther’s use of the *analogia fidei* was to allow a greater focus on the historicity of narrative in Old Testament interpretation. Nonetheless, this did not preclude the use of rhetorical tropes such as allegory. Crucially, however, this should not be constructed as a separate sense of scripture. If the context of a passage supported an allegorical reading, then the allegorical sense was allowed as the true literal sense: “One must let Aaron be just Aaron in the simple sense, unless the Spirit himself interprets him in a new sense, which then would be a new literal sense - as when St. Paul makes Christ out of Aaron for the Hebrews [Heb. 9–10]”.⁵⁸ The “literal” was therefore no longer one among many senses of scripture, but the one true sense. Allegorical, typological and anagogical meanings existed through rather than in addition to the literal sense of scripture.

This allowed Luther to argue that scripture was perspicuous when read with a focus on Christ. It was this focus that led him to initially reject the book of Revelation. The prophecy, he argued in his 1522 preface to the book, was too obscure and did not teach Christ clearly. By 1530, however, he had come to a more positive view of the book, believing it to broadly describe the history of the church. As Richard Bauckham noted, Luther changed his mind after seeing how Revelation could be used to assure readers of the survival of the true church against the forces of Antichrist (specifically, the papacy).⁵⁹ Luther’s new focus on Revelation found no place for a conversion of the Jews, however. After his early attempts at Jewish evangelism failed, he produced the notorious *On the Jews and their Lies*, arguing that Jews were “surely rejected by God, are no longer his people, and neither is he any longer their God”. Their conversion was seen to be impossible and promises of their future restoration should be interpreted spiritually.⁶⁰

Similar hermeneutical positions were evident in the work of John Calvin, whose writings were profoundly influential on the development of theological positions in England. As T.H.L. Parker has noted, Calvin’s emphasis on a “literal” reading of scripture meant an increased focus on the historicity of the text, to a greater degree than even Luther.⁶¹ For Calvin, a historically based reading acted as the basis for

⁵⁷Luther, *Bondage*, p. 201.

⁵⁸Luther, *Works*, vol. 39, p. 178.

⁵⁹Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 43–44. Luther also wrote of the Ottoman Empire as a second branch of antichrist.

⁶⁰Luther, *Works*, vol. 47, pp. 138–139.

⁶¹T.H.L. Parker, *Calvin’s Old Testament Commentaries* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986), pp. 83–121. Indeed, the Lutheran Aegidius Hunnius criticised Calvin for adopting a historical reading of certain Old Testament texts rather than reading them as typological references to Christ. See

an understanding of both the narrative and theological positions contained within it. While this meant that, like Luther, allegorical and tropological senses could be part of the literal sense, it also necessitated a more contextualised reading of the circumstances of a text's production. However, this had little impact upon Calvin's readings of Old Testament predictions of the restoration of the Jews. In his thought a type or figure was a person or thing that has been set up deliberately by God to stand as an effective pre-figuration of Christ and his kingdom. This meant that he could affirm a spiritualised reading of promises of a future Jewish kingdom: "For we must grasp this analogy in the prophets: when they discuss Christ's Kingdom, they set forth God's outward blessings as figures of spiritual goods".⁶² The type could not be divorced from the antitype; where individuals were considered, their primary reason for existence was to prefigure Christ.⁶³ Calvin could therefore argue that God "gave his covenant to the people of Israel in a veiled form, the grace of future and eternal happiness signified and figured under earthly benefits, the gravity of spiritual death under physical punishments".⁶⁴ Promises made to "Israel" were actually made to the elect: "I extend the name of Israel to all the people of God".⁶⁵ While some Jews would be saved in every period of church history, he did not believe that there would be any large scale end-times conversion.

The key to understanding the "earthly" promises made to the Jews was the concept of accommodation. Due to man's darkened ability, "as nurses commonly do with infants, God is wont in a measure to 'lisp' in speaking to us... as [to] accommodate the knowledge of him to our slight capacity".⁶⁶ As Christ "accommodate[d] his replies to those with whom he saw that he had to deal",⁶⁷ so scripture gave the reader only what they could understand, walking "softly, as with a mother's step, in accommodation to our weakness".⁶⁸ This dealt immediately with concerns on anthropomorphisms or seemingly immoral acts of God.⁶⁹ This concept could also be applied to the criticism that God demonstrated a changeable character

William McKane, "Calvin as an Old Testament Commentator" in *Calvin and Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Gamble, pp. 250–60.

⁶²John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Trans. Ford Lewis Battles, (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960). 3.13.4. Hereafter *Inst*.

⁶³Parker, *Old Testament*, p. 75.

⁶⁴Calvin, *Inst* 2.11.3.

⁶⁵John Calvin, *A Commentarie Upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romanes* (London, 1583), f.156r.

⁶⁶Calvin, *Inst* 1.13.1. Interestingly, this illustration is also found in Origen. See Hanson, *Allegory and Event*, p. 227.

⁶⁷Calvin, *Inst* 3.18.9.

⁶⁸Calvin, *Inst* 3.21.4.

⁶⁹Ford Lewis Battles, "God Was Accommodating Himself to Human Capacity" in *Calvin and Hermeneutics*, ed. Richard Gamble, p. 21.

in his relationship with the Jews. Answering criticism that it was unjust for God to have ordained different modes of communication with man in the old and new dispensations, Calvin wrote:

I reply that God ought not to be considered changeable merely because he accommodated diverse forms to different ages, as he knew would be expedient to each. If a farmer sets certain tasks for his household in the winter, other tasks for the summer, we shall not on this account accuse him of inconstancy, or think that he departs from the proper rule of agriculture, which accords with the continuous order of nature.⁷⁰

This doctrine of accommodation allowed Calvin to understand scriptural difficulties without recourse to allegory. The literal-historical sense of the words, as revealed by the Spirit was preserved. While having its basis in patristic thought, the extent to which this doctrine was employed by Calvin represented his major exegetical development. While a doctrine of accommodation had been present in the commentaries of Origen and Augustine, it was only in Calvin that it was highlighted as a method of responding to difficult passages. It allowed a continued focus on the literal-historical sense, while at the same time dealing with difficulties presented in the text.

Despite his detailed commentaries, Calvin had generally avoided the book of Revelation, producing no work dedicated to it.⁷¹ He was nonetheless negative towards any idea of an earthly millennium.⁷² The issue of a literal reign of the Saints had been raised forcefully in Münster in 1534, where an Anabaptist rising took the town and proclaimed it the New Jerusalem. The abuses, extreme communism and resulting massacre had shocked Protestant thought, and provided ammunition to Catholic interpreters who used the disaster as evidence of the danger of the Bible in the hands of the common man. From this point onwards, pre-millennial thought appeared to be an increasingly dangerous heresy.⁷³ The second Helvetic Confession of 1566, for example, condemned the doctrine as a “Jewish dream”.⁷⁴ The interpretation of Revelation remained, therefore, a particular challenge for biblical commentators. Nonetheless, it was a challenge often embraced with relish in England.

2.4 Hermeneutics, Eschatology and the Jews in Early Modern England

Hermeneutical thought in England therefore picked up trends in continental Protestantism. Nonetheless, there were a number of developments that formed what can be seen as a distinctive English tradition. English writers expressed their hermeneutical

⁷⁰Calvin, *Inst* 2.11.13. See Parker, *Old Testament*, p. 55ff for further discussion of this view.

⁷¹See Backus, *Reformation Readings*, pp. 70–72; Parker, *New Testament*, pp. 76–78.

⁷²“Now their fiction is too childish an error to need or to be worth a refutation . . . [they] do not realise how much reproach they are casting upon Christ and his Kingdom”. Calvin, *Inst* 3.15.5.

⁷³Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1957), pp. 272–306; Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, p. 211, Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, pp. 31–32.

⁷⁴Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, p. 31.

positions in a range of different works. These include the obvious, such as sermon manuals and biblical commentaries, but also particularly in works of polemic against Rome. According to William Tyndale, England's misplaced obedience to the papacy had "sprang first of allegories"⁷⁵; while Andrew Willet's *Synopsis Papismi* argued that a difference in the interpretation of scriptures was the root cause of all other disputes with the Roman church.⁷⁶ The hermeneutic differences between papist and Protestant were often expressed in the way in which the literal sense was used. As Tyndale argued, Catholics: "divide the scripture into four senses, the literal, tropological, allegorical, and anagogical. The literal sense is become nothing at all: for the pope hath taken it clean away, and hath made it his possession".⁷⁷

The analogy of faith was emphasised as a particularly useful way to maintain the literal sense, while also proving helpful in combatting claims that Protestants adopted a "private" interpretation. The argument that Protestants, in assuming the perspicuity of scripture, allowed an overly individualistic reading of the text was a common one among both continental and English opponents.⁷⁸ The *analogia fidei* allowed this claim to be rebutted, while maintaining both a belief in the sufficiency of scripture and the claim to remain within the received tradition of the universal church. William Fulke's response to the assertion that English Protestants interpreted "after their owne private conceite and phantasie" therefore highlighted the way in which the true literal sense of scripture maintained rather than destroyed the historical faith of the church. Protestants interpreted scripture "according to the plaine and natural sense of the same, agreeable to the rule or proportion of faith, which bene approved by the ancient fathers and Catholike Church of Christ, in al matters necessarie to eternall salvation".⁷⁹ As John Rainolds informed the Jesuit John Hart: "[we] learne of Christ himselfe the meaning of his word, and let the Spirit teach it: that is to expound scripture by scripture. A golden rule, to know and try the truth from error: prescribed by the Lord, and practiced by his servants for the building of his Church from age to age through all posteritie".⁸⁰ This was not, as Jesuits in particular charged, a simplistic method of exegesis. Whereas the *quadriga*

⁷⁵William Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises and Introductions to Different Portions of the Holy Scriptures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1848), p. 307.

⁷⁶Andrew Willet, *Synopsis Papismi, That is a general view of papistire* (London: Felix Kyngston, 1600), sig. B4ⁱⁱⁱr.

⁷⁷William Tyndale, *Doctrinal*, p. 303.

⁷⁸This had been articulated clearly at Trent. For particular English examples see the complaints of English convert to Rome William Alabaster, published along with refutations in Roger Fenton, *Answer to William Alablaster* (London, 1599) and John Racster, *William Alablasters Motives Removed* (London, 1598); also the record of the conference between English Jesuit John Hart and John Rainolds, published as *The Summe of the Conference . . . Touching the Head and the Faith of the Church* (London, 1584).

⁷⁹William Fulke, *A Defense of the Sincere and True Translations of the Holie Scriptures into the English Tong* (London, 1583), pp. 5–6.

⁸⁰John Rainolds, *The Summe of the Conference betweene John Rainoldes and John Hart: Touching the Head and the Faith of the Church* (London, 1584), p. 82.

presumed that scripture could contain four (or more) diverse meanings, for English exegetes the literal was equated with the full meaning of the passage in God's mind. This meaning could be allegorical, anagogical or tropological, but it remained the literal sense if it could be associated with the Spirit's intention in setting the scripture forth. "We affirme", wrote Willet, "that of one place of scripture there can bee but one sense, which we call the literall sense, when as the words are either properly or figuratively to expresse the thing which is meant". While "an allegorie or type may be part of the literall sense" interpreters should not make the Jesuits' mistake of framing a range of meanings. It would therefore be ludicrous to apply multiple senses to a passage such as Genesis 3:16 – while figuratively expressed, the progeny of Eve who crushes the serpent's head is literally meant of Christ, even though "spoken in a borrowed and figurative speech".⁸¹ Although scripture had allegorical, tropological and anagogical senses, noted Weemes, "these are not properly divers senses, but divers applications of one sense to our instruction, faith and manners".⁸² The analogy of faith allowed the interpreter to discern the difference between the sense of scripture and ways in which it could be applied.

This emphasis on the analogy of faith was obviously self-consciously constructed upon the tradition of reformed apologetics and the desire to demonstrate the continuity of Protestant churches with the universal church of true believers. The use of the analogy also presumed a certain level of understanding on the part of the exegete. This was shown, firstly, through the use of the historical beliefs affirmed by the fathers and the church, expressed particularly through the Apostles' Creed and those points on which there was near universal patristic assent. However, when the fathers were less clear, or appeared to contradict the clear testimony of the *analogia fidei*, they were to be rejected.⁸³ This historical imperative also included a critical understanding of the different circumstances and customs surrounding the composition of individual sections of scripture, particularly in those areas likely to cause controversy. To understand these correctly the exegete should make use of a number of academic skills in the form of sanctified scholarship. Thus to avoid perverting "the more obscure places" Roger Fenton declared that Protestant exegetes made use of the "meanes which God hath provided" for their interpretation. These included "the rules of reason and humane arts sanctified by Gods grace . . . also the record of antiquitie, consent of Fathers, testimony of learned men, conferring places, waighing circumstances, examining translations, with such like".⁸⁴

Interpretation should therefore begin with an understanding of the genre of the particular books being examined. A common division saw scripture broken down into "Historical", "Dogmaticall" or "Prophetical" books, with an awareness of

⁸¹ Willet, *Synopsis*, p. 34.

⁸² John Weemes, *The Christian Synagogue, Wherein is contained the diverse reading, the right poynting, translation, and collation of scripture with scripture. With the customs of the Hebrewes and Proselytes and of all those nations, with whom they were conversant* (London, 1623), p. 228.

⁸³ Rainolds, *Summe of the Conference*, p. 194.

⁸⁴ Fenton, *Answers*, p. 16 misl. 14.

the different use of language in each.⁸⁵ Once the genre had been identified, the expositor was to make use of their academic training. The exegete was, in William Perkins' words, to adopt a "grammaticall, rhetoricall, and logicall analysis".⁸⁶ An understanding of the liberal arts was therefore a key element of interpretation for English writers. Richard Sherry's *Treatise of Schemes and Tropes* warned those interpreting scripture that "if you be ignoraunte in the fygurative speches and tropes, you are lyke in manye greate doubttes to make but a slender solucion".⁸⁷ Likewise, Henry Peacham's 1577 primer in rhetoric *The Garden of Eloquence* advised readers that without an understanding of the key elements of his art "no man can reade profytably, or understand perfectly eyther poets, orators or the holy scriptures".⁸⁸ Both works therefore went on to highlight the complexities of language and the range of different ways in which both speech and prose could be used to modify the apparently simple sense of the words, shifting from the "proper and naturall signification, to another not proper, but yet nye and likely".⁸⁹ At times it could be argued that "the sense of scripture is against the shew of wordes" for rhetorical or theological purposes.⁹⁰

Alongside rhetoric, logic also played an important part in deciding interpretations. English hermeneutical positions (and theology in general) were heavily influenced by the system developed by Pierre de la Ramée (Petrus Ramus) in Paris from the 1530s onwards. Against the prevailing Aristotelian thought of the French university, Ramus had argued that logic was to be considered an essential part of philosophy rather than a separate discipline. He defined this as *ars bene disserendi* – the art of analysing or discussing something well. To facilitate this, he divided logic into two – *inventio*, through which concepts were arranged as individuals and *iudicium*, through which these individuals were then arranged into arguments. Where Aristotle had taught the use of a number of complex syllogistic formulae to organise the arguments, Ramus preferred the use of the self-evident axiom as

⁸⁵For example, see William Perkins, *The Arte of Prophecyng* (London, 1607), pp. 8–17 and Nicholas Byfield, *Directions for the Private Reading of the Scriptures* (London, 1618), pp. 1–3. In Perkins these divisions can be further broken down into "Greater" or "Lesser" prophetic books. The historical books are: The Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and Job. The dogmatic are Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs. The greater prophetic books are Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. The remainder are classed as the "lesser propheticall" books. The books of the New Testament are divided simply along the lines of Gospel/Acts, Pauline Epistles, General Epistles (Including Hebrews), and Revelation.

⁸⁶Perkins, *Arte*, p. 26. Of course he was thinking particularly of using scripture for preaching.

⁸⁷Richard Sherry, *A Treatise of Schemes of Tropes* ([London], 1550), sig. Aⁱⁱⁱⁱ[iii]v.

⁸⁸Henry Peacham, *The Garden of Eloquence, conteyning the figures of grammar and rhetorick* (London, 1577), sig. Aⁱⁱⁱⁱr.

⁸⁹Peacham, *Garden of Eloquence*, sig. Bⁱv.

⁹⁰Rainolds, *Conference*, p. 69.

the primary mode of *iudicium*.⁹¹ His most important advance came in his definition of method. Aristotelians of the period had generally agreed that there were several forms of method. Ramus, however, argued that there was only one type, and this was visible from nature. This method for arranging arguments always moved from the general to the particular, just as a doctor would begin by examining a patient's body as a whole before examining the constituent parts.⁹² This was the hallmark of Ramist logic, representing a desire to cut through the "parts" of the work analysed, reducing it to its one root meaning.⁹³ Ramus believed this method to be universal and applicable to all disciplines. As the English Ramist Abraham Fraunce noted, "This methode onely, and none other is to bee observed, so often as wee teach any art or science, or take upon us to intreate perfectly of any generall matter".⁹⁴ Ramist analyses were often displayed visually through large charts of branching dichotomies, as a treatise moved through its constituent parts from the general to the particular. This "analysis" aimed to exclude arbitrary arguments with the divisions of a subject always arising from the subject itself.⁹⁵ Of course, when the subject in question was the Bible, this allowed an interpreter to bring in portions from one section of the text to illuminate another without making arbitrary connections. The text was to be treated as a whole. Biblical texts, when "analysed" in this way, became more easily understood. For both the preacher and congregation, this logical system allowed sermons to be implanted in the memory with ease.⁹⁶ The manner in which this form of logic could be used to support the application of the *analogia fidei* should be obvious.

In England, Ramism gained popularity from the 1570s onwards. Wilbur Samuel Howell finds the first evidence of Ramism being taught in England in 1579, through the lectures of Brightman's friend and colleague Laurence Chaderton.⁹⁷ Indeed, Ramism emerged with particular force at Cambridge in this period. Fraunce's *Lawyers Logike*, for example, explicitly stated that it was based on "my eight yeares labour at Cambridge".⁹⁸ The particular application of Ramism to theology was most clearly seen, however, in William Perkins at Christ's College. As Lisa

⁹¹ Donald McKim, "The Functions of Ramism in William Perkins' Theology", *Sixteenth Century Journal* XVI:4 (Winter 1985), p. 505; Donald McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins' Theology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1987), p. 73.

⁹² Erland Sellberg, "Petrus Ramus", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2006 Edition), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2006/entries/ramus/>, Section 3.4. Accessed 30/05/08.

⁹³ Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method and The Decay of Dialogue* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 191; McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins*, p. 32.

⁹⁴ Abraham Fraunce, *The Lawyers Logike* (London, 1588), f. 113r-v.

⁹⁵ McKim, *Ramism in William Perkins*, pp. 115–116.

⁹⁶ Keith L. Sprunger, "Ames, Ramus, and the Method of Puritan Theology", *Harvard Theological Review* 59:2 (April 1966), p. 134.

⁹⁷ Wilbur Samuel Howell, *Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500–1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956) p. 179.

⁹⁸ Fraunce, *Lawyers Logike*, sig. 2v.

Gordis has suggested, Perkins' writings on exegesis were hugely influential on the hermeneutical thought of puritans throughout the seventeenth century.⁹⁹ In his works on the subject, Perkins stated that Bible prophecy presented unique challenges to the exegete. For: "the word of God doth not alway set downe things, as they follow in order of time just one after an other: but sometime it doth anticipate, putting such things in former histories, as are already done and accomplished, which in regard of their event should be related afterward. Sometime againe it useth by recapitulation to declare things as following in order of time, which doe properly belong to a former narration".¹⁰⁰ Perkins argued that human conceptions of time and history – which presumed a linear chronological flow – were themselves corrupted. Human logic was so far removed from God and a true understanding of his purposes that scripture appeared absurd without spiritual illumination. Prophecy, therefore, required a logical system to understand it, a framework through which it could be read. This framework was governed by Ramist logic. The appeal of Ramism to the puritan exegete is obvious. When used to study the Bible, it presumed that a universal hermeneutic could be applied to the whole work. While the Bible itself may be the work of different authors at different times, each book acted as the logical outworking of a single mind – the mind of God. If Ramism was the one true logic, it therefore followed that it should be used to understand the logical flow of the Bible. In other words, the true literal sense of the scripture could be reached only through the use of a logical system built around Ramism. In all of this, Perkins emphasised the importance of the *analogia fidei* to a far greater degree than previous writers. He defined the analogy as a measure of orthodoxy formed from key scripture and creedal doctrine.¹⁰¹ Thus, scripture was "either Analogical & plaine, or Crypticall and darke". The "plaine" places reflected the *analogia fidei* and were relatively simple to interpret in their "literal" sense. Thus, "If the naturall signification of the words of the place propounded doe agree with the circumstances of the same place, it is the proper meaning of the place".¹⁰² This was the case, for example, in all matters which were essential to individual salvation. However, if the words of scripture appeared cryptic, then the following rule was to be applied:

If the native (or naturall) signification of the words doe manifestly disagree with, either the analogy of faith, or very perspicuous places of the Scripture: then the other meaning, which is given of the place propounded, is naturall and proper, if it agree with contrarie and like places, with the circumstances and wordes of the place, and with the nature of that thing, which is intreated of.¹⁰³

⁹⁹Gordis, *Opening Scripture*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁰William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience*, (London, 1606), pp. 247–248.

¹⁰¹Perkins, *Arte*, pp. 31–32. This concept was derived from Augustine, as noted by Knott, *Sword of the Spirit*, p. 36. Stanley Fish has sarcastically described this approach as "Whenever you find something that doesn't say what it is supposed to say, decide that it doesn't mean what it says; and then *make* it say what it's supposed to say" *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), p. 22.

¹⁰²Perkins, *Arte*, pp. 45–46.

¹⁰³Perkins, *Arte*, pp. 46–47.

Yet knowledge of rhetoric and logic alone were not enough to fully equip the exegete for their task. Along with the rise of Ramist logic came a growing interest in tracing the historical background of the text. This is unsurprising given the emphasis placed upon establishing the context of each part of scripture and the situation it was addressed to. This historicism extended far beyond a simple desire to explain the scope of individual sections of the Bible. In particular, increasing importance was placed on the value of understanding Jewish customs and linguistic practices. This was particularly true of the study of the Hebrew language, with the first Regius chairs of Hebrew established at Oxford and Cambridge in the 1540s. By the 1580s rabbinic commentaries were available in a number of colleges in both institutions, and the study of Hebrew was a commonplace amongst students. When Franciscus Junius dedicated his *Grammatica Hebraeae Linguae* to Philip Sidney, he therefore noted that Englishmen “were friends of art and friends of Hebrew; that their soules breathed out only Hebrew flowers, so to speak; that their voices intoned only Hebrew”.¹⁰⁴ This use of Jewish scholarship provided ammunition to Catholic critics. Gregory Martin, lecturer at the English College in Rheims, charged that Protestants had formed an ungodly alliance with “the sworn enemies of our saviour Christ” in making use of rabbinic work. In responding to this charge William Fulke was dismissive. It was only for a better understanding of scripture’s literal sense – “to learne the proprietie of Hebrew wordes of the learned Rabbins” – that Protestants made use of Jewish scholarship.¹⁰⁵ This growing interest in Hebrew led to an increased awareness of the Jewish people as a still living race, and of the breadth and depth of rabbinic scholarship on the Old Testament.¹⁰⁶ Combative Hebraist Hugh Broughton went so far as to affirm that “Maimonides hath infinite much that cleareth the Apostles truth more fitly then Greek and Latin Fathers do”.¹⁰⁷ In his introduction to John Weemes’s manual on exposition *The Christian Synagogue*, William Symson thus praised the author who had “read with deliberation also, the ancient customes of the Jewes, in their owne *Rabbines*, and hath mentioned so many of them, as gives no small light for the understanding of the text”.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, Weemes dedicated no fewer than 148 pages of the 207 page volume to this theme. A growing awareness of the historical and cultural background to the text increasingly led writers to affirm that the literal sense of a text should be in line with the way in which it was understood by its original recipients. As Fulke cautioned, the text “must be

¹⁰⁴Quoted in Eliane Glaser, *Judaism without Jews: Philosemitism and Christian Polemic in Early Modern England* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 44.

¹⁰⁵Fulke, *A Defense*, p. 223.

¹⁰⁶See Harold Fisch, *Jerusalem and Albion: The Hebraic Factor in Seventeenth-Century Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964), pp. 44–117; David S. Katz, *The Jews in the History of England 1485–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 107–144; David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603–1655* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982) pp. 43–88; Peter Toon, ‘The Latter Day Glory’ in *The Puritans, The Millennium & The Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600–1660*, ed. Peter Toon (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 1970), pp. 23–26.

¹⁰⁷Hugh Broughton, *A Revelation of the Holy Apocalyps* (Middelberg, 1610), p. 3.

¹⁰⁸William Symson in Weemes, *The Christian Synagogue*, sig. A2v.

translated according to the signification [it] had in the time of the writer whome you translate".¹⁰⁹ Unsurprisingly, this tied into the way in which the Old Testament in particular was understood: "We must not, neither is it safe for the strengthening of our faith, to draw places of scripture unto Christ, which by the holy Ghost had an other meaning: so shall the Jewes laugh us to scorne".¹¹⁰

Yet while there was an increasing awareness of the historical background to scripture across the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, both a historicist reading of Revelation and a typological reading of Old Testament promises to the Jews remained an established part of the English hermeneutic tradition. Partially, this can be attributed to the reformed belief (particularly seen in Calvin) that the promises were always understood spiritually by the faithful, even by the Old Testament patriarchs.¹¹¹ Yet it was also a product of the combination of rhetoric, logic and historical background discussed above, which allowed an interpreter to argue that the scriptures could express a meaning beyond the bare letter. This was in no way an abandonment of the literal sense. Rather, it was a recognition that the literal sense acted as an umbrella term with a panoply of meanings potentially contained within it. In Tyndale's words, "the scripture useth proverbs, similitudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifieth, is ever the literal sense, which thou must seek out diligently".¹¹² When interpreting the promises by the *analogia fidei* writers were thus keen to avoid the dangers of an over-literalistic reading often linked to the extremism seen in Münster. It was therefore vital that Christ's fulfilment of the types and images of Old Testament ceremonies and promises be taken into account when reading prophecy. In his 1590 *De Universali et Novissima Iudaeorum Vocatione*, Willet warned that while the Jewish people as a whole would be called to Christ, the Old Testament promises of national restoration should not imply any return to the land of Israel: "Praedictiones Prophetarum de Iudaeis non ad littera expendendae".¹¹³ When scripture promised the "rest of Canaan" he noted in *Synopsis Papismi*, it was talking spiritually of "the Kingdom of God".¹¹⁴ This was the true sense of these promises. In Nicholas Gibbon's words, as "the seed of Abram in the flesh enjoyed the possession of Canaan: his seed after the Spirit enjoy the Kingdom of rest, an immortall inheritance".¹¹⁵ So the promises were "but shaddowes and significations to put the Jewes in remembranuce of [Christ's]

¹⁰⁹Fulke, *A Defense*, p. 115.

¹¹⁰Fulke, *A Defense*, p. 512.

¹¹¹Guibbory, *Christian Identity*, pp. 15–17.

¹¹²Tyndale, *Doctrinal*, p. 304.

¹¹³"The predictions of the Jewish prophets are not to be taken literally". Andrew Willet, *De Universali et Novissima Iudaeorum Cocatione Secundum Apertissimam Divi Pauli Prophetiam* (Cambridge, 1590), sig. C3r.

¹¹⁴Willet, *Synopsis*, p. 34.

¹¹⁵Nicholas Gibbons, *Questions and Disputations Concerning the Holy Scripture* (London, 1601), p. 499.

comming before he came".¹¹⁶ In John Foxe's more acerbic phrasing, the Jews were still fooled by taking spiritual promises literally: "sweetely beguiling them selves, with a glauering shew of a false shadow, flattering them selves likewise, with a fantastick hope of a terrene kingdome, whereof they had never any one word promised by God".¹¹⁷ For Foxe and other Protestants these promises were read through the same New Testament texts used by patristic and medieval commentators to spiritualise them. The true children of Israel were those who had believed the promises, not those who merely had an ethnic connection to the Jewish race, for as Paul concluded in Romans 9:6 "they are not all Israel, which are of Israel". God could raise children of Abraham up from the stones if he so wished (Mt. 3:9, Lk. 3:8), and with the partition wall between Jew and Gentile now broken down (Eph. 2:14) there was no special earthly future for ethnic Jews. God's true church had always been made up of believers, not of those of one particular ethnic background or another. While the majority of those saved in the Old Testament were Jewish, and the majority after Christ Gentiles, the church had always contained an ethnic mixture – whether Rahab, Ruth and Naomi in the Old Testament, or the mixture of Jewish and Gentile believers in the New Testament. The church, or "true Israel" had thus continued in an unbroken line "since the beginning of the world".¹¹⁸ As the popular 1577 translation of Andreas Hyperius' *Practis of Preaching* noted, "if we beleeve and obey [God] in deede, then are we true Israelites, and citizens registered in the kingdome of heaven".¹¹⁹

The Old Testament promises were therefore rightly read as referring to the spiritual blessing of the church and Christian life rather than the earthly promises of restoration to Canaan. While the idea of restoration to Holy Land had been broached by occasional radicals,¹²⁰ the idea of any Jewish return was usually greeted with Foxe's characteristic horror:

¹¹⁶Thomas Becon, *The Demaundes of Holy Scripture* (London, 1577), sig. Eⁱⁱⁱv.

¹¹⁷John Foxe, *A Sermon Preached at the Christening of a Certaine Jew* (London, 1578), sig. C1v.

¹¹⁸Nicholas Byfield, *The Patternne of Wholesome Words* (London, 1618), p. 349.

¹¹⁹Andreas Hyperius, *The Practis of Preaching* (London, 1577), fol.81v.

¹²⁰These include Francis Kett (d.1589), who was accused of holding that Christ "is now in his human nature gathering a church here in earth in Judea", that he would return before the final judgement, and reign as King from Jerusalem, and that there would be two literal resurrections before judgement day. However, Kett's printed work appears almost completely orthodox. Certainly, the majority of references to "Judah", "Israel", and "David" referred allegorically to the church (See *The Glorious and Beautiful Garland of Mans Glorification* (London, 1585)). Kett was executed in 1589, probably for Arian tendencies. For more on his thought see Dewey D. Wallace Jr., "From Eschatology to Arian Heresy: The Case of Francis Kett (d.1589)", *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974), pp. 459–473. Other radicals to suggest the idea included Ralph Turden, who styled himself as the new Jewish messiah, and was considered insane (Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, pp. 188–191). A similarly eccentric interpretation was found in Roger Edwards. He wrote his manuscript work in 1580 and dedicated it to Bishop Aylmer (British Library Ms. Lansdowne 353/3). The work (described by the manuscript editor as "A Phantastic Booke"), though rich in scriptural detail was bizarre – Edwards was imprisoned in the Tower at the time of its composition. His literal reading of the prophets is interesting (for example, see ff. 198v,

the perpetuall establishment of the kingdome of David, must be farre otherwise understoode, [in this] you [Jews] either lye shamefully in the order of your exposition, or els that your owne Prophets did prophesie contrary to the trueth . . . But let us imagine and graunt by way of a case put, that you may recover your Jerusalem againe: which notwithstanding will never come to passe, (unlesse God himselfe and all his Prophets doe lie).¹²¹

While a national restoration was out of the question, a general hope for Jewish conversion was commonly held. Unsurprisingly, this was largely based around the hope of Israel's salvation expressed in Romans 11:26. In John Bale's 1545 commentary on Revelation, *The Image of Both Churches*, for example, the author argued for a final conversion of the Jews: "That Christes prophecye may be founde true. The last to be the fyrst, and the fyrst the last. For he that hath dispersed Israell, shall bringe him againe to his folde, as Heiremy recordeth".¹²² The marginal notations of the 1560 Geneva Bible thus described a great end-times Jewish conversion based upon Romans 11: "He sheweth that the time shal come that the whole nation of ye Jewes thogh not every one particularly, shalbe joined to the church of Christ".¹²³ A note in the Bible's indices on Isa. 10:22b contained a comment suggestive of Jewish millennial blessing: "This smalle nomber, which seemed to be consumed, and yet according to God's decree is saved, shalbe sufficient to fil all the worlde with righteousnes".¹²⁴ Even Foxe at his most virulent was consoled with the hope of Jewish conversion. After a long polemic accusing the Jews of deicide he could sound a note of optimism addressed to an imagined Jewish audience: "I hope well of your amendement: for why should I not hope, when as I finde S. Paul to conceive so well of your returne againe? . . . That is to say, that [God] wil vouchsafe to reduce you againe into his owne familie, with his elect Saints, and make you partakers of his gladsome Gospell".¹²⁵ It is important to note that this conversion envisaged the dissolution of Judaism not just as a religion, but also as a racial identity. The Jews were to be subsumed into a new Christian identity, with all marks of distinctiveness removed in conversion. As the popular English edition of Heinrich Bullinger's sermons concluded, the Jews must "forsake their Jewishnes . . . [and] goe to the Christen religion".¹²⁶ The category of "Jew", both as a racial and religious category, would be extinguished.

199v, 224r), especially in his belief in "Perpetua pax Israelis in terra" (198r) but it is impossible to argue that his little known manuscript work had any influence.

¹²¹Foxe, *Sermon*, sig. f.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ [iiii]r.

¹²²John Bale, *The Image of Both Churches* (London, 1580), I.142. See also I.96–99.

¹²³*The Geneva Bible: A Facsimile of the 1560 Edition* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), New Testament, p. 75 l.

¹²⁴*Geneva Bible 1560*, Old Testament, p. 287.

¹²⁵Foxe, *Sermon*, sigs. L.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ [iii]r; M1r. See also Weemes, *Christian Synagogue*, p. 141.

¹²⁶Bullinger, *Hundred Sermons*, sig. 53v. For further examples see John Napier, *A Plaine Discoverie of the Whole Revelation of Saint John* ([Edinburgh], 1594), p. 120; Foxe, *A Sermon*, sig. L.ⁱⁱⁱⁱ [iii]v, Perkins, "A Fruitfull Dialogue Concerning the end of the World" (1587) in *Workes*, Vol. III (London, 1631), p. 470.

This hope of Jewish conversion must be located within a wider English apocalyptic expectation which was itself heavily concerned with hermeneutic issues. As Tyndale had noted, “The apocalypse, or revelations of John are allegories whose literal sense is hard to find in many places”.¹²⁷ This did not, however, stop his contemporaries from attempting to understand the book. The usual approach was to adopt a broad historicism in which the symbols in Revelation were applied to events in church history.¹²⁸ Several writers therefore used this method to produce important commentaries on Revelation from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Bale’s highly influential *Image of Both Churches*, produced during a period of exile late in Henry VIII’s reign and published in three parts from 1545 onwards, read Revelation as descriptive of a battle between two churches, one of Christ and one of Antichrist: “Hee that knoweth not thys booke, knoweth not what the church is whereof he is a member”.¹²⁹ The commentary was not concerned with the minutiae of apocalyptic details, but aimed instead to correct corrupt doctrine in the English church. Revelation thus described the history of the true church: “It is a full clerenesse to all the cronicles and most notable histories which hath bene written since Christes ascension”.¹³⁰ As with Augustine, Bale believed the first resurrection to be spiritual and the millennium to refer to the first thousand years after Christ.¹³¹ Hermeneutically, Bale was aware of the numerous challenges posed by the book. Acknowledging the difficulties of figurative speech, he believed the only way in which it could be interpreted was by using the *analogia fidei*: “The more the figurative speech aboundeth heere, the more let them conferre it with the other scriptures without all honyed colours of retoricke or of crafted philosophy, specially with those which of their owne nature jointly agreeth to the same”¹³²

Bale had, during his first exile, become part of a community of Englishmen absorbing Reformed ideas on the continent. While most Henrician exiles had returned to England during Edward’s reign, it was not long before a new exilic community began to form in the wake of Mary’s persecutions. This created a new community of Englishmen abroad, who absorbed a number of continental ideas on both hermeneutics and, specifically, on Revelation. These ideas slowly filtered into the English mainstream as exiles returned under Elizabeth.¹³³ Continental attacks on the Papacy as Antichrist, combined with earlier Lollard thought and growing persecution, came together to form a particularly strong anti-Catholic tradition in England.¹³⁴

¹²⁷Tyndale, *Doctrinal*, p. 305.

¹²⁸See Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 1–110.

¹²⁹Bale, *Image*, sig. Aⁱⁱⁱr.

¹³⁰Bale, *Image*, sig. Aⁱⁱⁱⁱr.

¹³¹Bale, *Image*, III.103–169.

¹³²Bale, *Image*, sig. B.iv.

¹³³Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, p. 33; Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, pp. 59–86.

¹³⁴This is not to question the value of revisionist interpretations of the English reformation, but rather to highlight the prevalence of anti-Catholic thought in apocalyptic works.

While Bale's work was important it was Foxe, another exile, who would have a greater general influence on English thought. In his *Actes and Monuments*, he not only set out a history of martyrs of the English church, but also placed it within an apocalyptic framework.¹³⁵ From the 1570 edition onwards, Foxe saw a fivefold division of church history, beginning with the persecution of the godly until roughly three hundred years after Christ, a period analogous to the 42 months in which the Gentiles trample the temple in Rev. 11:2 and for which the beast rules in Rev. 13:5. The second period described the millennium of Rev. 20, which Foxe argued began with Constantine's accession. There followed a "time of backsliding", beginning in roughly 750. From around 1080, with the ascension of Hildebrand and Innocent III, the church was thrown into turmoil and pure doctrine obscured. In 1324, the "time of antichrist and loosing of Satan", the great reformers Wyclif and Hus were harshly persecuted by the established church and the millennium ended. This final period included Foxe's own day and was marked by "reformation and purging, wherin antichrist beginneth to be revealed, and to appear in his colours". It would continue until an unspecified date in the future, but there was now nothing holding back the final judgement.¹³⁶ The impact of Foxe's historiography cannot be overestimated. With its resolutely English and pro-Elizabeth basis, it proved to be a useful tool for supporting both state policy and constructing English identity.¹³⁷

An equally important influence on English thought was the Geneva Bible, which went through 140 re-printings from 1560 to 1644.¹³⁸ Four different editions appeared from 1557 onwards, each containing a number of annotations on the text. The 1576 edition contained Laurence Tomson's adaptation of Theodore Beza's notes on Revelation, and represented a reduction in size from the 1560 edition. The 1599 printing contained the 1576 translation with the replacement of Beza's notes with those of French minister Franciscus Junius. The Geneva notes were an adaptation of his short commentary on Revelation published in 1592 as *Apocalypsis, A Briefe and Learned Commentarie upon the Revelation of Saint John*. Junius' reading was both more historiographically and rhetorically based than that of his predecessors – he began his commentary with a table of historical events and the symbols they fulfilled.¹³⁹ Otherwise, his interpretation differed little from the

¹³⁵There were several editions of Foxe's work. The schema here was first used in his 1570 edition. See Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 41–45.

¹³⁶John Foxe, *Actes and Monuments* (London, 1596), p. 1.

¹³⁷For example, "every good man well to weigh with himself the long tranquillity, the great plenty, the peaceable liberty, which the Lord of his mercy hath bestowed upon this land during all the reign hitherto of this our Sovereign & most happy Queen ELIZABETH . . .", Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, f. 26r. This theme will be discussed more fully in Chap. 4, particularly in terms of William Haller's claim that Foxe developed an idea of the elect nation.

¹³⁸See Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, pp. 71–86 for a detailed history of this reading and the different editions of the Geneva Bible.

¹³⁹Franciscus Junius, *Apocalypsis, A Briefe and Learned Commentarie Upon the Revelation of Saint Iohn*, (London, 1592) f. 7r.

standard Reformation model. The thousand years “falleth precisely upon the times of that wicked Hildebrand”¹⁴⁰ and the first resurrection was spiritual.¹⁴¹

Also adding to this developing stream of apocalyptic thought (and influenced both by the continental tradition and Ramist logic) Scottish commentator and mathematician John Napier published an influential historicist reading of Revelation in 1593. Napier wrote in English particularly to appeal to readers south of the border. The defeat of the Armada in 1588 had been a forceful reminder to him that Antichrist’s forces were proving to be a growing threat.¹⁴² Napier was keenly aware of the difficulties presented by the literal sense of Revelation, yet believed that he could reach the “true sense and meaning” of the text through “the analytick or demonstrative maner”. He aimed for a work in which scripture was interpreted “not of the literal sense of the chapter, but of the true meaning and interpretation of the same”.¹⁴³ Each verse was divided into a paraphrase and a history, and set forth as a series of analytical prepositions. This analysis allowed him to be critical of over-literalism. The millenarian heresy, for example, had sprung from taking the text “literally and definitely”.¹⁴⁴ Revelation should therefore be read “not literally . . . but after a prophetical and figurative manner of speech”.¹⁴⁵ Napier’s method and mathematical interest allowed him to be more precise than previous commentators in dating events in the book. He believed that each trumpet and vial judgement in Revelation described a period of 245 years, beginning with the first jubilee year after Jerusalem’s destruction in 71 CE. This allowed him to suggest 1786 as the last possible date for the day of God’s judgement and renovation of the world. Noting that Jesus had promised that the final days would be cut short for the sake of the elect (Mt. 24:22), he argued that the downfall of Babylon (Rome) would come at some point prior to that year. Daniel 12:11–12 had predicted that two periods would follow the time when “the daily sacrifice” was abolished, one of 1,290 days, the other of 1,335 days. Christian interpreters usually took these days to equal years (as per Tyconius and Ezk. 4:5), dating them from the destruction of the Jerusalem temple. Napier, however, believed that they did not begin until the attempted reconstruction of the temple by the Emperor Julian (“the Apostate”) in 365 CE. Using this as his starting point, he added the 1,335 days and found 1700 as the final date for judgement on Rome (although he believed that it could arrive as early as 1688).¹⁴⁶

The detail of Napier’s historical framework was representative of a drift towards particularism in commentaries on Revelation, as a focus on the need for a detailed, historical structure to surround the text grew. As Broughton wrote in 1590, knowledge of history was “needfull to be knowen for to strengthen our Fayth, that we may

¹⁴⁰Junius, *Apocalypsis*, p. 79 n.3.

¹⁴¹Junius, *Apocalypsis*, p. 79 n.11.

¹⁴²Firth, *Apocalyptic Tradition*, p. 138.

¹⁴³Napier, *Plaine*, sig. A4ⁱⁱⁱv.

¹⁴⁴Napier, *Plaine*, p. 240.

¹⁴⁵Napier, *Plaine*, p. 190. Other examples include pp. 114, 187, 250.

¹⁴⁶Napier, *Plaine*, pp. 7–22.

see a constant agreement in severall ages".¹⁴⁷ An understanding of history therefore allowed the reader to grasp the relationships between each of scripture's constituent parts. In other words, it helped form the basis of the *analogia fidei*. The emphasis on this type of framework for understanding the minutiae of the apocalyptic text would become increasingly common over the seventeenth century. This desire for greater historical understanding was no aberration from the hermeneutical norms of medieval writers or continental reformers. Rather it was a development of their positions and a desire to better understand the literal sense of scripture which drove writers to seek a more historical, contextualised understanding of the past – and, in the case of Revelation – the future as well. In spite of this increasing focus upon the meaning the historical background of the text, however, Old Testament promises to the Jews were still read as spiritualised promises made to God's true Israel – the Church. While there was unquestionably a widespread hope for Jewish conversion, this could only be conceived of as an influx of Jews into the Gentile church as per Romans 11. While these positions may have held at the end of the sixteenth century, they were soon to be challenged – not, however, by radical forms of thought, but by the very tools through which they themselves had been constructed.

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¹⁴⁷Hugh Broughton, *A Concent of Scripture* (London, 1590), sig. 2ⁱⁱr.

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