



“The Final Judgement: John Bale’s Apocalyptic Justification of English Protestantism”

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This research examines the role of apocalyptic thought as a means to legitimize Protestant Christianity in the sixteenth century through the efforts of John Bale, a former Carmelite monk turned English Protestant. Apocalyptic thought held a controversial place in the minds of sixteenth-century Protestant reformers. Some, like Martin Luther and John Calvin, were hesitant to interpret the Book of Revelation due to concerns of the text's reliability. However, Bale embraced apocalyptic thought as a way to prove that the Protestant brand of Christianity was purer than that promoted by the Roman Church. Bale had several strategies to make his point. First, he traced all ecclesiastical history from the time of Christ on earth to his present day and concluded that the Protestants of his day could trace their beliefs directly back to those of the Apostles in the first century. Next, Bale interpreted passages of Revelation to conclude that beliefs specifically tied to the Roman Church were tenets created by Antichrist and thus had no place in a true Christian society. Finally, Bale used his understanding of the direction of history to conclude that English Church represented God's chosen church on Earth and that the English people held a special place in the events of the End Times. This research helps to shed light on an understudied figure of the English Reformation whose apocalyptic writings proved to be hugely popular in England at the time of his writing.