

Explore the Mind-blowing English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War

Throughout history, humans have been captivated by visions of the end times and the impending apocalypse. From religious texts to works of literature, apocalyptic themes have played a prominent role in shaping our understanding of the world and its future. In this article, we delve into the intriguing realm of English apocalyptic visions, tracing their origins from the Reformation era to the eve of the Civil War.

The Reformation: Awakening the Apocalyptic Imagination

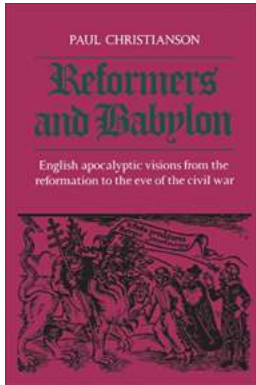
The Reformation in England brought significant religious and political changes, which fueled the fires of apocalyptic fervor. With the split from the Roman Catholic Church and the rise of Protestantism, millenarian beliefs gained traction among various factions.

One of the most influential figures of the time, John Foxe, painted an apocalyptic picture of England in his famous work "The Book of Martyrs." It detailed the sufferings of Protestant martyrs under Catholic persecution, amplifying the sense of impending doom and ultimate deliverance.

Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War (Heritage) by Andrew Rawson (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English



File size	: 1486 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Print length	: 296 pages
Hardcover	: 212 pages
Item Weight	: 1.05 pounds
Dimensions	: 6.14 x 0.5 x 9.21 inches



Another vocal proponent of apocalyptic ideas during this period was Thomas Brightman. His works, such as "Commentary on the Revelation," interpreted biblical prophecies to predict the imminent downfall of the Papacy, a belief that resonated with many Protestants.

The Elizabethan Era: Exploring Divinely Ordained Destiny

As England ushered in the Elizabethan era, apocalyptic visions continued to evolve. This period witnessed a growth in literature and theater, providing a platform for authors and playwrights to explore eschatological themes.

William Shakespeare, a literary genius of his time, incorporated apocalyptic imagery in several of his plays. The most notable example being "Macbeth," where the protagonist's ambition and subsequent downfall are reminiscent of apocalyptic warnings against human pride and arrogance.

In addition, poets like Edmund Spenser developed allegorical works, such as "The Faerie Queene," which symbolically explored the political and religious tensions of the time through apocalyptic motifs.

The Jacobean Era: A Tumultuous Transition

The Jacobean era marked a period of significant political and religious upheaval, attracting renewed attention to apocalyptic visions. The reign of King James I brought about doctrinal conflict and tensions surrounding the succession of power.

During this time, Thomas Middleton's play "The Revenger's Tragedy" portrayed a corrupt and decaying society on the brink of destruction, injecting a darker and more cynical tone into English apocalyptic literature.

Another notable work of this era was John Donne's poem "An Anatomy of the World." It contemplated the state of humanity, echoing apocalyptic anxieties and the disillusionment of a society grappling with change.

The Eve of the Civil War: Divisions and Doomsday

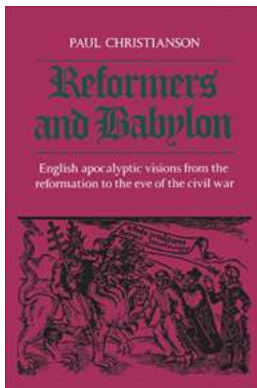
As the tensions between the Parliamentarians and the Royalists escalated, the dawn of the English Civil War approached. Apocalyptic visions took on a new significance, reflecting the societal divisions and anticipating the impending conflict.

John Milton's epic poem "Paradise Lost" captivated readers with its vivid depiction of the fall of man and the eternal struggle between good and evil. It served as a cautionary tale, reflecting upon the dire consequences of pride and rebellion.

Additionally, Thomas Hobbes explored the apocalyptic nature of humanity in his philosophical treatise "Leviathan." He argued for absolute government control to prevent the chaos and destruction that he believed would inevitably ensue without a strong central authority.

English apocalyptic visions from the Reformation to the eve of the Civil War present a rich tapestry of ideas, fears, and hopes that shaped the intellectual

landscape of the time. These visions reflected the political, religious, and social tensions of each era, offering a glimpse into the collective imagination of the English people as they grappled with the uncertainties of their world. Today, these writings continue to fascinate and inspire, reminding us of the enduring human fascination with the end of the world.



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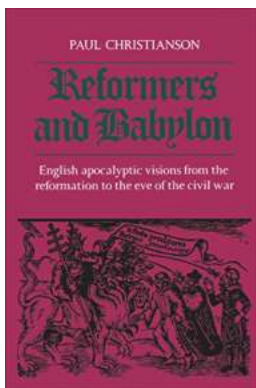
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Starting in the 1530s with John Bale, English reformers found in the apocalyptic mysteries of the Book of Revelation a framework for reinterpreting the history of Christianity and explaining the break from the Roman Catholic Church. Identifying the papacy with antichrist and the Roman Catholic Church with Babylon, they pictured the reformation as a departure from the false church that derived its jurisdiction from the devil. Those who took the initiative in throwing off the Roman yoke acted as instruments of God in the cosmic warfare against the power of evil that raged in the latter days of the world. The reformation ushered in the beginning of the end as prophesied by St. John.

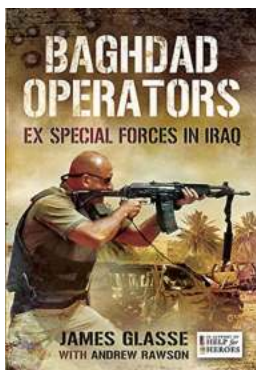
Reformers and Babylon examines the English apocalyptic tradition as developed in the works of religious thinkers both within and without the Established Church and distinguishes the various streams into which the tradition split. By the middle of Elizabeth's reign the mainstream apocalyptic interpretation was widely accepted within the Church of England. Under Charles I, however, it also provided a vocabulary of attack for critics of the Established Church. Using the same weapons that their ancestors had used to justify the reformation in the first place, reformers like John Bastwick, Henry Burton, William Prynne, and John Lilburne attacked the Church of England's growing sympathies with Romish ways and eventually prepared parliamentarians to take up arms against the royalist forces whom they saw as the forces of antichrist.

Scholars of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century intellectual history will welcome this closely reasoned study of the background of religious dissent which underlay the politics of the time.



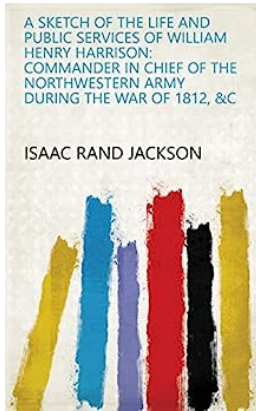
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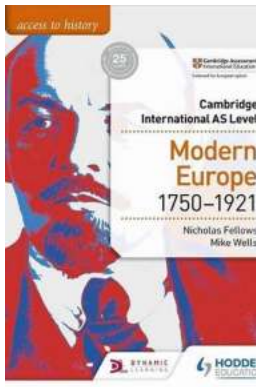
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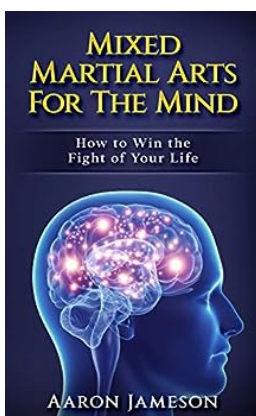
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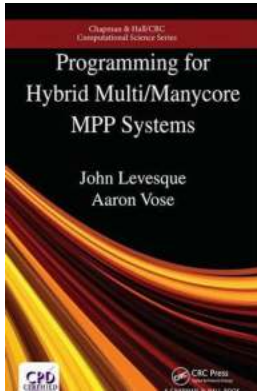
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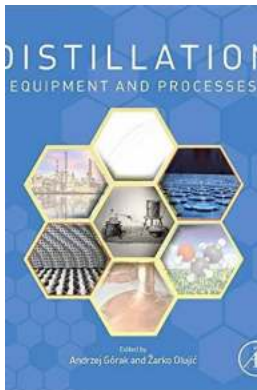
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