Leaving aside the issue of whether Erasmus had internally integrated his literary and religious commitments into a grammar or rhetoric of theology, these months between the publication of the *Novum Instrumentum* and the Ninety-Five Theses were ones in which he and his band of learned friends seemed capable of articulating the highest spiritual and temporal ideals of the Latin West. The period of the appearance of *Utopia*, polished and patronized by Erasmus, seemed indeed to presage a new golden age. So Erasmus wrote to his benefactor, Leo X, only months before the glitter of his pontificate would begin to be obscured by the lengthening shadow of the Lutheran crisis:

For in this age, under your most auspicious leadership and through your saintly wisdom, I foresee that three of its greatest blessings will be restored to the human race: that true Christian piety which in so many ways is now decayed, the study of the humanities in part neglected hitherto and in part corrupted, and that public and perpetual harmony of the Christian world which is the fountain and the parent of religion and learning. These will be the undying trophies of Leo the Tenth. . . . (ep 566)

The excellence of this carefully edited and beautifully printed volume rests in its capacity to evoke once again that blighted hope in its entire plausibility.

JAMES M. STAYER, *Queen's University*

Paul Christianson. *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the eve of the Civil War*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 1978. Pp. x, 285. \$17.50.

Paul Christianson's first book attempts a synthesis of original sources and recent interpretations. There is a dire need for such an overview, which would bring together the work of those historians who have demonstrated the importance of the end of the world as a seventeenth-century theme. Christianson seeks to add to our knowledge, but one feels that, even more, he is attempting to bring order and coherence to our cumulative understanding of this expanding subject.

The author's separation of 'apocalyptic' (a general term) from 'millennial' (a belief in the literal reign of the saints on earth), and the distinction of four types of apocalypticism (mainstream; separatist; radical puritans who regarded the Church as Laodicea; and very radical puritans who desired root-and-branch reform) are offered early in the book (pp. 7, 10-11), and provide both the confines and main theme of the study. Christianson lays much stress in his basically chronological approach on the contribution and continuing importance of John Bale. He is undoubtedly right to do so, and this forms one of the more important statements of the work. It was Bale, argues Christianson, who drafted while in exile the new framework for interpreting the prophecies of St. John as the true history of the Bible, and stressed Revelation as the central passage in the Bible (pp. 14-15). At the same time, because he emphasizes the dispossessed as God's agents, Bale stood outside the mainstream of apocalyptic thought that still relied, at least in part,

on the actions of the godly prince. But this rather involves Mr. Christianson in some tongue-twisting. At one moment (p. 21) he argues that, in balancing the roles of the prince and the downtrodden, Bale "lay outside of the mainstream of English apocalyptic thought" before 1600. At another (p. 40) he says that Foxe's addition of historical examples "firmly implanted Bale's approach as the mainstream apocalyptic tradition in England. . . ." Even granting the power of Foxe to transform Bale in such a manner (which is by no means clear), this leaves the problem of defining what is meant by "mainstream." It is unclear, when speaking of the 1560s, whether this term refers to those who still held to Edwardian conventions, to the supporters of Genevan reforms, or even, at the popular level, to the Plumbers Hall group, which contributed to what Mr. Christianson calls the separatist version of the apocalyptic tradition. Even if the term simply means "majority," it would not be clear whether this could be taken as a majority of the country, of the divines, or only of those who held some direct political influence in these matters. Lacking any evidence beyond printed sources, the author is unable to define "mainstream" beyond the confines of the selection of tracts he analyses.

The book does manage to find a place for most of the important Protestant divines of the Elizabethan and early Stuart period within the four streams of apocalypticism, though one wishes that the author had explained in greater depth *why* (as well as *how*) apocalypticism became so central a theme after the Reformation. He might well also have taken time to explain the relationship of apocalyptic themes to the greater struggle for assurance of salvation. Were the two frequently related, for example, at the popular level through the sermon to the country congregation? Again, he might have considered whether we can accept Charles Webster's argument that Bacon incorporated apocalyptic views. There are many avenues down which the author does not lead us; but in placing such a diverse collection as Alexander Leighton, Martin Marprelate, John Jewel, and John Napier in their different categories, the book does serve a valuable purpose. But a cautionary note: in his desire to classify so many as apocalyptic writers, the author occasionally includes people whose greater contribution lay outside this field. The most obvious examples are the Laudian martyrs Bastwick, Burton, and Prynne. Christianson fails to examine the importance of apocalypticism within the overall thought of these men. A simple example: the author does not consider whether their eschatological beliefs determined their ecclesiological conventions, or whether the impulse worked the other way; that is, did a rejection of (evidently) corrupt beliefs and practices in the Church require a greater rationale that took the form of apocalypticism? Motivation and cause-effect relationships are most difficult to determine accurately within the context of the history of ideas, but one feels that Mr. Christianson should at least have addressed himself more directly to these problems.

At times, however — especially in Chapter V — the stress on the apocalyptic aspects of Christianson's subjects offers new insights. This is particularly true when the author discusses the parliamentary preachers. Here he is more cautious, admitting that not all these sermons were marked by apocalyptic thought. But their blending of immediate political cause with an overriding interest in the end of God's providence offers the reader new understanding about how the struggle against existing authority was not (and was not *seen* as) purely an expedient conflict, but also involved the final resolution of over a century of combat with Antichrist and his minions. Here Christianson is at his most suggestive, for the stress on the conflict's

length must surely have serious implications for those who would see the Revolution as the product of short-term factors. One might only wish that he had integrated fewer names we already know and more of the popular tracts abounding in this period, which have as yet received comparatively little comment. How important, for example, was apocalypticism (and then millenarianism) to the sorts of people about whom Hill and Manning have written? In this light, one might question Christianson's conclusion that after Mede had rounded out the scholarly pattern of interpretation laid down by Bale, the "creative force of the apocalyptic tradition slowly evaporated" (p. 245). This is perhaps to look at the subject in too narrow a light. Surely the preachers who sought to inspire Parliament — and even more those who sought to move the Army, to eradicate the evil of Antichrist, even when it meant executing the prince upon whom much of the "mainstream" apocalyptic tradition was based — were just as "creative" — if not as intellectual a force.

The book's technical aspects, style, and interpretation also require brief notice. The book is reasonably well served by its index as by its bibliography, although this strangely omits Charles Webster's *Great Instauration*, the first chapter (at least) of which bears heavily on this topic. The frequent use of 'outside of' and 'whether or not', the extremely common use of 'cosmic', and an appearance by 'overexaggerated' (p. 51) do not simplify the reader's task. Nor does the author's style, which at times relies on extremely convoluted language. Also, 1588 is described as the "year of the attempted Armada invasion of England" (p. 65), as though a reader of this kind of work would need to be told what the Armada was. Jewel, who did not follow Bale's chronology, stands "outside of the chronological matrix of Bale" (p. 32). For Barrow, the author employs a shifting base to note that his works "guaranteed that the *thin line* between radical puritanism and separatism continued to constitute a *yawning gulf*. . ." (p. 89, my italics). Perhaps these are minor matters, but they mar the text.

More serious is the incursion of certain political judgements. Henry Barrow is described, without the inclusion of substantiating evidence, as possessing a "martyr complex" (p. 88). Psycho-history, while popular, has its limitations; is it too obvious to point out that martyrs cannot exist without oppressors? And yet "the authorities," it is contended, "exhibited remarkable patience with men like Henry Barrow. . ." (pp. 90-91). This may be true if execution on suspect grounds can be taken as the definition of "remarkable patience." It is not to be forgotten that Barrow was imprisoned before any of his works reached print. It is also perhaps noteworthy, given the radical nature of many of the proposals he analyses, that Mr. Christianson is content to rely on the term "civil war" in his own title. It was surely rather a 'revolution' that Barrow and the others had in mind.

Yet it would be unfair to end on a note of criticism. Mr. Christianson, in *Reformers and Babylon*, has presented us with a straightforward and interesting history of pre-revolutionary English apocalypticism. In producing what is almost a hagiography, he has introduced us to a far broader tradition than that evidenced by the more particular studies of the sects of the Revolution. Readers will still find it necessary to turn to the likes of Toon, Capp, Lamont, and Hill for deeper analysis of specific groups; nonetheless, this is a serious contribution that offers to future researchers many useful suggestions for further study.

JOHN MORGAN, Queen's University