The Church of England, Judaism, and the Jewish Temple in Early Modern England

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I
From its beginnings, Christianity has forged its identity in relation to the Judaism from which it emerged. That relation has been complex, conflicted, and continually changing. The first centuries were a critical period for the definition of Christianity’s relation with Jews and Judaism. With the crisis of the Reformation and the separation from Rome, however, the reformers were once again faced with articulating what ‘true’ Christianity was, and thus again had to think about its relation to Judaism. As Protestants separated from the Church of Rome, hoping to restore the supposed primitive purity of the church, they found themselves renegotiating the relation between Christianity and Judaism. My interest here is specifically in how the effort to define the reformed, national Church of England, in the aftermath of the break from Rome, involved controversies about value and significance of the Jewish past, and particularly the Jewish Temple, for England.¹

The reformation and construction of the English Church was an ongoing, contested process, as clergy argued over how much of the traditional worship and structure of the Roman Church should be retained. Although much valuable work has been done on the tensions in post-Reformation England,² little has been written about the role Judaism played in these conflicts. Peter Lake has pointed out that

¹ Research for this essay was supported by a National Endowment for the Humanities Senior Research Fellowship.
those advocating conformity to the ceremonies retained from the Church of Rome often cited the Old Testament to support their positions, but the ‘Jewish’ aspect of English controversies over worship has not been recognized or explored. My claim is that Judaism and the ‘Jewish’ presence were a crucial part of the arguments and discussions about what England’s reformed church should be and what English Christianity was. Conflict over the identity of the English Church turned on its relation not just to Rome but to the Jewish past and religion out of which Christianity had emerged.

II

We might begin with John Foxe, whose influential *Acts and Monuments* (popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*) expressed a strong reformist position that, as it defined Rome as the anti-Christ, also identified the Catholic Church with Judaism. Drawing on a long history of anti-Jewish rhetoric, and painting the Jews as anti-Christian as well as the persecutors of the early Christian church, Foxe described the corruption and decay of Christianity as a relapse to Judaism, the infusion of Jewish superstition into Christianity. Degeneration began when Christians tried to build a ‘more glorious’ ‘new church’ on the improper ‘foundation of the law and works’ – code words not just for Mosaic Law but also for rabbinic Judaism. Foxe dated the ‘declining time’ of the church in England from the coming of William of Normandy, who brought Jews into England (something Foxe does not mention but may well have assumed as common knowledge). Foxe noted that by Wycliffe’s time, the ‘whole

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3 Peter Lake has pointed out that those advocating conformity to ceremonies retained from the Church of Rome often cited the Old Testament to support their positions, but the ‘Jewish’ aspect of English controversies over worship has not been recognized or explored. See P. Lake, ‘The Laudians and the Argument from Authority’, in: B. Y. Kunze and D. D. Brautigam eds., *Court, Country, and Culture: Essays on Early Modern British History in Honor of Perez Zagorin*, Rochester 1992, pp. 149-175, at 151-156.

4 John Fox[e], *Acts and Monuments of The Church*, 9th edition, London 1684, vol. 1, p. 192 (‘The Fourth Book Containing Other three hundred years from William Conqueror, to the time of John Wickliffe, wherein is described the proud and mis-ordered Reign of Antichrist, beginning to stir in the Church of Christ’). The excellent article by Sharon Achinstein, ‘John Foxe and the Jews’, *Renaissance Quarterly* 54 (2001), pp. 86-120, observes that Foxe’s ‘anti-Judaism was primarily theological’ (p. 114), though I would suggest that theological anti-Judaism can easily spill over into vicious extra-theological forms.
state of Christen Religion’ was so ‘defiled and spotted’ with ‘superstition’ that ‘there could be no great difference almost perceived between Christianity and Jewishness’. The superstitious ‘Ceremonies’ were both ‘new fangled’ and old, for they constituted a return to Jewish worship that undid the ‘liberty’ of the gospel, which Paul in Galatians (chapters 2-5) had opposed to the ‘bondage’ of Jewish ceremonial law.

For Foxe, it was necessary to maintain firm boundaries between Judaism and Christianity. Like many Protestant reformers, Foxe represented Roman Catholicism as a continuation of Judaism. In the vigorously reformed imagination, a shared emphasis on corporal worship, and on ceremonial and external matters, linked Catholicism with the Jewish religion. Although John Bale looked forward to the eventual conversion of the Jews, his *Image of both Churches* showed how the Church of Rome had assumed the place of the supposedly anti-Christian Jews, not only by persecuting true Christians (that is, Protestants), but by ‘a new crucifyenge’ of Christ in their Mass, ‘playing al parts, Judas, Annas, Caiphas, Herode, Pilate, and the Jewes’.

There also seemed to be a genealogical connection between the Roman Catholic Church and the Jews. In a section on ‘The Proud Primacy of Popes’, Foxe printed Pope Boniface’s statement, which expressly grounded his authority in the Old Testament and Aaron: ‘my Institution began in the Old Testament, and was consummate and finished in the New, in that my Priesthood was prefigured by Aaron, And other Bishops under me were prefigured by the Sons of Aaron, that were under him’. We see two conflicting positions here about the relation of Christianity to Jewish precedent: for Boniface, typology reinforces succession, the link between Jewish precedent and Christianity; for Foxe, there must be a divorce between the law and gospel. Paul had argued in his epistles that faith, the gospel, and Christians had superseded and replaced works, the law, and the Jews. Rome, in confounding the law and gospel, thus proves that it is not

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5 Fox[e], vol. I, p. 484.
6 Fox[e], vol. I, p. 484.
7 J. Bale, *The Image of Both Churches*, London 1550, sig. h.iii.
8 Fox[e], vol. I, p. 887.
fully Christian. It has not divested itself of the Judaic mentality nor broken from the old religion of the Jews. The ‘Church of Rome, pretending only the name of Christ and of his Religion’, is actually ‘not much unlike ... the old Synagogue of the Scribes and Pharises, who under the name of God crucified the son of God, and under pretence of the Law, fought against the Gospel’. There is a great ‘difference between the Church of Rome that now is, and the Ancient Church of Rome that then was’. Fallen from its earlier purity, emphasizing ‘outward and ceremonial exercises’ and ‘outward Works of Law’, the Church of Rome now teaches ‘the people, that what so ever the law saith, the Gospel confirmeth; and whatsoever the Gospel saith, the same is agreeable to the Law, and so make they no difference between Moses and Christ’. Both exemplifying and teaching Jewish/Christian continuity, Rome is, for Foxe, dangerously anti-Christian: it draws ‘the people’ back to a Jewish way of thinking about religion. Foxe’s sense of the sharp division between law and gospel, Jewish and Christian religion, contrasts with the very different view that was expressed first by Richard Hooker at the end of the sixteenth century, and then by seventeenth-century church apologists for the episcopal English church who consciously followed in Hooker’s footsteps.

III

If asked to state their position about the relation between Christianity and Judaism, most English clergy in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century probably would have said they agreed with Foxe, whose tome had a fixed place in every English church along with the Bible. Yet the controversy over worship and church government tells a different, more complicated story. For, from Hooker on, those defending the Church of England’s worship and discipline against Presbyterian and puritan objections did so in part by grounding it in Jewish biblical precedent. In this way, the English Church was linked with what they called the ancient ‘Church of the Jews’.

Whereas Foxe believed that the Church was truly Christian only as it was purged of residual Jewish elements, Hooker and apologists who

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9 Fox[e], vol. I, pp. 26, 32, 29.
followed him turned to ancient Judaism, and specifically the Jewish Temple, to authorize the Church of England. In turning to Jewish precedent, they were responding, on the one hand, to the Roman Church’s objection that the reformed church was ‘new’ and, on the other, to puritan desire for a more thorough reform from ‘popish’ ceremonies and government. As the ‘inventor’ of Anglicanism, the person who after 1660 would become (as the historian Peter Lake puts it) the ‘patron saint of Anglicanism’, Hooker shaped the institutional identity of England’s church. In his *Lawes of Ecclesiasticall Polity*, he gave it a curiously ‘Jewish’ foundation, providing ideological justification for identifying the English Church not just with the priestly government of the ancient Israelites but specifically with the ancient Temple.

Hooker’s sense of Christian/Jewish relations was complex, divided. In his Preface, he criticizes puritans for claiming to be ‘Gods owne chosen people, applying all thinges unto their owne companie which areanye where spoken concerning divine favours and benefites bestowed upon the olde common wealth of Israell’.

He ridicules the puritan obsessive identification with ancient Israel. Moreover, Hooker’s distaste for (living) Jews appears in his remark that the ‘persons’ of Jews are ‘most hateful’. But Hooker’s *Lawes* also firmly connected the English Church to the Jewish Temple in ways that suggests a more complicated relation to Jews.

Hooker valued the permanence and beauty of Solomon’s Temple, the material residence for God towards which the earlier desert tabernacle pointed, the splendid building which the Jews after their return from Babylonian exile wanted to restore, and which later Christian churches also, it would seem, emulated. Hooker explained that in Egypt, in bondage, the Israelites were happy to have ‘some corner of a poore cottage’ to worship God in. ‘Notwithstanding in the very desert they are no sooner possest of some little things of their owne, but a tabernacle is required at their handes’.

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12 Hooker, Bk. 4, ch. 11; vol. I, p. 310.
13 Hooker, Bk. 4, ch. 2; vol. I, p. 279.
they built a proper place of worship. Arguing that the material ‘meanes’ of worship evolve as religion and the nation become established, Hooker concluded that the circumstances and material conditions of the Apostles and of early Christian worship could not be a model for present-day England. The condition of England in the 1590s was more like that of biblical Israel under David and Solomon. And so, instead, Hooker turned to Solomon’s Temple.

To some extent, he was following the position of early Church Fathers who found in the pre-Mosaic era of the patriarchs a ‘naturall’ and ‘universal’ religion and morality that antedated Judaism and thus could be embraced as the pre-history of Christianity. Hooker frequently speaks of Jewish ‘ordinances’ and practices described in the Hebrew Bible as ‘naturall’, reasonable, and hence ‘of perpetuitie’. But Hooker went further. In a move away from the anti-Judaism that had long defined the Christian church, Hooker recuperated Judaism by including a long, fascinating discussion of the early Christian church that emphasized the overlap between Christianity and Judaism from the earliest years. Particularly in Book 4 of the Lawes, his discussion of Jewish/Christian continuities recovers a historical sense of Christianity as growing out of Judaism. He points out that many early Christians had been Jews and continued Jewish practices after they had embraced Christianity. He reminds readers of Paul’s Jewish identity, and the apostle’s immersion in ‘Judaicall’ ‘wisdome’ at the ‘feet of Gamaliell’. Hooker understood that, despite the persistent myth that ‘the Jewes were the deadlyest and spitefuller enemies of Christianitie that were in the world’, early Christian/Jewish interrelations were often positive
and enabling, and that the identity of Christianity could not be grasped
without knowing something about Judaism.

For Hooker, there was a significant period of overlap between Jewish
and Christian practices and identities, a period in which the Church
itself continued certain Jewish practices. Implicitly arguing against
those who insisted there should be an absolute separation between
Christianity and all things Jewish, who insisted the English reformed
church must get rid of all traces of Judaism (as well as popery), Hooker
offered in Book 4 a detailed discussion of the various ways in which
Judaism was part of the Christian practice of the early church. He
wrote about how early Jewish Christians continued to sacrifice and
worship in the Jewish Temple until it was destroyed by the Romans;
how the church continued to use the words ‘Sacrifice’ and ‘Priest’ in
conformity with the older Jewish usage despite the shift to a metaphorical
sense; even how the early church intermingled Old and New Testament
readings in the liturgy in a conscious effort to combat Christians ‘such
as Marcionites and Manichees’ who slandered the Jewish ‘law and
Prophets’.19 Anticipating the conclusions of modern studies of early
Christianity, Hooker demonstrated that the separation of Christianity
and Judaism was neither immediate nor absolute. The effect of his
extended, detailed discussion of the Jewish aspects of early Christian
practice was to suggest that the boundaries between Christian and
Jewish were far more fluid than his hotter Protestant opponents believed.

Having shown the ‘Jewishness’ of early Christianity, Hooker could
then argue in Book 5 for the legitimacy of the controversial episcopal
government and ceremonial worship of the Church of England by
reference to ‘the Church of God amongst the Jewes’.20 The reading of
the Psalms practiced in the English church goes back to David, and
their accompaniment by instrumental music continued in the Temple.
Hooker dated the antiphonal singing or saying of psalms, detested by
puritans, from the Jews but suggested that perhaps even Moses and
Miriam had sung in this way after safely crossing the Red Sea.21

Sharply criticizing protestant iconoclasts who ‘this daie’ want to ‘pull

20  Hooker, Bk. 5, ch. 41; vol. II, p. 162.
downe the temples which they never built, and to levell them with the ground’, Hooker defends ‘places sett’ for public worship by citing, first, the ‘moveable tabernacle’, and, then, the ‘maiesticall and statelie’ temple in Jerusalem.22 As Christianity became more established and secure, Christian worshippers (like Jews before them) began to erect temples and consecrate them.23 So rooted is Christianity in the ethos of Judaism that Hooker interprets Jesus’s attack on the Jewish ‘prophaners of the temple’, not as a break with Jewish tradition, but in line with it. Jesus was actually defending temples as sacred spaces: ‘Christ could not suffer that the temple should serve for a place of marte’.24

Hooker was at pains to settle the English Church on a Jewish foundation, as he claimed continuity with ancient Jewish, pre-Catholic worship. It was a way of at once insisting on an unbroken tradition of worship, and skipping over the corruption of Rome. In his logic, the English were not practicing popish idolatry but simply continuing ancient practices approved by God. Hooker even turned to a Jewish example to prove that it is legitimate for Christians to add new prayers to the established liturgy: he observed that Moses’s song after the victory over Pharaoh (‘that verie hymne of Moses’) eventually became part of the ‘Jewish liturgie’ (as it still is today).25 The evolution of Jewish worship itself seems exemplary for Hooker, whose comments make it clear that he was familiar with, indeed had probably examined, contemporary Jewish liturgy. Remarkably, post-biblical Jewish practices, not just pre-Christian ones, could legitimate changes within early modern English Christian worship.

IV

Hooker’s apologia for the Church of England, written against the Presbyterians, did not settle the matter. There continued to be conflict within the clergy over the ceremonies and prelatical government of the established church – a conflict that escalated in the 1620s and 30s after Charles I came to the throne (1625) and William Laud rose to

23 Hooker, Bk. 5, ch. 11-12; vol. II, pp. 48-53.
24 Hooker, Bk. 5, ch. 12; vol. II, pp. 52-53.
power in the church, eventually becoming Archbishop of Canterbury (1633). Under their influence, the English Church became increasingly ceremonial. Stone altars were erected; communion tables were replaced by fixed altars, now set off by rails, signifying the altar as most holy. Laudian prelates beautified churches and sought to impose uniformity of worship. These activities supposedly aimed at unifying the church and nation, but actually increased the divisions within the church. ‘Puritans’ objected that the prelates were bringing back popery and a Jewish-kind of ceremonial worship that had been abrogated by Christ. Some thought there was a plot to return England to Rome. Laud was arrested in 1641, and the English Civil Wars broke out in 1642, a war fought in part over religion. In January 1645, Laud was executed, convicted of treason and of actually being in league with the Pope.

I believe, however, that the project of Laud and other high-church clergy promoted by Charles was, not to return to Rome, but rather to turn the material churches of England and their worship into the English Christian counterpart of the ancient Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. Assumptions defined by Hooker about the Jewish genealogy of the English church – his invocation of biblical Jewish precedent and particularly the practice of Solomon’s Temple – were systematically put into practice in the late 1620s and 30s, much to the horror of hotter Protestants, who insisted that Christian worship should be inward and spiritual, not outward and material, and that it should be stripped of any ceremonialismand grounded in Mosaic Law.

On February 6, 1625/6, four days after Charles I’s coronation, Laud preached a sermon at the opening of Parliament. Speaking before the King and the House of Lords on Psalm 122:3,4,5 (‘Jerusalem is builded as a City that is at unity in it selfe’), Laud connected the situation in Stuart England, where puritans within the church disliked the established form of worship, with that of the Jews in first-century Jerusalem, when there was dissention within the Temple. Laud’s sermon emphasized the link between England and Jerusalem, center of ancient Israel. He reminded England that once ‘Jerusalem of old … lost her unity’, the Temple became vulnerable to the Roman siege that destroyed it in 70 C.E. If England wished to avoid similar catastrophe, she must avoid ‘faction within’ her temple. Believing that unity can only be achieved through uniform public worship, Laud insisted that God’s
commandment to the Israelites for public worship was not ‘to cease with the Law, and that Temple’, but was obligatory for Christians. Connecting ancient Jewish and contemporary English worship and reaffirming Charles I’s place in the Davidic line, Laud invoked the example of the Jews’ worship at the Temple to endorse the Church of England’s public worship, with its fixed liturgy, the public reading of scripture, and its ceremonies. Uniform worship, said Laud, teaches obedience ‘to the house of David’ now represented in Charles ‘our David’.

Much of the ceremonialism that developed in the English church over the next years, as Laud’s power increased, was associated with the altar. This attention to the altar struck puritans as a dangerous, idolatrous departure from the reformed emphasis on preaching the word of God. For puritans critics like Peter Smart and William Prynne, this emphasis on priests and altars, the insistence on the holiness of the material church, the separation of the laity from the clergy – all were dangerous marks of ‘popery’.

But Laudian clergy defended these things by invoking a Jewish genealogy and precedent for their practices. The seventeenth-century conflicts over worship reveal sharply divergent understandings of what it meant to be Christian, and of the place of Judaism. Whereas hotter Protestants, following John Foxe, emphasized the discontinuity between Jewish ceremonial worship and Christianity, John Pocklington, in *Altare Christianum* (1637), defended the use of altars in the English Church by insisting (like Hooker) that the Christian church was ‘framed by the pattern of the Jewish Church’. He cited the ancient ‘fathers’ of the church to support his view. Peter Heylyn’s *Antidotum Lincolniense* (1637), which was commissioned by Charles I, similarly defended the privileging of the altar and chancel by tracing these features of the church back to the holy of holies in the Jewish Tabernacle and Temple. Heylyn cited the ‘judicious’ Hooker who insisted it was no ‘grievous fault’ for Christians to ‘contrive’ their churches according to the ‘model

of Salomons’. In his Devotions, John Cosin traced the antiquity of set ‘houres of Prayer’, not to Catholic Rome, but to David and the ancient Jewish Temple. Christ and King David shared the same ‘Formes of Piety and Devotion’ and so should seventeenth-century Christians. Writing of private prayer, but with implications for the public liturgy that was under puritan attack, Cosin argued that the origin of set times of prayer lay in David’s custom to pray three times a day, and he cited Psalm 55 as evidence. In the Jewish temple, prayers and thanksgiving to God were offered three times a day, and, Cosin showed, this practice was ‘piously continued and practiced under the Gospell also’ by Christians. In the notes he made in interleaved copies of the Book of Common Prayer, from 1619 through the late 1650s, Cosin continued to remark on many instances in which contemporary Christian practices had their basis in Jewish devotion and customs. All of these practices were objected to by puritans. Cosin explained that the singing of hymns accompanied by instruments goes back to Moses, who when the Israelites had safely passed through the Red Sea sang a song of praise, accompanied by Miriam on ‘a timbrel’. He observed that the custom of the meal after the funeral dates back to the Jews. The priest’s or bishop’s blessing of the congregation at the end of Holy Communion derives from the Temple priests’ blessing of the people ‘after the morning service’, a practice Cosin noted was still observed in Jewish synagogues at the end of their services.

This sense of the positive continuity of Christian and Jewish worship – and of a link back to the Jewish Temple – also explains, I think, the strange phenomenon of Thomas Godwin’s Moses and Aaron, which enjoyed an otherwise inexplicable popularity in seventeenth-century England. Its author was a relatively obscure man who had been chaplain to James Montague, Bishop of Bath and Wells, became

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28 J. Heylyn, Antidotum Lincolniense, London 1637, pp. 79-80, at p. 80.
30 Cosin, pp. 5-6.
Achsah Guibbory

Chief master of Abingdon School in Berkshire, and died in 1642. First published in 1625 at the transition from James’s to Charles I’s reign, *Moses and Aaron* was reprinted every couple of years throughout the period when Laud and his prelates were in power (1626, 1628, 1631, 1634, 1641), once (1655) during the Protectorate when the Church of England was officially disestablished by Parliament, and seven times in the twenty five years after 1660, when the Church of England was restored along with monarchy. *Moses and Aaron* is a meticulous, scholarly effort to reconstruct from the Hebrew Bible and a variety of Jewish and Christian sources the ancient culture and practices of the Jews, from biblical times up until Christ, but also with forays into later and modern Jewish practices. Including a wealth of detail about Jewish customs and practices (for example, the steps in the process of becoming a rabbi and the name changes accompanying it; how Jews prepare for and observe the Sabbath), Godwin reconstructs the society, culture, and religion of the Jews. His tone is detached but interested, as if he is describing a fascinating, strange culture, yet one to which he feels some connection. Godwin’s point is that modern English Christians need to understand the Jews and their practices in order to understand Christ, and to be good Christians. As he writes in his dedicatory epistle, ‘that many have no better acquaintance with Christ and his apostles, is because they are such strangers with *Moses and Aaron*’.35

It is the consciousness of continuity with Jewish tradition and worship that led Archbishop William Laud to conduct the ‘consecration’ of churches which was one of the ‘popish’ ‘crimes’ with which he was charged in his trial. Laud saw his consecration of churches and chapels as continuing the practice whereby not only the Jewish Temple but the vessels in it were especially dedicated to God. Evidence of his consciousness of this link appears in the fact that in consecrating some new ‘Plate … for use at the Communion’ in his chapel, Laud had actually used part of ‘Solomon’s Prayer, at the Dedication of the Temple’.36

Part of the Laudian project in the 1630s was to renovate and refurbish English Churches that had fallen into disrepair. Altars in churches

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The Church of England, Judaism, and the Jewish Temple

were adorned with expensive paintings, tapestries, and candlesticks. It was reported that in Durham cathedral two to three hundred candles burned at a time. New glass windows replaced old ones. Such changes outraged Protestants who saw these churches as imitating the spectacular Roman Catholic cathedrals. But I would suggest that it was the Jewish Temple, which antedated Catholic cathedrals, that Laudian apologists looked back to as their model. Behind Laud’s sense of the ‘beauty of holiness’ lay a nostalgic vision of the magnificent Jewish Temple and the powerful intimation that the English Church, not the Roman one, was its true descendent.

Compared to the glorious Temple of Solomon, Laud’s churches were modest. Nevertheless, their altars, beautiful basons, candlesticks, and chalices, the embroidered priestly garments, all recalled the furnishing of the ancient Jewish Temple. And it was that Temple that Laudian apologists invoked. Peter Heylyn defended Laud’s having used the people’s wealth to rebuild St. Paul’s cathedral by citing Josephus, who told how ‘the people of the Jewes had severally bestowed their costly offerings’ on the Temple.37 The author of De Templis noted that while parish churches were the counterpart of the Jews’ synagogues, cathedrals were analogous to the Temple. He explained that ‘Christian Temples’ are actually built ‘after the fashion of Solomons Temple, with the porch, body, and chancel, corresponding to the court, sanctuary, and holy of holies in the Jewish temple’.38

We find among Laudians something close to an obsession with the Temple, and the significance of that obsession is worth exploring. I would suggest that Laudian ceremonialists saw Solomon’s Temple at the height of its glory as having served multiple uses that could be understood to have a contemporary counterpart in post-Reformation England. The Temple exemplified both proper worship of God and the power of Israel’s king. It dedicated wealth and beauty to God (acknowledging that these things come from God), even as it was the symbol of the glories and power of Solomon’s empire. Centralizing worship, the Temple unified the nation of Israel. It was especially significant, however, that according to the Hebrew Bible the Temple

37 Heylyn, Antidotum (above, n. 28), sect. II, p. 70.
was the place where God said he had chosen to ‘dwell’. With the Reformation, it was crucial for England’s church to construct her legitimacy in the face of criticism both from Rome and from hotter Protestants who thought she was not sufficiently reformed. To suggest that the English Church was the successor of the Temple was to stake a claim to be the true church, and not just part of it. As George Herbert put it in his poem of the same title, ‘The British Church’ is the one special to God, ‘whose love it was / To double-moat thee with his grace, / And none but thee’ (ll. 28-30).39

_There I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee_ (Exod. 25:22), God tells Moses when he gives instructions in Exodus for making the tabernacle in the wilderness. 1 Kings describes how, after the Temple was completed, _the cloud filled the house of the Lord _... _the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord_ (1 Kings 8:10-22).40 This sense of God’s special presence in the Temple evolved in post-biblical times into the concept of the Shekhinah, the aspect of the omnipresent, immaterial God that resides among human beings. According to Jewish tradition, the Shekhinah left the Second Temple when it was destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.. Christians believed that the divine presence passed to the Christians because the Jews had rejected Jesus. But Jews believed the Shekhinah went into exile along with them.

Many of those committed to building the English Church were fascinated with the idea of the presence of God, and the notion that it that it specially resided in their consecrated churches. Thinking of the renovated English cathedrals, the author of _De Templis_ proclaimed, ‘we may see god’s glory in the stateliness and beauty of the building, the richness of the vessels and ornaments, the sacred pomp of ministers’ , as if such beauty expresses something of God, who in this way allows a perceivable aspect of himself to reside in the church. Apologists for the English Church during Charles I’s reign, as they defended consecration, the ‘beauty of holiness’, and rituals associated

40 I have used the King James (Authorized Version) of the Bible for quotations throughout.
41 _De Templis_ (above, n. 38), p. 111.
with the altar, implicitly were claiming that the divine presence dwelled with her. At stake was competition among Christians, as well as between Christians and Jews, for a special claim on God’s presence, on religious truth. Laud and others, as they made their churches beautiful and orderly, thought they were building a place for the Shekhinah. Why else would Laud and Pocklington refer to the altar in English churches as the ‘mercy-seat’ – the seat of pure gold, covered by the two gold cherubim, that God commanded to be built for the Tabernacle – the special place where God said I will meet with thee (Exod. 25:22). For Laud and Pocklington, the altar where the Sacrament was enacted, presided over by priests, was the counterpart of the ‘mercy-seat’ in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple. As Laud proclaimed in his 1637 speech against Prynne in the Star Chamber, ‘The Altar is the greatest place of God’s Residence upon Earth, greater than the Pulpit’. William Prynne, Laud’s prosecutor, repeated this statement at the trial. Prynne saw it as conclusive evidence that Laud was bringing back the hated Catholic ‘Mass’, with its idea of sacrifice and the doctrine of transubstantiation. But I would suggest instead that Laud, when he insisted on the ‘real presence’ of God at Holy Communion, was actually appropriating a much older sense of God’s presence, one to be found in the Hebrew Bible.

In July 1644 as his trial for treason concluded, Laud attempted to read a passage from Sir Walter Raleigh’s History of the World that had turned to the ancient Jewish tabernacle and the Temple to defend the sanctity of Christian churches which were threatened by iconoclastic reformers. Believing Raleigh’s words recapitulated his defense, finding community with Raleigh, who at the beginning of the seventeenth century had been imprisoned in the Tower where he himself now was kept, Laud began, ‘So Sacred was the moveable Temple of God, and with such Reverence guarded and transported, as 22,000 Persons were Dedicated to the Service and Attendance thereof. The Reverend care which Moses the Prophet and chosen Servant of god had, in all that belonged even to the outward and least Parts of the Tabernacle …’

42 Pocklington (above, n. 27), p. 175.
43 Laud, History of the Troubles and Tryal (above, n. 36), p. 361.
But Prynne cut him off before he could read more than a third of the long passage. He knew where Laud was headed.

When Laud was executed in 1645, he went to his death continuing to proclaim his allegiance to the Temple. On the scaffold, he declared that he would not ‘forsake the Temple and the truth of God, to follow the bleating of Jeroboams Calves in Dan and Bethel’ – a reference to the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam after the kingdoms had split (1 Kings 12-13).

So what are we to make of all this? I think modern scholars (like the puritan-minded critics of supposed Laudian innovations) have missed an important part of the logic that underlay the Laudian project. For it has not been recognized that the Laudian program of church reform and uniformity was grounded on the identification of England with the ancient kingdom of Israel during the brief period between the time when David united the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, centralizing worship in Jerusalem, and when the two kingdoms split after Solomon’s death. Laud may have been oppressive and rigid, but he was, I believe, honest when he claimed he was not trying to return England to popery. There was, of course, a political agenda at work. The sense that God was especially present in the part of the church most closely connected with the priests, served the ambition of prelates and priests who seemed to be violating the Protestant notion of the priesthood of all believers. The emphasis on reverence and submission to ‘higher’ authority reinforced the political order of the state. But the whole project of grounding the Church of England on Jewish precedent needs to be understood, not just in terms of power politics, but also as part of the formation of England’s identity as a nation-state, in which the institution of the English Church was envisioned as having a central, unifying role.

Such was the implication of Heylyn’s biography of Laud, published after the Restoration, as Heylyn elevated the Archbishop as a martyr.
of the English Church and praised its condition under Laud’s ‘direction’. Under Laud, Heylyn saw ‘the Clergy … joining together to advance the work of Uniformity recommended to them; the Liturgie more punctually executed …; the Word more diligently preached, the Sacraments more reverendly administered, than in some scores of years before; the people more conformable to those Reverent gestures in the House of God …; more cost laid out upon the beautifying and adorning of Parochial Churches’. Erasing the dissensions Laud’s program had created, Heylyn concluded that ‘the advancement of the great work of Unity and Uniformity between the parties went forwards like the building of Solomons Temple without the noise of Axe or Hammer’. The Laudian vision for the church had, of course, been sharply contested – one could even say it had triggered civil war – but in an important sense it proved triumphant at the Restoration, when Charles II returned to England’s throne, greeted as ‘David’, and the Church, with its episcopacy and prayer book, was restored.

What we have thus seen is that the post-Reformation construction of the English nation and church actually involved a redefinition of the relation of Christianity to its Jewish past. The effort to legitimize the Church of England by way of the ancient Jewish Temple countered the anti-Jewish stance of reformers who insisted that Christianity divest itself of all traces of Judaism. It also attempted to wrest from Catholic Rome the claim to be the true successor of the Temple. We see in the apologists for an episcopal, ceremonial Church of England both an empathetic identification with the pre-Christian Jews and an effort to displace them, to assume the identity of God’s chosen nation. Christian England would now be understood to be the true Israel, the place where God’s presence dwells. As such, England implicitly becomes the inheritor of the promises made to Israel in the Hebrew Bible.
