

# THE ANTICHRIST(IAN) TURK IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

SINAN AKILLI\*

**ABSTRACT.** From the mid-sixteenth century onwards, a distinct tradition of astrological prognostications emerged in England and this tradition became established in the seventeenth century, especially during the Civil War, through the wide circulation of astrological and prophetic texts. A significant number of these texts were either influenced by or the translations of astrological and prophetic texts originating in continental Europe, especially Germany. Therefore, images and depictions—constructed mostly in diabolical terms and in association with the events of the end of the world—of “the Turks”, who were among the main concerns of the continental astrologers and prophets in the centuries in question, found their way into the English tradition. Moreover, in England of the same period there was a visible interest in the Ottoman Turks and their empire and the diabolic imagery associated with the Turks became tools of propaganda at the hands of various parties that used and exploited texts of astrology and prophecy for their political interests. The wider impact of such exploitation of the images of the Turks by individual parties was the discursive construction of a negative image of the Turks in the seventeenth-century English public imagination. This article offers a contextualized study of three such texts and contributes to the larger scholarly attempts to better understand the literary and cultural encounters and interactions taking place between England and the Ottoman Empire in the early modern period.<sup>1</sup>

**KEY WORDS:** Turks, Civil War, England, prophecy, astrology

The relevance of a contextualized study of text debating the apocalyptic image of Turks, which seems to have received inadequate attention in mainstream scholarship, is twofold. Firstly, by the study of selected texts of prophetic and astrological literature, exemplifying what Chapman aptly calls “textual barometers for early modern assumptions and reading practices” (Chapman, 2007: 1259), this article reveals and explicates one of the ways by which popular beliefs and assumptions held by the English people of the Turks in the seventeenth century were formed. Secondly, by showing

\* SINAN AKILLI (PhD) is Assistant Professor at the Department of English Language and Literature within the Faculty of Letters, Hacettepe University in Ankara, Turkey. E-mail: sinanakilli@gmail.com.

1 This paper is an abridged version of the author’s previously published article “Apocalyptic Eschatology, Astrology, Prophecy, and the Image of the Turks in Seventeenth-Century England”, *Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Letters* 29.1 (June, 2012): 25-52.

how the concept of the Antichrist or implications of Antichristian qualities were deliberately associated with the Turks for political propaganda in seventeenth century England, the article aims to contribute to the findings resulting from recent scholarly interest in the nature and context of the direct and indirect cultural exchanges and encounters taking place in the Renaissance and the early modern period between the English and the Turks, in particular, and between the Christian West and the Muslim East, in general.

Emanating from the simple principle that everything that has a beginning must also have an end, the notion of finality as it relates to the existence of the world and of the cosmos, has intrigued human minds since antiquity. In the Judeo-Christian culture, such eschatological beliefs have been based on the Book of Daniel in the Old Testament and the Book of Revelation in the New Testament (McGinn, 1998: 1). In this context, apocalypticism, deriving mainly from the *Book of Revelation* and interpreting the revelations about the imminence of and events preceding the End, has emerged as a type of early Christian eschatology. Apocalyptic eschatology as such has three characteristic convictions: the first one involves a teleological and deterministic view of history and of all existence and accepts that the world will end at a time predetermined by God; the second belief is that the predetermined End is, in fact, the goal for the fulfillment of the divine plan in a process of “crisis-judgment-vindication”; and thirdly, the belief that the End is imminent and the process is already under way (McGinn, 1994: 10-11). Such a view of the End inherently contains a sense of duality as it implies both a pessimistic and an optimistic vision, which is essentially related to the cosmic struggle between Good and Evil. In other words, to herald the coming of Good, Evil has to dominate first.

In Christian apocalyptic eschatology, which had strong ties with prophecy and astrology,<sup>2</sup> the above-mentioned duality of Good / Evil has been conceived in relatively more tangible terms by the duality of Christ and Antichrist, the latter being the main target of interpretation for it has remained but a concept and a metaphor that could be used from different points of view to mean different things in different contexts. The essentially antagonistic nature of the term Antichrist, which is immediately visible in the prefix “anti-”, has in many cases allowed for the use of the name to refer to the “other” or the “enemy”. In Elizabethan England, for instance, terminology of apocalyptic eschatology was a common and legitimate part of political

2 For instance, thirteenth-century English mathematician Roger Bacon was influenced by the Islamic doctrine of conjunctionism, and he presented a Christian interpretation of the doctrine as well as using mathematics to forecast the coming of the Antichrist based on the conjunctions of the planets, thereby combining astrology with the apocalyptic tradition (Geneva, 1995: 130).

discourse. As is also noted by Hill (1971: 14), when Richard Hakluyt wrote *Discourse on Western Planting* in 1584 to persuade Queen Elizabeth to support and sponsor the expedition plans of Sir Walter Raleigh for the colonization of the West Indies, he argued that English presence and naval activity in the region would be a blow to Spanish monopoly and “abate the pride of Spaine and of the supporter of the greate Antechriste of Rome” (Hakluyt, 1584: 155). Such commonness of the eschatological language was a consequence of the Reformation which had made the Scriptures accessible for the larger public and had led to an increased popular interest in the prophetic parts of the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, which were, in turn, quite literally interpreted by the intellectuals of Elizabethan England as suggesting that the End was near (Thomas, 1978: 167). Having achieved such prevalence and popularity in the sixteenth century, apocalyptic terminology had become an ideal tool for propaganda by the time Civil War began and was used frequently during and long after the war. Accordingly, in seventeenth-century England the term Antichrist came to be associated with the Pope, the Catholic bishops, the Protestants, the Spanish, the Jews, the Royalists, the Parliament, the Irish, and last but not least, the Turks (Hill, 1971: 178-182) depending on who was using the term, when and against whom.

Perhaps one of the long lasting impacts of the astrological and prophetic traditions in England of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was related to the construction of a very negative image of the Turks among the wider English public. It is true that the English had had face-to-face encounters with the Seljuk Turks, the people who were rapidly gaining control of Asia Minor during what Norman Housley calls the period of “‘classical’ crusading (1095-1291)” (2007: 190). However, in this period the term used in Europe to refer to the Muslim “enemy” was not the “Turks”, but the “Saracens”, obviously a misleading term confusing religious belief with ethnic stock (Housley, 2007: 196). From the late thirteenth century onwards and as the Ottoman state steadily expanded in Europe, the Turks gradually replaced the Saracens as the ultimate Muslim “enemy” and, with the conquest of Constantinople by the Ottoman Turks in 1453, the term “Turk” was firmly established, though carrying over from the term “Saracen” the same confusion between religion and ethnic origin. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the various aspects of the construction of the image of “the Turks” in apocalyptic eschatological terms in the seventeenth-century English public imagination through astrological and prophetic texts circulating in England at the time, one must start off with an account of the appearance of the Turks in general European astrology and prophecy as a significant figure, which dates back not surprisingly to the mid- to late fifteenth century, that is, to the conquest of Constantinople and the decades that followed.

After 1453, the shock waves caused by the fall of the most important Christian stronghold in Eastern Europe spread deeper into Western Europe as, shortly afterwards, eastern European countries like Bulgaria, Greece, and Romania also became Ottoman territories. It seemed that next in line were Austria, Hungary, Germany, and even Italy. All this was happening at a time when Europe was already polarized within itself because of sectarian wars. It was in this time of crisis, when the need for knowing things before they happened became crucial, that Johannes Lichtenberger wrote his prognostications in *Pronosticatio in latino* (1488) where he discussed the Pope and the Church, and the Turks and the Jews. [The work aroused so much interest in Europe that] [“f]rom 1488 to 1499 fourteen Latin, German and Italian editions were published” (Kurze, 1958: 63). More significantly, Lichtenberger combined astrology and apocalyptic prognostication when, interpreting the meaning of the Turkish advance in Europe, he predicted that the end of days was near (McGinn, 1998: 270-271). In other words, from the beginnings of the interpretation of the apocalyptic prophecies in the Holy Scriptures together with astrological predictions in Europe, the Turks were one of the main concerns.

Especially the Germans were growingly restless about the possibility of an Ottoman invasion of their kingdom, and when “[a]round noon on 7 November 1492 the thunderous crash of a meteorite terrified the inhabitants of southern Germany, Alsace and Switzerland” (Soergel, 2007: 303), the first response was to try and come up with an interpretation of this extraordinary phenomenon. As Soergel states:

After examining the circumstances surrounding the event, as well as the historical record of similar incidents, the king’s dignitaries concluded that the stone pointed, not to coming military catastrophes, floods or earthquakes—all events frequently associated with comets and other celestial phenomena—but that it revealed impending imperial victories against [...] the Turks (Soergel, 2007: 306).

As is clear from the examples given above, the presence of the Turks in sixteenth-century European astrological and prophetic works was observed, for the most part, in the ones produced in Germany, due primarily to the proximity of the perceived threat to this country. As Jennifer Forster notes, for centuries, prophecies with political content had a dual function of both articulating and molding public opinion especially in times of brewing crisis (Forster, 2001: 611); and in the sixteenth century it was primarily the Germans who needed an effective propaganda in the face of Turkish advance in Europe. Another reason which can explain the German astrological and prophetic preoccupation with the Turks was the role the concept of “the Turks” played in Reformation discourse. Even though Martin Luther had suggested the diabolic alliance and similarity between the Catholic pope and

bishops and the Turks in his earlier writings,<sup>3</sup> it was his 1529 book, *On War against the Turk*—written in the same year as Süleyman the Magnificent began his march to Vienna—which authoritatively established for all of Protestant Europe, but especially for the Germans, the conceptual link between the Turks and the eschatological language. Luther wrote that “just as the pope is the Antichrist, so the Turk is the very devil incarnate. The prayer of Christendom against both is that they shall go down to hell, even though it may take the Last Day to send them there; and I hope that day will not be far off” (Luther, 1529: 29). Established so strongly, German prophetic preoccupation with the Turks continued in the latter part of the sixteenth century, especially during the long period of war (1593-1606) between the Holy Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire when prognostications containing eschatological scenarios like the conquest of the Holy Roman Empire by the Turks<sup>4</sup> or the conversion of the Turks to Christianity to initiate the Second Coming were widespread (Mout, 1994: 96). More importantly, the German prophecies and predictions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries also seem to be the main sources through the influence of which similar texts began to be printed in the rest of continental Europe and in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

*A Most Strange and Wonderfull Prophecie upon this Troublesome World*, published in London in December 1595, for example, was based on the 1569 predictions of two German astrologers, Dr. John Cypriano and Tarquatus Vandersmers, but the title page also stated that their work was translated from Italian into English by Anthony Hallowey (Forster, 2001: 601). The depiction of the Turks in this text typically uses the language of apocalyptic eschatology. In the section where Cypriano’s predictions about the future events in the four corners of the world were reported, there was an account of how in the East, a black dog would enter Germany, but after losing one

3 For example, in “Treatise on Good Works”, Luther wrote “these are the real Turks whom the kings, princes, and nobles ought to attack first” (1520, 172) when he referred to Catholic bishops, whom he had also associated with the Pope who was the greatest enemy of Christ’s, in other words, the Antichrist according to him.

4 These prophecies were mostly based on the fifteenth-century prediction by the German Franciscan Johannes Hilten, who had given the year 1600 or 1606 for this conquest (Mout, 1994: 96). However, Hilten’s predictions apparently were interpretations of the Book of Daniel, one of the primary sources of Judeo-Christian apocalyptic eschatology. As Darin Hayton deals with another late fifteenth century German interpretation of the *Book of Daniel*, he reports that in the original biblical source, Daniel dreamt of four animals, a winged lion, representing the transfer of rule from Babylon to Persia; a bear, symbolizing the taking over of imperial power from Persia by Alexander the Great’s Greek Empire; a four-headed leopard, giving the authority to the Roman Empire; and a ten-horned beast, interpreted as the transfer of *imperium* from the Holy Roman Empire, with possible implication to the Ottoman Empire (2007: 64-66).

of his legs he would forsake his old master and become loyal to a new one, which was also explained to the reader as the conversion of the Turks to Christianity, which, in turn, was a sign of the End (Forster, 2001: 605). Similarly, in the part where Vandermers's prophecies were given, the Turks were conceived of as partaking in the apocalyptic scenario as an Antichristian entity, as under the title of "misbelieving nations" they were grouped together with the "papal Antichrist", and the King of Spain (quoted in Forster, 2001: 605).

Obviously, such views as expressed in texts like *A Most Strange and Wonderfull Prophetie upon this Troublesome World* were being written into an English context in which the dominant discourse on the subject was not very different. To illustrate this point, one may mention John Aylmer—who was the third Lord Bishop of London from 1577 to his death in 1594 in the reign of Elizabeth I, and whose diocese included the Court, the Westminster Hall and the City of London—as he conceived of the Turk as an ally of the Devil or Lucifer, namely the King of France who was oppressing the Protestants in his realm:

King or a Devil, a Christian or a Lucifer, that by his cursed confederacy so encourageth the Turk, that he now dares be bold to venture upon Polonia, a Christian realm, which hath received the Gospel, and that way to come into Germany. Oh! Wicked caitiff, and firebrand of hell [...] which, for the increasing of the pomp and vain-glory which he shall not long enjoy [...] will betray Christ and his cross to his mortal enemy (quoted in Strype, 1821: 183-184).

One may argue that such a comment coming from an authority like the Lord Bishop of London must have had a major influence in constructing the diabolic image of the Turks in Elizabethan England. The sense of immediacy of the perceived threat for Germany, rather than for England, is also noticeable in Aylmer's statement, which is yet another example for the German- and Germany-originated nature of the English preoccupation with the Turks.

Another figure who contributed to the depiction of the Turks in terms of apocalyptic eschatology, more specifically, as the Antichrist, in England was John Foxe, a late sixteenth-century historian. In Book VI of his *Acts and Monuments of Christian Martyrs*, after giving a lengthy history of the Ottoman monarchs, and the Turkish advance in Europe, he wrote a section about the Biblical prophecies and his self-stated purpose was "to cōsider and examine in the Scriptures, with what prophesyes the holy spirit of the Lord hath premonished and forewarned vs before, of these heauy persecutions to come vpon his people by thys horrible Antichrist" (Foxe, 1583: 786). After a prolonged account of the several interpretations of the apocalyptic prophecies in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation, which was followed

by a prayer for protection from the Turk, Foxe concluded his argument by addressing his readers:

In this long digression, wherein sufficiently hath bene described the grieuous and tedious persecution of the Saracens, & Turkes against the Christians, thou hast to vnderstand (good reader) and beholde the image of a terrible Antichrist evidently appearing both by his own doings, & also by the scriptures, prophesied & declared to vs before. A question whether is the greater Antichrist the turke or the Pope. Now in comparing the Turke with the pope, if a question be asked whether of them is the truer or greater Antichrist, it were easy to see and iudge, that the Turke is the more open and manfiest enemye agaynst Christe and hys Church (Foxe, 1583: 797).

John Burrow explains Foxe's intellectual impact in England by referring to his work as "the greatest single influence on English Protestant thinking of the late Tudor and early Stuart period" after the Bible (2008, 296) and in view of such influence, it would not be wrong to argue that there prevailed a strong identification of the Turk with the Antichrist in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century England, which would definitely find voice in literary productions of various sorts. One such example from the early seventeenth century was from travel literature. In the 1609 manuscript "Mr Stamp's Observations in his Voyage to Constantinople," the capital city of the Turks was described as follows: "Constantinople [is] in the forme of a Triangle in circule 15 myles, seated upon seaven hils, and therefore some would have it the seate of the Anti-christe" (in MacLean, 2007: 1). Presumably, the author of this early text of travel literature wished to fascinate his possible readers with sensational descriptions, and he knew, most probably from prior exposure to the texts like that of Foxe, that employing the image of the Turk as Antichrist would match with the contemporary constructions of the Turks in English public imagination.

As I have explained elsewhere (Akilli, 2012: 32-33), from the mid-seventeenth century onward, the production and dissemination of astrological and prophetic works in England reached historic high levels and with the influence of Puritan millennialism, the terminology of apocalyptic eschatology became dominant in these works. The representation of the Turk as the Antichrist was no exception in this flooding of apocalyptic literature and preoccupation with the End. In his *The Resurrection Revealed* (1654), Nathanael Homes, a Puritan theologian and a millenarian, presented an interpretation of the fourth beast mentioned in the Book of Daniel, and claimed that the Pope and the Turk together embodied the Antichrist:

The ten horns are explained by St. John to be the character of the Roman empire, and to signify the ten kingdoms into which at last it was divided; and the breaking off *three* of these ten by the *one horn* that grew up among them doth fur-

ther notably describe the body of Antichrist arising out of the Roman empire, with its two sides: the Turk having one eye, leg, and arm, and the Pope the other: one both making up one antichristian body, to keep the world from embracing Christ and his pure Gospel. [...] I would propose this expedient to the learned: viz. to consider the Turk and the Pope to be the main integrals of Antichrist (Homes, 1654: 148).

Homes, like John Foxe before him, made sure to depict the non-Christian other as the worse evil by arguing that if one must tell which is “the Antichrist” it would definitely be the Turk, as the Pope opposed the Christ “more covertly, pretending in some things to be *for* Christ” and went on to provide further evidence for his argument:

Their names, Antichrist, is doubtless applicable to both; [...] But the Turk most decidedly merits the name anti-Christ (i.e. *against*-Christ) since he opposes him *openly* [...] His NUMBER is applicable to both Turk and Pope, viz. 666. For as the numeral letters of [the Greek and Hebrew] names of the Pope who is a Latin and Roman make up that number, so do the numeral letters of Mahomet, written in Greek [...] (Homes, 1654: 150).

Occasionally giving sermons before the House of Commons, Homes too was an influential figure, and in a 1641 sermon he had talked about the urgency of throwing down the Antichrist “in fifty years hence”, because according to his calculations it was “the promised time” (Hill, 1971: 82). As such, he was also a key figure in the establishment of the mental association of the Turks with the Antichrist or Antichristian concepts prior to the Restoration. Especially in the few years leading up to 1666, the so-called *annus mirabilis*, the issue of the Antichrist was brought even more to the center of discussion, as some believed that “the number of the beast” would initiate the events of the prophesied Apocalypse. Hence, astrologer Thomas Nunnes predicted the downfall of the Antichrist, namely the Turk and the Pope, in that year, while John Tanner added the return of the ten lost tribes of Israel to the former scenario,<sup>5</sup> and in the face of the apparent falsity of these prophecies, after 1666 figures like John Napier and Johannes Alsted pointed to the 1680s and 1890s for the fulfillment of these prophecies (Capp, 1979: 174-

5 Especially in early seventeenth-century England, the lost tribes of Israel was the subject of an ongoing debate and the Turks, though under the name of Tartars—a term which referred to the Turks too in the Tudor and Stuart England—were central to this debate as by some they were believed to be the lost tribes whose return to Jerusalem would inaugurate the millennium in Jerusalem (Cogley, 2005: 782-783). The re-emergence of the debate in the post-Restoration period was due mainly to the 1677 publication of Giles Fletcher the Elder’s 1610 manuscript entitled *The Tartars Or, Ten Tribes*, by a Puritan minister (Cogley, 2005: 782).

175). After the Restoration, there was a rapid decline in the use of the symbolism of the Antichrist, a name “less and less frequently mentioned, in print at all events” (Hill, 1971: 147-148), for political propaganda and criticism related to the matters of England. However, as the descriptions in the texts that are commented on here will show, the construction of the Turks as Antichristian continued well into the final decades of the seventeenth and would decrease in number significantly only after the defeat of the Ottoman army in Vienna in 1683,<sup>6</sup> and the gradual dismissal of prophecy and astrology from the mainstream cultural and literary scene into the realm of “non-sense”.

In the light of the brief historical background and contextual information provided so far, in the remaining part of this article, the construction of the image of the Turks in terms of apocalyptic eschatology and by the use of Antichristian imagery in seventeenth-century England will be further illustrated with reference to some manuscripts available to the seventeenth-century English reader. The three texts selected as examples contain reports, prophecies and predictions about the Turks and the Ottoman Empire. As such, these texts represent different groups of manuscripts which can be roughly categorized as “natural phenomena”, “miraculous happenings”, and “astrological prognostications and prophecies” that were available to the seventeenth-century English reader.

The first text to be commented on here belongs to the group of texts which relate narratives of “natural” phenomena such as comets and earthquakes. It must be pointed out at the outset that most of these texts typically treat these “natural” phenomena as “unnatural” or “supernatural”, or infuse a “supernatural” element into the narrative. This can be explained by referring to Bernard Capp’s contention that even though the Reformation had erased the magical and the supernatural from the center of faith, the masses still demanded to read and know about supernatural phenomena, and astrological and prophetic texts functioned as the suppliers of this popular demand (Capp, 1979: 279). The manuscript selected from this category is entitled *Extraordinary Nevves from Conflantinople*, dated November 27, 1641, which is a translation from French by one W. C. Claiming to report the contents of a letter, sent from a person whose name is undisclosed, to Lord Dominico, Mugliano, Florantoni on September 6, 1641, the text relates a story which is interpreted as confirming the prophecies about the

6 Capp notes that the advance of the Turks further into Europe and their eventual siege of Vienna were among the major reasons behind a new period of anticipation from the late 1670s onwards, though less pervasive than the one in the 1640s; and that an equal combination of astrological and prophetic interpretations were more characteristic of this period, as opposed to the dominance of biblical prophecy in the prognostications of the earlier period (1979: 175-176).

“Ruine of the Turkish Empire” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 1). After giving the reader an interpretive frame at the very beginning, the author starts his account of the story in the following, which is dominated by an eerie and sensational tone:

From the tenth of Auguftal, to the 13. of the fame Moneth there was fo furious a winde in the plaines neere unto *Constantinople*, that it did difroote and blow up many Trees, and ruinated a great number of ftately Edifices, and amongft thofe perfons who received great loffe, it is peticularly obferved, that four of the Turkes grand Couriers, and a Captaine of his Troopes, were by the violence of this Tempeft, throwne into deep precipices, and were never fince feene... (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 2).

The sensationalism in this opening seems to be the strategy of the author to impress the reader from the very beginning. Indeed, it may be argued that sensationalism was a staple of this kind of text as its target audience was not the educated elite but the masses. Capp, too, places importance on the role of the sensational by stating that the contents of the almanacs were also an escapist literature and that “[m]onstrous births, the fall of kings and seas red with blood were an important element in the public’s appetite for entertainment and excitement” (Capp, 1979: 285). In other words, the more sensational an almanac was, the better it sold. However, the representational aspect of this opening seems to be the more interesting one. Even in this very first paragraph the majestic image of “the Turk” is constructed mostly in militaristic terms such as “Captaine” and “Troopes” and would easily appeal to the readers’ mental association of the Turks with the Antichrist and his army at the apocalyptic battlefield of Armageddon. Another point is that, by such imagery, the reader is to understand that the might of the Turks comes from their military strength only. Nonetheless, even from the beginning it is established that the Ottoman troops are vulnerable to Nature’s fury. Since God meant the same thing as Nature, after the reconciliation of astrology and religion,<sup>7</sup> the mid-seventeenth century English reader of this text would immediately remember the Biblical prophecies about the eventual downfall of Antichristian forces.

After the introduction, the author includes more sensational descriptions to increase the tension and to build up suspense:

all this was made the more fearefull and deftroiyable by the Aspect of two Commetts or blafing ftarres with double tailes, or forked pofteriums. The one of which appeared from two of the clocke in the morning until midnight, juft over

7 The reconciliation of astrology and religion in Germany and England, respectively has already been explained by other critics (Brosseder, 2005: 575; Chapman, 2007: 1261).

againſt the great Turkes *Seraglio*, and the other over the Church or Mofque of *Santa Sophia*, from three of the clocke in the afternoone till five a clocke the next morning... (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 2).

One of the two points which must be considered here is the deliberate emphasis on specificity and exactness. The comets stay hovering over the city “from three of the clocke in the afternoone till five a clocke the next morning” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 2). Such deliberate expressions of attempted realism that are repeated throughout, of course, only have the purpose of making the story look more credible. The second point is the binary opposition created by the comets’ being positioned above the Muslim Sultan’s palace on the one side and above a structure which had been the symbol of Christendom for centuries on the other. It is noteworthy that the phrase “Church or Mofque of *Santa Sophia*” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 2) signifies not only the dualistic character of Santa Sophia, but also an unsettled dispute. The implication here is that Constantinople has not been lost forever and might as well be reclaimed soon, an idea which will prove to be in accord with the resolution of this narrative. On a second interpretive level, the unsettled dispute here implies the final battle between Christian and Antichristian forces before the End, in which the Antichrist will be utterly defeated, and accordingly in this interpretation the Turks are immediately constructed as the Antichristian forces.

The text also tells of how on the twelfth day of the same month at about three o’clock in morning “the great Turke”, whose name is not given but who must be Sultan İbrahim I as he reigned in 1641, dreamt that he was being attacked by “many Lyons, the greatest of which having bitten him upon the breast” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 2-3) and woke up in terror. Shortly after going back to sleep, the Sultan “had a second vision of many *Centaures*” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 3) who fiercely battled against each other until a great army of “*Griffens*” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 3) came from the East and began slaughtering the Centaurs. The Sultan “with a flaming fword in his hand” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 3) tries to help the Centaurs, “but as he lift up his fword againſt the *Griffens*, the Eagle conducting them, difarmed him, upon which the great *Turke* being ſurprised, awakens with ſo great confuſion and trouble” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 3). After waking up, the Sultan immediately summons the diviners and the astrologers in his realm to interpret the appearance of the comets and his dreams within three days and give a report without hiding any truth. The most senior member of the group, named “*Moffa Egyppiano*” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 4), presenting the interpretation tells the Sultan that “all our Anceſtours have believed, as we alſo believe our felves, that thy raigne ſhall be the laſt of the *Turkes*” (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 5). Upon this, the Sultan gives a severe physical punishment to all of the diviners and astrologers, who were, miraculously, not hurt in the least, which

made some of the inhabitants of Constantinople to go and be baptized into the Christian religion (*Extraordinary Nevves*, 8-9). Apart from displaying, to the relief of the reader, the vulnerability of the most powerful man of the time, the Ottoman Sultan, the Grand Signor of Europe, the use of the self-confessed testimony of the enemy diviner is meant to convince the English reader of the eventual defeat of the threat against Christendom. The immediate message here is that, the Turks' story in Europe will end in such a way that it will bring joy to Christendom. But more importantly, the conversion of some Turks into Christianity is very meaningful, as according to apocalyptic eschatology it was one of the signs of the imminent end, before which Christianity would prevail all over the world. So, this text without doubt depicted the Turks in Antichristian terms by alluding to some common knowledge originating from apocalyptic eschatology, and contributed to conception of the Turks in these terms by the mid-seventeenth century English reader.

The second text is representative of the accounts of "miraculous happenings." The anonymous author of the text entitled *Strange and Miraculous Newes from Turkie* (June 13, 1642), claims to relate the account of a miraculous vision which appeared in Medina, which was reported to the English Ambassador in Constantinople. Just like in the exposition of the previous text, the author of this manuscript uses the same strategy of giving specific time and place and, to further enhance credibility, employs the authority of an ambassador. The typical sensational exposition is seen in this text too:

On the 20th of September of 1641 there was a severe thunderstorm in Medina. After the storm "the vapours being difperft, and the Elements cleert, the People might read in Arabian Characters, these words in the Firmament, *O why will you believe in Lies* (*Strange and Miraculous Newes*, 2).

At first, the author creates only enough anticipation to prepare the reader to the main incident, the climax of the narrative:

a woman in white [...] having a cheerfull countenance, holding in her hand a Book, coming from the Northeaft, opposite againft her were Armies of *Turkes*, *Perfians*, *Arabians*, and other *Mahometans*, ranged in order of Battaile, and ready to charge her, but fhee kept her ftanding, and onely opened the Booke, at the fight whereof the Armies fled, and presently all the Lamps about Mahomets Tombe went out, for as foone as ever the Vifion vanished [...] a murmuring Wind was heard... (*Strange and Miraculous Newes*, 2).

Once again, the central event reported by the text is imbued in allusions to the battle of Armageddon and the identification of the Turks as the army of the Antichrist, the eventual defeat of which is central to apocalyptic eschatological scenario is obvious. The witnesses of this episode cannot conceive the

meaning of the vision, but “only one of the *Dervices*, which is a strict religious Order among the *Turkes* [...] and live in contemplation, stepped up very boldly and made a Speech...” (*Strange and Miraculous Newes*, 2) interpreting the vision. The “*Dervice*” first gives a summary of the beginnings of the Jewish and Christian religions respectively and tells people how God, being weary of the vanities of these people, in time “disposse[ed] them of their chiefest Cities, Jerufalem and Constantinople” (*Strange and Miraculous Newes*, 3). Towards the end of the narrative, the dervish goes on to tell how God sent Prophet Muhammet as a new hope for his people, who shall be happy forever if they serve his religion right. At this point, the dervish states that he believes they have not been very successful in this, and declares:

I tremble to speake it, we have erred in every point, and willfully broken our first Infitutions, fo as God hath manifested his wrath by evident signes and tokens [...] this strange and fearefull vifion is a prediction of some great troubles and alterations [...] I feare our Religion will be corrupt, an our Prophet an impostor, and then thif Christ, whom they talke of shall shine like the Sunne, and fet up his name everlastingly (*Strange and Miraculous Newes*, 4).

Upon these statements, his audience condemns the *Dervice* and after suffering through unspeakable torture he dies, with this as his last gasp: “*O thou VVoman with the Booke save me*” (*Strange and Miraculous Newes*, 5). Once again, the message to the reader is that Islam will be corrupt and eventually dissolve and Christianity will “shine like the Sunne”. There reference is obviously to the conversion of the Turks and the universal domination of Christianity before the end of days, so this text too can be regarded as drawing a picture of the Turks by employing the language of apocalyptic eschatology.

The last text which will be dealt with here was published into the immediate aftermath of the second siege of Vienna by the Ottoman army, and thus the image of the Turks is central to narrative. As such the text clearly illustrates how common the image of the Turks was in astrological prognostications employing apocalyptic vocabulary, written by English astrologers and printed in England as late as the final decades of the seventeenth century. John Merrifield’s *Catastasis Mundi: Or the True State, Vigor, and Growing Greatnefs of Christendom* (1684) begins as a criticism of John Holwell’s *Catastrophe Mundi, or, Europe’s many mutations until the year 1701*, which was published in 1682, and of his 1683 Appendix to the book, in which he had predicted a speedy establishment of Turkish domination in Christendom. As the Ottoman army was approaching the gates of Vienna, Holwell had predicted that the catastrophe of the world was at hand. Merrifield’s account, on the other hand, takes the reader to the stage of *catastasis*, which is the stage preceding the catastrophe in classical tragedy. So the reader is to understand that the catastrophe did not occur yet, and there is still time and

hope to reverse the course of things. Merrifield defines Holwell's work as a "bold and *fallacious* dealing, under the pretence of explaining the meaning of the *triple Conjunction of Saturn, and Jupiter in Leo* [which had occurred in 1682], wherewith he hath encouraged *Mahomet*, and crucified our *Saviour* afresh" (Merrifield, 1684: A2), and states the aim of his own work as "the promotion of *Christian Courage*, and imbasing of *Turkish Power*, in expounding the *fame Conjunction*" (Merrifield, 1684: A2). He then expresses that he "thought whether this Holwel might be a Prophet of Mahomet, to encourage the Turks, and to dishearten the Chriftians" (Merrifield, 1684: A3). Of course, one needs to keep in mind that Merrifield was writing after the successful defense of Vienna by the Christian armies in 1683, which had proved Holwell wrong.

After his accusations directed toward Holwell, Merrifield begins to make his own point by first giving an astrological interpretation of the history of the Turks, and then by presenting "*the true Nativities* [of The Sultan and Prophet Muhammet], with an *Astrological Discourse thereon shewing you how that the Turks shall not over-run Chriftendom*" (Merrifield, 1684: A4). Merrifield's astrological findings about the Ottoman monarchy are as follows:

If we take the Original, or Beginning of the *Turks* Empire, to be from the *Ottoman* Family, as I suppose we justly may (although they had many Rifings and Fallings, after [the Turks] left their Native Countrey, *Anno Dom.* 844. and were then called *Scythians*) for Ottoman taking upon him the Government of the *Turks*, he first founded this great Empire, in the year of Chrif, 1289. at which time, *Saturn* was in *Pifces*; and Authors tell us, that *Turky*, or the greatest part of it, lies under *Capricorn*, and therefore governed by *Saturn*. And according to the rules of Astrology, *Saturns* great years are 465. which added to 1289. will make 1754. therefore this Monarchy seemeth to stand firm and stable no longer then unto the year of Chrif, 1754 (Merrifield, 1684: 1).

In other words, the reader is invited to anticipate the fall of the Ottoman monarchy within seventy years from the date of publication. Following his calculation of the time of the downfall of the Turks, Merrifield presents his own version of the nativity charts of Sultan Mehmet IV and of Prophet Muhammet, which can again be considered as parts adding to the sensationalism of the text.

Merrifield argues that the nativity chart of Sultan Mehmet IV shows that "The Sun, *Jupiter* and the Moon, in the Ascendent, are sure Testimonies of Honour [...] it makes him extremely proud, so that he will esteem none so good as himself, but will be apt to quarrel with those of his neighbouring Nations..." (Merrifield, 1684: 3). Moreover,

The Lord of the Eleventh, is in square to the Lord of the Ascendent, which will cause the Friends of the Native to prove deceitful to him. *Saturn*, Lord of the Af-

centent, pofited in the Second, fhews the Native to ufe induftry to increafe his Subftance, and to enlarge his Territories; but *Saturn* is an Infortunate by Nature, and by being pofited in the Afcentent, will rather deftroy the Natives Subftance, and diminish his Empire (Merrifield, 1684: 4).

One can assume that Merrifield must have had enough knowledge of Ottoman history<sup>8</sup> to predict that after the unsuccessful campaign in Vienna, the Sultan would encounter growing opposition in his court, which indeed happened. He could have predicted this much by commonsense. Yet, one must admit that Merrifield makes a lucky hit about the year of the Sultan's death when he writes: "About the year, 1687, he hath the Sun, Moon and Afcentent, directed to the Body of *Saturn*; I cannot pofitively fay that he will lofe his Life then about; but I am certain he will undergo Afflictions of body, and all his Affairs go unfuccefsful for some confiderable time..." (Merrifield, 1684: 6). Sultan Mehmet IV died in 1687.

The nativity of Prophet Muhammet in Merrifield's text is given as the "Scheme of the Nativity of *Mahomet*, the Author of the *Turks* Faith or Religion" (Merrifield, 1684: 7). The choice of the word "author" instead of "prophet", of course, is in line with the Christian belief that the prophet of Islam was an impostor. Accordingly, Merrifield first gives a brief biography of Prophet Muhammet, explaining how being a merchant and a "curious researcher into both the Jews and Chriftian Religion" (Merrifield, 1684: 7), he saw many countries and accumulated wealth, and how at the age of thirty eight "Pride enflamed his heart, and wrought in him a defire to be taken for a Prophet; and to make men believe that he was a real Prophet" (Merrifield, 1684: 7). He then explains the Turks' conversion to Islam as follows:

no wonder that the *Turks*, which were the Seed of *Ham*, that wicked son of *Noah*, whom his Father curfed, fhould efteem fuch a lying Impofitor as *Mahomet* was, for a God or Saviour; for Hiftory plainly faith, that after the Death of *Noah*, *Ham* went into *Africa*, and there fetled his Abode, and from his Pofterity fprang the *Turks*, a fort of People, much of his own nature... (Merrifield, 1684: 8).

After establishing the wickedness of the Turks and their faith, Merrifield refers to the Bible to make his point more authoritative and to realize his explicitly-stated aim of promoting Christian courage: "God hath faid in the Holy Scriptures, that all Nations fhall be converted to the Chriftian Faith, before the Day of Judgement, therefore [...] about the year, *Anno Chrifti*

8 Richard Knolles's *General Historie of the Turkes* (1603) and Paul Rycaut's *The Present State of the Ottoman Empire* (1665), several editions of both of which appeared after their first publications, were probably the main sources of reference for anyone writing about the Turks in seventeenth-century England.

1759. we may expect the the Diffolution of the *Turks* Faith...” (Merrifield, 1684: 9). The conclusion part of Merrifield’s work is clearly one more example of how, even as late as 1684, the image of the Turks was constructed in the minds of English readers based on the language of the prophecies about the End, which was integrated into the astrological discourse.

As has been illustrated by the prophetic and astrological texts studied here, which were available to seventeenth-century English reading audience, the image of the Turks was constructed with references, though at varying degrees, to apocalyptic eschatology and led to the conception and representation of the Turks as the agents of the Antichristian, if not the Antichrist himself. Even though the authors or translators of the texts are different individuals, it is observed that the narrative and discursive strategies of the texts, such as sensational openings, elements of suspense, attempted-realism displayed by exactness and detail in description to create an effect of credibility, are very similar to each other in many ways, which provokes suspicion of deliberation and systematization. Although this deliberate association was done for purposes of political propaganda most of the time, there is enough evidence to argue that such an identification must have influenced and shaped the popular beliefs and assumptions held by the English people of the Turks in the seventeenth century. In relation to this last remark, one final question needs to be answered: how does one know that these texts were really influential in the construction of an image of the Turks, a diabolic one at that, in early modern English public imagination? For an informed answer, one needs to refer again to the views of Capp who, in explaining the popularity of these texts, has pointed out that:

[i]n assessing the role of the almanac [and its content of astrological and prophetic prognostications] in Tudor and Stuart England, we must recall that astrology in this earlier period was far more than a subculture. It formed a part of the dominant pattern of beliefs, though one which slowly declined and which coexisted very uneasily with other hostile elements. With sales that passed a third of a million copies a year, almanacs clearly did belong to the popular culture of the age (Capp, 1979: 283).

Elsewhere in his book, Capp argues that the sales figures of the almanacs in early modern period are proof that they constituted a strong element in both shaping and reflecting the beliefs and practices of the period (1979, 292). Therefore, one may conclude that one of the ways in which the image of the Turks was constructed in seventeenth-century English public imagination was typically characterized by the use of Antichrist(ian) imagery, and thus, the issues discussed in this article may contribute to the efforts stemming from the recent scholarly interest in the various aspects of the early modern cultural and literary encounters between Christian Europe and the

Muslim world in general, and between the English and the Turks, in particular. Of course, similar research must be done in the reverse direction, that is, through a study of the beliefs and assumptions about the Europeans in general and the English in particular as they may have been discursively expressed in similar Ottoman and other Islamic astrological and prophetic manuscripts, so that the other half of this general scholarly inquiry can be completed.

## References

- Akılı, Sinan. "Apocalyptic Eschatology, Astrology, Prophecy, and the Image of the Turks in Seventeenth-Century England." *Hacettepe University Journal of Faculty of Letters* 29.1 (June, 2012): 25-52.
- Brosseder, Claudia. "Writing in the Wittenberg Sky: Astrology in Sixteenth-Century Germany." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 66.4 (2005): 557-576. Accessed January 12, 2012, *JSTOR*.
- Burrow, John. *A History of Histories*. New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.
- Capp, Bernard. *Astrology and the Popular Press: English Almanacs 1500-1800*. 1979. Reprint. London: Faber and Faber, 2008.
- Chapman, Allison A. "Marking Time: Astrology, Almanacs, and English Protestantism." *Renaissance Quarterly* 60 (2007): 1257-90. Accessed December 4, 2007, *Project Muse*.
- Cogley, Richard W. "'The Most Vile and Barbarous Nation of all the World': Giles Fletcher the Elder's *The Tartars or, Ten Tribes* (ca. 1610)." *Renaissance Quarterly* 58 (2005): 781-814. Accessed March 07, 2009, *Project Muse*.
- Extraordinary Nevves from Constantinople, November the 27, 1641. Being a Letter sent from thence to the Lord Dominicco, Mugliano, Florantino, dated the second of September. 1641. Contayning a most certaine and true Relation of the late and strange visions, with the aspects of two Commetts or blazing Starres with forked Tayles. Appearing to the Great Turke, and perpendicularly hanging over his Seraglio in Constantinople, as also his incredible dreames, together with their Interpretation by the wifest of his Divines, Astrologers, and Magicians. Written in French and faithfully Translated by W. C. (1641)*. London: Printed for Francis Constable, and John Thomas, 1641. Accessed May 17, 2007. *Early English Books Online*.
- Forster, Jennifer. "Anticipating the Apocalypse: An Elizabethan Prophecy." *Historian* 63.3 (2001): 601-617. Accessed February 03, 2012. *Wiley Online Library*.
- Foxe, John. *Actes and Monumentes of Christian Martyrs, and matters Ecclesiasticall, passed in the Church of Christ from the Primitiue beginning, to these our dayes, as well in other Countreys, as namely, in this Realme of England, and also of Scotland, discoursed at large*, 1583. Accessed February 08, 2012. *John*

- Foxes's The Acts and Monuments Online*: <http://www.johnfoxe.org/index.php?realm=text&edition=1583&gototype=modern>.
- Geneva, Ann. *Astrology and the Seventeenth Century Mind: William Lilly and the Language of the Stars*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995.
- Hakluyt, Richard. *A Discourse on Western Planting*, 1584. Accessed February 08, 2012. *Internet Archive*: [http://www.archive.org/stream/cihm\\_07386#-page/n7/mode/2up](http://www.archive.org/stream/cihm_07386#-page/n7/mode/2up).
- Hayton, Darin. "Astrology as Political Propaganda: Humanist Responses to the Turkish Threat in Early-Sixteenth-Century Vienna." *Austrian History Yearbook* 38 (2007): 61-91. Accessed April 29, 2011. *Cambridge Journals Online*.
- Hill, Christopher. *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England*. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.
- Homes, Nathaniel. *The Resurrection Revealed, or the Dawning of the Day-Star*, 1654. Reprint. London: Simpkin and Marshali, 1833. Accessed February 08, 2012. *Google Books*: <http://books.google.com.tr/ebooks?id=ggMPA-AAIAAJ&hl=tr>.
- Housley, Norman. "The Crusades and Islam." *Medieval Encounters* 13 (2007): 189-208. Accessed April 25, 2012. *Brill*: <http://web.clas.ufl.edu/users/ncaputo/euh4930-08/articles/hously.-pdf>.
- Kurze, Dietrich. "Prophecy and History: Lichtenberger's Forecasts of Events to Come (From the Fifteenth to the Twentieth Century); Their Reception and Diffusion." *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 21.1-2 (1958): 63-85. Accessed January 26, 2009, *JSTOR*.
- Luther, Martin. "On War against the Turk." (1529). In T. G. Tappert, ed., *Selected Writings of Martin Luther: 1529-1546*, 9-53. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Treatise on Good Works." (1520). In T. G. Tappert, ed., *Selected Writings of Martin Luther: 1517-1520*, 103-196. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007.
- MacLean, Gerald. *Looking East: English Writing and the Ottoman Empire before 1800*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.
- McGinn, Bernard. *Apocalypticism in the Western Tradition*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1998.
- Merrifield, John. *Catastasis Mundi: Or the True State, Vigor, and Growing Greatness of Christendom, Under the Influences of the Last triple Conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Leo, the late Comet, &c. Together with the true Genitures of, Mahomet the Impostor, The Grand Seignior, The German Emperour. The French Monarch. Proving thence, That the Turks will be defeated in all their Attempts against Christendom, &c. notwithstanding Mr. Holwel's Menaces to the contrary in his Catastrophe Mundi, and his Appendix thereunto. Also the said*

*Holwel's monstrous Falshoods and Errours discovered, retorted and confuted, and himself remitted to the Turks, to comfort them now after their Losses before Vienna. By John Merrifield, Student in Astrology, Physick, and the Heavenly and Sublime Sciences. London, Printed for Rowland Reynolds near Salisbury-Exchange in the Strand, 1684. Accessed May 17, 2007, Early English Books Online.*

Mout, Nicolette. "Chiliastic Prophecy and Revolt in the Habsburg Monarchy." In M. Wilks, ed., *Prophecy and Eschatology*, 93-109. Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.

Soergel, Philip M. (2007). "Portents, Disaster, and Adaptation in Sixteenth Century Germany." *The Medieval History Journal* 10.1&2 (2007): 303-326. Accessed January 26, 2009, SAGE.

*Strange and Miraculous Newes from Turkie. Sent to our English Ambassadour resident at Constantinople. Of a Woman which was seene in the Firmament with a Book in her hand at Medina Talnabi where Mahomets Tombe is. Also severall Visions of Armed men appearing in the Ayre for one and twenty dayes together. With a Propheticall interpretation made by a Mahumotan Priest, who lost his life in the maintenance thereof. London, Printed for Hugh Perrey neere Ivy-Bridge in the Strand, 1642. Accessed May 17, 2007, Early English Books Online.*

Strype, John. *Historical Collections of the Life and Acts of the Right Reverend Father in God, John Aylmer, Lord Bp. of London in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth Wherein are Explained Many Transactions of the Church of England; and What Methods Were Then Taken to Preserve It, With Respect Both to the Papist and Puritan. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1821. Accessed February 08, 2012. Internet Archive: <http://www.archive.org/details/historicalcolle00strygoog>.*

Thomas, Keith. *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England. London: Penguin, 1978.*

