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“A KNOT WORTH UNLOOSING”: THE INTERPRETATION OF THE  
NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH  
IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND

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JOHN H. DUFF

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CALVIN THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

3233 Burton SE • Grand Rapids, Michigan • 49546-4301

800 388-6034 fax: 616 957-8621 info@calvinseminary.edu

www.calvinseminary.edu

This dissertation entitled

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written by

**JOHN DUFF**

and submitted in partial fulfillment of

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has been accepted by the faculty of Calvin Theological Seminary

upon the recommendation of the undersigned readers:

Richard A. Muller, Ph.D.

John Bolt, Ph.D.

Lyle D. Bierma, Ph.D.

Willem van Asselt, Ph.D.

Ronald J. Feenstra, Ph.D. Academic Dean

Date

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To Desiree—loving wife, fellow scholar, best friend

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## Preface

When I was a child and even into my teen years, the topic of eschatology tended to scare me rather than comfort me. The theological tradition in which I was raised made it clear that before Christ would return, the world situation would deteriorate dramatically and I secretly hoped the Second Advent would not occur in my lifetime. Over time, my fear of the topic gave way to a studied indifference after becoming aware that not all Christians believed the way I had been taught. Hence it is somewhat ironic that I chose to write a dissertation on the subject of the new heavens and earth. Some course work in my doctoral studies aroused an interest in the history of biblical exegesis and a paper I wrote on the understanding of the millennium of Revelation 20:1-6, coupled with the renewed interest in the new heavens and earth in contemporary scholarship all combined to spur the research contained in the following pages.

I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Richard Muller, for his patience and wisdom throughout the dissertation process. Anyone who has read his works knows that his research is thoroughly grounded in the historical documents of an era. In this regard, I have endeavored to be his disciple. However, his greatest gift to me was the assurance and confidence that this study was worth pursuing to its completion.

## Abstract

Scholars interested in the history of Christian eschatological thought have focused primarily on the theme of heaven or on the various interpretations of the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6. Virtually no attention has been given to past interpretations of the biblical phrase *the new heavens and earth*. This dissertation uncovers the interpretations of this phrase that were extant in seventeenth-century England. These interpretations fall into two basic camps—those that understood the phrase metaphorically and those that understood the phrase literally.

One group of English divines believed the new heavens and earth was a phrase referring to the new age of the gospel that commenced in the first century CE. Subsequent to the earthly ministry of Jesus, God flung open the doors of salvation to Gentiles while at the same time bringing judgment to the Jewish nation for its failure to recognize and embrace Jesus as Messiah. This judgment culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, bringing an end to the Jewish political and religious systems. Christianity replaced Judaism, bringing with it the hope of salvation for Gentiles. Such an epic event was fittingly described as a new heavens and earth.

A second group of English interpreters believed the phrase stood for a yet future time when the political and religious circumstances of the world would change for the betterment of the church for one thousand years. The new heavens and earth stood for a future millennium in which Christ would establish his reign over the world prior to the day of resurrection and final judgment. The papacy would fall and true religion would flourish in the world. Christ would reign over the earth either personally or via the church.



These metaphorical interpretations of the new heavens and earth existed alongside a more literal one. Theologians who accepted a literal understanding believed the new heavens and earth described the renovation of the physical creation at the final judgment. Adam's sin had introduced corruption into the created order and God would eventually purge creation from the effects of Adam's fall. Among this group, differences of opinion existed with respect to how much of the world would need cleansing, what creatures would be restored and of what use would a renovated world serve.

Two main opinions existed about the use of a renewed world. The majority of scholars believed the purged world would serve as a monument to God's glory, wisdom and power. God's people would be able to see this monument from their permanent abode in heaven. A few divines adopted the idea that the new heavens and earth would be home to Christ and his people for eternity. Christ would resign his position as head over the Father's kingdom and take up his own kingdom on earth in fulfillment of the promises to Abraham, David and the Old Testament prophets.

## INTRODUCTION

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a resurgence of interest in the teaching of Scripture about the end of this world, interest fueled by the notion that the papacy was the Antichrist whose days, in the eyes of many Protestants, seemed to be numbered. That interest is very evident among seventeenth-century English divines, many of whom believed that the prophecies of Scripture concerning the end of the age would be fulfilled within their generation or soon after. While a robust scholarship has explored the rise of millennial thought in seventeenth-century England, other aspects of the eschatology of that time have received much less attention.<sup>1</sup> One area that has been virtually ignored is seventeenth-century interpretations of a phrase that occurs four times in the Bible—*new heavens and a new earth*.<sup>2</sup> This phrase occurs in texts often understood as describing the end of the present world and the beginning of the world to come. The first two occurrences appear in the book of Isaiah. In Isaiah 65:17, the author reports God as saying, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the

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<sup>1</sup> Although millennialism in all periods of church history has been studied by historians, the following pay special attention to its presence among the English in the seventeenth century: Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975); Peter Toon, ed. *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1970) and Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2000). Other works give it considerable attention even though it is not their only focus: see Richard Kyle, *The Last Days Are Here Again* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998); Charles Webster, ed. *The Intellectual Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Trevor Aston, Past and Present Series (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); and Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

<sup>2</sup> Although historical reasons account for why scholarship has scrutinized the idea of a millennium, that idea is based largely on its appearance in one text of scripture—Revelation 20:1-6—where the phrase “a thousand years” is mentioned six times. The “new heaven(s) and new earth” is mentioned four times in three different biblical books written over the span of several centuries.

former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”<sup>3</sup> In the next chapter, the thought is repeated: “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain” (66:22). The second set of occurrences appears in the New Testament, one in 2 Peter and one in Revelation. After prophesying that the world will undergo a great conflagration, Peter encourages his readers with another prophecy: “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). Finally, John reports a vision in Revelation 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”<sup>4</sup> This dissertation will focus on the understanding of this promise in seventeenth-century England. In particular, it will demonstrate that, in spite of a fairly stable hermeneutical method amongst English scholars, the interpretation of the new heavens and earth was not monolithic but considerably varied with respect to how and when this promise would be fulfilled.<sup>5</sup>

The topic of the new heavens and earth has received some recent attention among contemporary theologians. Cornelis Venema devotes an entire chapter to the new

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<sup>3</sup> All scripture citations in this dissertation are taken from the King James Version to be found at [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org).

<sup>4</sup> It may be noticed that the first three occurrences of the phrase contain the plural “heavens” while Revelation 21:1 uses the singular “heaven.” This distinction does not appear to have been deemed important in the primary or secondary sources consulted for this dissertation. For consistency, the plural will be used throughout this study.

<sup>5</sup> For a thorough treatment of pre-critical hermeneutics, see Richard Muller, *Holy Scripture: The Cognitive Foundation of Theology*, vol. 2 of *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, Ca. 1520 to Ca. 1725* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

heavens and earth in his *The Promise of the Future*.<sup>6</sup> He includes one brief paragraph in which he asserts that the new heavens and earth has been understood in two basic ways in church history; they will be brand new with no connection to the present world or they will be an overhauled version of it.<sup>7</sup> Michael Wittmer presents a case for a renewed earth where Christians will live forever pursuing a variety of cultural pursuits.<sup>8</sup> This thesis receives an expanded treatment by Randy Alcorn in a volume which attempts to address specific questions about the activities and characteristics of the renovated world.<sup>9</sup> As valuable as these and similar contributions are to a systematic and practical understanding of the new heavens and earth, their focus is not to elucidate its history of interpretation.

As distinct from the systematicians, historians of Christian thought have tended to explore three other avenues in eschatology. The first avenue winds through works concerned with heaven as it has been conceived in Christian history. The title of Ulrich Simon's study, *Heaven in the Christian Tradition*, suggests that the broad sweep of Christian history will be previewed.<sup>10</sup> In reality it is a study of heaven looking at Old

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<sup>6</sup> Cornelis P. Venema, *The Promise of the Future* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 454-488.

<sup>7</sup> Venema, *The Promise of the Future*, 460. Venema cites Herman Bavinck's *The Last Things* as his source for examples of adherents to the belief in a completely new world. These sources include Origen, Lutherans, Mennonites, Socinians, Beza, Junius and the Remonstrants. Venema does not give examples of those who held to some form of continuity between the present world and the world to come.

<sup>8</sup> Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven Is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 201-207.

<sup>9</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004). The title is slightly misleading for, as it turns out, the new earth is "the book's central subject." See Alcorn, *Heaven*, xvi.

<sup>10</sup> Ulrich Simon, *Heaven in the Christian Tradition* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958).

Testament and New Testament texts, supplemented with references to inter-testamental literature, rabbinic sources, and the apostolic fathers; the title notwithstanding, this eschatological road stops far short of the seventeenth century. In *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence*, Jeffrey Russell covers more ground than Simon.<sup>11</sup> Russell explores Christian concepts of heaven from 200 B.C.E. to the early fourteenth century when Dante published the *Divine Comedy* in 1321. He chose to end his history with the *Divine Comedy* since he thinks it is the “highest expression of the tradition.”<sup>12</sup> These two studies not only do not embrace the seventeenth century but they do not discuss the promise of a new heavens and a new earth.

Two other histories of heaven attempt to cover the topic from the time of Christ to the present. Drawing on sources from all ages, Alistair McGrath approaches the topic of heaven thematically instead of chronologically.<sup>13</sup> His primary interest is in how heaven has been portrayed in literature as opposed to theological works. Since his interest is literature, he briefly engages the works of Bunyan, Baxter and Milton, but the topic of new heavens/new earth does not arise in his survey.

Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang provide the second attempt at surveying the history of heaven within the Christian tradition.<sup>14</sup> In chapter 6, the authors discuss sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth-century Protestant and Catholic conceptions of life

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<sup>11</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

<sup>12</sup> Russell, *A History of Heaven*, xiv.

<sup>13</sup> Alistair McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven*, Blackwell Brief Histories of Religion (Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).

after death for the saints. McDannell and Lang assert that both Calvin and Luther believed in a coming renovation of the earth, noting that Luther speculated that the saints might visit the earth in the eternal state, but it would not be their home. Calvin did not allow for any earthly existence in the eternal state, be it temporary or permanent.<sup>15</sup>

Though Luther and Calvin believed the earth would continue to exist in a renovated form, McDannell and Lang assert that the Puritans largely gave up the idea. The great upheaval of the seventeenth century led to attention on the world to come and not this present one. Therefore,

Heaven for the pious could never be a replica of the existing world. The old Reformation doctrine about the renewed world as a place of life everlasting was abandoned. Even those who predicted a fruitful earth during the millennium returned the righteous to their proper heavenly existence after the end of time. The other life, either immediately after death or after the millennium, freed the saints from the world; it did not continue their existence there.<sup>16</sup>

Later the authors claim that “[i]n the early seventeenth-century Protestant theology, belief in a new earth virtually disappeared” and “later Puritans had no real use for the concept.”<sup>17</sup> Irrespective of the accuracy of this assessment, McDannell and Lang do not appear to have utilized any primary sources that attempted to exegete new heavens and earth biblical texts to substantiate their claim about the diminution of the earth in Puritan thought.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 154.

<sup>16</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 172. The quote implies that it was standard fare during the Reformation to believe that the earth would be the home of the saints. Though the eschatology of the Reformation era is not the focus of this study, that conclusion seems hastily drawn.

<sup>17</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 377.

<sup>18</sup> The ensuing chapters will undermine the accuracy of McDannell and Lang’s judgment about the place of the earth in Puritan thought.

Rather than attempt to write a history of heaven covering centuries of the Christian tradition, Philip Almond deals with just one century in his *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England*.<sup>19</sup> Almond's primary emphasis is on the conceptions of life after death that were extant between 1650 and 1750. Almond does not discuss interpretations of the new heaven and new earth as a main point. His main focus is on the journey of a soul/body from its origin to its future destiny, with a great deal of time being given over to the fate of the wicked. That being said, some seventeenth-century interpretations of the new heavens and new earth appear as part of Almond's discussion of the conflagration of the earth and its aftermath. Some of those interpretations include the earth becoming hell, becoming a comet, falling into the sun, or hosting a rational form of life that is not human. As beneficial as Almond's research is, it leaves room for expansion. First, he does not consider the first half of the seventeenth century at all, and second, his research into the interpretation of key texts is limited to Calvin's commentary on Isaiah, the annotated Bible produced under the auspices of the Westminster Assembly in 1645 and Henry More's works on Daniel and Revelation—hardly a large sample of the available exegetical material.

In addition to the road that explores histories of heaven, a second avenue that leads to eschatological thought in the seventeenth century wends its way through studies on the apocalyptic thought in general and on millenarianism in particular.<sup>20</sup> Joy Gilsdorf

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<sup>19</sup> Philip C. Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>20</sup> The review of scholarly literature that follows is primarily focused on English millenarianism, a potent force in the years leading up to and embracing England's civil war and its aftermath. But it should be noted millennial expectations were not confined to English soil. On the Continent, Johannes Piscator, Johann Amos Comenius and Johann Heinrich Alsted all espoused some version of a future millennium. In 1999, Maria Rosa Antognazza and Howard Hotson stated that "...continental millenarianism still remains a

published her dissertation on the apocalyptic ideas of New England Puritans with her chief concern being how their apocalyptic orientation significantly shaped their conceptions of church polity and philosophy of history.<sup>21</sup> Gilsdorf offers useful background material for understanding Thomas Brightman and Joseph Mede as well as the general apocalyptic tenor of England and especially New England in the seventeenth century.<sup>22</sup> In addition, she provides a helpful discussion of the influence of the commentaries on Revelation written by Brightman, Patrick Forbes, and Henry Alsted. However, it is their influence with respect to the millennium that is the concern of Gilsdorf, not their interpretations of the new heavens and earth.

Eugene Weber writes about the history of apocalyptic beliefs from John the Apostle to the twentieth century.<sup>23</sup> Acknowledging that he is offering more of a narrative than an interpretation,<sup>24</sup> Weber's treatment of the seventeenth century consists of

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relatively little studied topic...” and partially addressed this gap by comparing Alsted and Leibniz on the millennium. The next year, Hotson published an entire monograph on Alsted, devoting a large section to the influences on Alsted's developing millennial expectations. See Maria Rosa Antognazza and Howard Hotson, eds., *Alsted and Leibniz: On God, the Magistrate and the Millennium*, *Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung* 34 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 1999), 127-128 and Howard Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588-1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation, and Universal Reform* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 182-222. A classic study of northern and central European medieval millennial hopes is Norman Cohn's *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, reprint 1974). His study focuses on the eleventh-sixteenth centuries with an appendix devoted to the Ranters in seventeenth-century England, who were the heirs of the Free Spirit heresy.

<sup>21</sup> Joy Gilsdorf, *The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. John Murrin, *Outstanding Studies in Early American History* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989), n.p.

<sup>22</sup> Brightman and Mede both wrote influential commentaries on the book of Revelation. Their interpretation of the new heavens and earth will be examined in chapter two.

<sup>23</sup> Eugen Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Beliefs through the Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Weber, *Apocalypses*, 5.



cataloging the signs of the eschatological fervor of the times: self-proclaimed prophets and messiahs preached the end of the age, speculations about the millennium abounded, and identifications of the Antichrist centered on the Pope. His only reference to the new heavens and new earth comes in connection with his discussion of Milton's *Paradise Lost*. According to Weber, in this work God claims that the aftermath of the final conflagration will be a purified earth.<sup>25</sup>

Bryan Ball chronicles the eschatological zeal of English Protestants up until 1660.<sup>26</sup> He argues that the preeminent cause of the fervor of the century is “the inherent religious feeling of the age” fueled by Reformation theology and the belief in Scripture as God’s word to humanity.<sup>27</sup> Appropriately then, Ball does not neglect exegetical works in his analysis. In chapter 2 he examines the interpretations given to Daniel and Revelation offered by John Napier, Brightman, Arthur Dent and Mede. Yet this examination does not cover their understandings of the new heavens and new earth. His only comment about the new heavens and new earth appears at the beginning of chapter 5:

Men could aver with equal conviction that the promises of a new heaven and a new earth were to be realized, either temporally in a glorious state of the church that would prevail in the latter days prior to the final consummation of all, or eternally in a literal new creation when the earth would be restored to its primitive glory.<sup>28</sup>

Ball correctly identifies two interpretations of the new heavens and earth among English Protestants, but he leaves unexamined the exegetical conversation which surrounded

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<sup>25</sup> Weber, *Apocalypses*, 74.

<sup>26</sup> Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*, ed. Heiko A. Oberman, *Studies in the History of Christian Thought*, vol. 12 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975).

<sup>27</sup> Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 5-7.

<sup>28</sup> Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 157.

those two interpretations. It is also worth noting that while Ball claims there were advocates of a renovated earth in the eternal state prior to 1660, McDannell and Lang assert that in the early part of the seventeenth-century belief in a restored earth “virtually disappeared.” This discrepancy of thought with respect to the prevalence of belief in a renovated earth in the early seventeenth century suggests that a closer analysis of the relevant data is needed.

In an older work, D. H. Kromminga presents an historical overview of the millennium.<sup>29</sup> He traces chiliastic ideas from the patristic writers to the first half of the twentieth century. His treatment of sixteenth and seventeenth-century millenarian thought is limited to its political manifestations of the time—mainly the Anabaptists on the Continent and the Fifth Monarchy Men in England. How the interpretation of new heavens and earth texts may have contributed to political chiliasm is absent from his analysis. The same can be said for Timothy Weber’s very brief account of the influence of millennial thought on the political developments in England in the 1640s and 1650s.<sup>30</sup>

In a book edited by Peter Toon, several scholars contribute essays on Puritan views of the millennium.<sup>31</sup> These essays chronicle the shift from a dominant Augustinian historicist approach to the millennium to the belief in a future millennium, accompanied by a conversion of the Jews and collapse of the papacy.<sup>32</sup> The book’s narrow focus

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<sup>29</sup> D. H. Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church: Studies in the History of Christian Chiliasm* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1945).

<sup>30</sup> Timothy P. Weber, "Millennialism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, ed. Jerry L. Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 374-375.

<sup>31</sup> Peter Toon, ed., *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1970).

<sup>32</sup> Toon, *Puritan Eschatology*, 6-7.

prevents the authors from dealing with seventeenth-century understandings of the consummation in general or the new heavens and new earth in particular.

James Davidson's *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* is the final stop on the apocalyptic/millennial avenue. Although Davidson is concerned with millennial ideas during the eighteenth century, he does not exclude some forays into intellectual antecedents in the seventeenth century.<sup>33</sup> His research focuses on whether the book of Revelation and its interpretation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries "disposed people to think or act in certain consistent ways."<sup>34</sup> His analysis does not touch on the interpretation of new heavens and new earth except in one small passage where he describes the view of Charles Chauncy who held to the belief that the earth was the home of the saints in eternity.<sup>35</sup>

The third highway to traverse in order to investigate seventeenth-century conceptions of a new heavens and earth travels through the territory of history of interpretation of specific biblical texts. This particular highway is rather short. Of the handful of works interested in past interpretations of biblical texts, only a few focus on seventeenth-century thought, and none of those include the passages mentioning the new heavens and earth. More general works include those of Kenneth Newport, Jonathan Kirsch, and Katharine Firth. Newport examines the interpretation of the book of Revelation between the years 1600-1800. His focus is on Baptist, Methodist, English

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<sup>33</sup> James West Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought: Eighteenth-Century New England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), ix.

<sup>34</sup> Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought*, x.

<sup>35</sup> Davidson, *The Logic of Millennial Thought*, 110.

Anglican and Roman Catholic readings.<sup>36</sup> He specifically states that his work is not within the genre of the history of biblical interpretation or the genre of the history of biblical research. “Rather, we are concerned here with the history of *popular* exegesis and the interaction between the biblical text and the *non-critical* interpreter of it.”<sup>37</sup>

Newport provides some background to the interpretation of Revelation as a whole during the seventeenth century, but never studies the interpretation of Revelation 21. One of Newport’s key themes is that Revelation was subject to considerable eisegesis, providing a scriptural foundation for the demonization of particular social or religious groups. In a similar vein, Jonathan Kirsch attempts to reveal how the book of Revelation has been appropriated for dubious purposes. He argues that the book is and always has been “a potent rhetorical weapon in a certain kind of culture war, a war of contesting values and aspirations, that has been waged throughout human history.”<sup>38</sup>

Katharine Firth has provided a finely grained monograph on apocalyptic thought in Britain between 1530 and 1645.<sup>39</sup> Though apocalyptic is her broad category, a significant portion of the study covers the interpretation of Revelation. Firth’s chief interest lies in how certain writers saw the relationship between the prophecies of Revelation and historical events. The bulk of the work deals extensively with John Bale,

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<sup>36</sup> Kenneth Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), n.p.

<sup>37</sup> Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium*, 3. Newport adds: “This is an area that has been much neglected, but its potential significance in the field of social and religious history suggests that it is worthy of considerable further research.”

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Kirsch, *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization* (HarperSanFrancisco, 2006), 17.

<sup>39</sup> Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

John Foxe, John Napier, John Knox, Hugh Broughton, Thomas Brightman, Walter Raleigh and George Hakewill. The topic of the new heaven and new earth surfaces very briefly on a few occasions when Firth mentions the views of John Bale and Walter Raleigh, the former from the sixteenth century and the latter from the seventeenth century. Both apparently affirmed a transformation of the existing material world.<sup>40</sup>

Historical analysis of specific texts in Revelation includes David Brady's examination of the interpretation of the number 666 between 1560-1830.<sup>41</sup> Rodney Petersen investigates the extant explanations of the two witnesses in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>42</sup> Although other texts could be added to this list, suffice it to say that the exegetical history of the new heavens and new earth has yet to be examined.<sup>43</sup> The purpose of this study is to amend that situation with respect to seventeenth-century England.

No studies have been found that dedicate themselves to the understanding of this promise of a new heavens and earth in the eschatologically-charged world of

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<sup>40</sup> Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition*, see pages 56 and 181 for her comments on Bale and Raleigh respectively.

<sup>41</sup> David Brady, *The Contribution of British Writers between 1560 and 1830 to the Interpretation of Revelation 13.16-18 (the Number of the Beast): A Study in the History of Exegesis*, ed. Oscar Cullmann et al., *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Exegese*, 27 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1983). See the introduction, especially 5-6.

<sup>42</sup> Rodney Petersen, *Preaching in the Last Days: The Theme Of "Two Witnesses" in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

<sup>43</sup> One of the reasons for the paucity of scholarly work on the history of interpretation of any single biblical text has likely been the difficulty of obtaining primary sources from the seventeenth century. One was restricted to the works of major figures whose works have been reissued from time to time, or one needed to travel to, or live near, the few libraries that hold original copies. Fortunately, the vast array of documents from the seventeenth century is now available through online databases such as, to give one example, Early English Books Online. These databases make it possible for scholars to construct a more nuanced assessment of any topic that was discussed in a given time frame.

seventeenth-century England. Scholars that do mention the promise give it scant attention and they ignore the exegetical tradition that lay behind it. This dissertation proposes to help fill this void in historical theology and, in so doing, provide a more nuanced picture of eschatological thought in England between 1600-1700.<sup>44</sup> Hence this dissertation could be classified as a work on the history of interpretation of the new heavens and earth as it existed in England in the seventeenth century. Such a study will not only shed light on that period's understandings of that particular phrase, but it will also contribute to how the broader topic of eschatology was understood during one of England's most turbulent centuries.

In the pages that follow, it will be shown that the interpretive labors of English divines produced varying accounts of the new heavens and earth. These accounts appear within several literary genres: commentary, catechism, sermon, tract and treatise. The authors of these documents encompass the well-known figures of the day as well as figures who, for whatever reasons, chose to remain anonymous. The religious loyalties represented by the authors range from Anglicans to Presbyterians to Independents to Baptists. These differences reveal the knottiness of trying to write the history of interpretation of the new heavens and earth.

Before turning to the study itself, it is helpful to be familiar with what could be considered to be the general eschatological outlook of that age as it is reflected in the contemporary creeds and bodies of divinity of the century. None of the major creeds

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<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that while the focus will be on the seventeenth century, a degree of latitude on either side of that century will be permitted. The periodization of history into one hundred year blocks is an artifice that provides a convenient starting point for the research but need not be followed strictly. Thus documents that precede or follow the seventeenth century may be surveyed if they are determined to be relevant to the research.

produced in the century ever mentions the new heavens and earth. These statements of faith reveal a reticence to advocate for any particular eschatological scheme other than supporting a resurrection and judgment of all of humanity at the return of Christ.<sup>45</sup> Crawford Gribben bears this out in his examination of several major confessions—the Scots Confession (1560), the Irish Articles (1615), the First London Confession (1644), the Westminster Confession (1647), the Savoy Confession (1658), and the Second Baptist Confession (1677/1689). Gribben clearly shows that confessional pronouncements with respect to the end times are “remarkably conservative”.<sup>46</sup> He concludes that “Puritan confessions repeatedly refuse to endorse the radical eschatologies defended in the individual writings of some of the very theologians who composed them.”<sup>47</sup> Although some of the “radical eschatologies” were deeply held by their proponents, they must have believed that the inclusion of these beliefs was not fitting for corporate affirmations. Framers of these confessions consistently opted for a less-is-more approach with respect to their creedal statements about the end times.<sup>48</sup>

Discussion of the new heavens and earth in summaries of doctrine written by individuals rather than by groups is slightly more detailed, as the following examples will demonstrate. Elnathan Parr wrote a work in catechetical fashion exploring basic Christian

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<sup>45</sup> Hence, if one compares the creedal affirmations about the end of the world found in the first few centuries of church history with the affirmations found in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one discovers that they are remarkably consistent.

<sup>46</sup> Crawford Gribben, "The Eschatology of the Puritan Confessions," *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 20, no. 1 (2002): 77.

<sup>47</sup> Gribben, *Puritan Confessions*, 78.

<sup>48</sup> Gribben implies that this methodology continued that of the Reformation era. He argues that the early Reformed thinkers repudiated the eschatological complexities that had arisen within the church during medieval times. Instead, they streamlined their explanations of the end of the world. See Gribben, *Puritan Confessions*, 56-57.

doctrine.<sup>49</sup> He comments that in preparation for the final judgment of mankind, the heaven and earth will be consumed with fire. He qualifies this statement by adding that the fire will not annihilate the substance of the heaven and earth “but only the figure changed, and the vanity purged out.”<sup>50</sup> Two years later, another catechism, written by Thomas Cartwright, broaches the topic.<sup>51</sup> While discoursing on the second coming of Christ, Cartwright briefly mentions the fate of creation: “Yes; that the heavens, and the earth, and all the creatures of God, shall be put in a new liverie against the coming of Christ; and therefore that we should much more cleanse our selves, thereby to bee fit to inhabit such changed and cleansed places as the heavens are.”<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, Cartwright does not expand on the idea of “a new liverie” or in what manner the godly

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<sup>49</sup> Elnathan Parr, *The Grounds of Diuinitie Plainely Discovering the Mysteries of Christian Religion, Propounded Familiarly in Diuers Questions and Answers: Substantially Proued by Scriptures; Expounded Faithfully, According to the Writings of the Best Diuines, and Euidently Applied by Profitable Vses, for the Helpe and Benefite of the Vnlearned Which Desire Knowledge. To the Which Is Prefixed a Very Profitable Treatise, Containing an Exhortation to the Study of the Word, with Singular Directions for the Hearing and Reading of the Same.* By Elnathan Parr Minister of the Word, at Palgraue in Suffolke, (London : Printed by N. O[kes] for Samuel Man, and are to be sold at his shop, in Pauls church-yard, at the signe of the Ball, 1614), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library.

<sup>50</sup> Parr, *The Grounds of Diuinitie*, 235. [Note: unless otherwise indicated, all direct quotes taken from primary sources will retain the spelling and typeface formatting of the original. Seventeenth-century documents mixed italics and roman typeface in the printing of the work, often with no discernible reason to the modern reader. Spelling was also not yet standardized and a word might be spelled multiple ways, sometimes within the same document.]

<sup>51</sup> Thomas Cartwright and William Bradshaw, *A Treatise of Christian Religion. Or, the Whole Bodie and Substance of Diuinitie* [sic]. By T.C (At London : Imprinted by Felix Kyngston, for Thomas Man, 1616), *Early English Books Online*, Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery. Cartwright died in 1603 but several of his works were published posthumously. This work was initially published in 1611 but apparently contained many errors. It was reissued in 1616 for the express purpose of amending those errors. See *To the Christian Reader* at the beginning of the 1616 edition. For the 1611 edition, see Thomas Cartwright, *Christian Religion: Substantially, Methodicall[E.] [Pla]Inlie, and Profitable Treatised* (London : Printed by Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1611) *Early English Books Online*, British Library. John Hunt calls Cartwright “the first who gave tangible form and expression to the Presbyterianism of the Church of England” as well as “the earliest complete incarnation of Puritanism.” See John Hunt, *Religious Thought in England: From the Reformation to the End of the Last Century*, vol. 1 (London: Strahan & Co., 1870; reprint, 1973), 49.

<sup>52</sup> Cartwright and Bradshaw, *A Treatise of Christian Religion*, 303.



will “inhabit such changed and cleansed places as the heavens are.” He is clear that the righteous will inherit the kingdom of God and “every godly one shall bee a king in heaven.”<sup>53</sup> From heaven, the godly will be able to compare their own glory with the glory of the immortal “dumbe creatures” that will possess “a kind of glory.”<sup>54</sup> The ungodly will be condemned and cast into hell, following which Christ will ascend to heaven taking the elect with him.<sup>55</sup>

In William Ames’ *Marrow of Theology*, Ames makes two propositions (out of 34) about the material world.<sup>56</sup> While never mentioning the new heaven or new earth explicitly, the first proposition claims the “fire that is appointed to purge and renew the World” will follow the judgment of mankind.<sup>57</sup> The second proposition states that the elements will change but not be “taken away”, obviously a phrase implying renewal rather than destruction.<sup>58</sup>

In comparison with the preceding works, the *Summe of Sacred Divinitie* is effusive in its remarks.<sup>59</sup> The author first states that the saints will not be the only

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<sup>53</sup> Cartwright and Bradshaw, *A Treatise of Christian Religion*, 306.

<sup>54</sup> Cartwright and Bradshaw, *A Treatise of Christian Religion*, 311.

<sup>55</sup> Cartwright and Bradshaw, *A Treatise of Christian Religion*, 309.

<sup>56</sup> William Ames, *[the] Marrow of Sacred Divinity Drawne out of the Holy Scriptures and the Interpreters Thereof, and Brought into Method / by William Ames... ; Translated out of the Latine, for the Benefit of Such Who Are Not Acquainted with Strange Tongues ; Whereunto Are Annexed Certaine Tables Representing the Substance and Heads of All in a Short View, Directing to the Chapters Where They Are Handled; as Also a Table Opening the Hard Words Therein Contained ; a Worke Usefull for This Season*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 1114:23 (London: Printed by Edward Griffin for Henry Overton..., 1642).

<sup>57</sup> Ames, *[the] Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 189.

<sup>58</sup> Ames, *[the] Marrow of Sacred Divinity*, 189.

<sup>59</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie First Briefly & Methodically Propounded: And Then More Largly & Cleerely Handled and Explained. Published by Iohn Downname Batchelor in Diuinitie*, Early

creatures to experience glory; all creatures and the “whole frame of Gods Creation” will also undergo renewal, resulting in their incorruptibility.<sup>60</sup> Since the creatures felt the consequences of man’s sin, they shall also participate in the consequences of man’s glorification, i.e., they shall “put on new Liueries”.<sup>61</sup>

The author then collates several texts to enlarge on this renewal. He references Paul’s words in Romans 8 where Paul extends the renewal to all of creation, a renewal that includes not only the heaven and earth but animals, plants and even metals.<sup>62</sup> He also cites Peter as clearly expressing what creation is groaning for—a renewal to righteousness (2 Peter 3:13). The creation’s renewal is also the subject of Isaiah’s prophecy in chapters 65 and 66. David wrote of it in Psalm 96:10-12 which describes nature rejoicing when the Lord comes to judge the earth.<sup>63</sup> And it is this day of judgment that Peter has in mind when he spoke of the restoring of all things (Acts 3:21).

Consistent with many of his contemporaries, the author accepts the idea that the renovation to come will affect the “qualitie” but not the “substance” of the heavens and earth.<sup>64</sup> The “deformitie” that infects the creation will be removed but the “nature” and

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English Books, 1475-1640 / 882:05 (London : Printed by Willi: Stansby and are to be sold by Geo: Hodges, 1628). The authorship of this piece is unclear from the work itself. John Downname is listed on the title page as publisher but not the author. Since Downname did publish other works under his own name, it is likely that he did not actually write *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*.

<sup>60</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 549.

<sup>61</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 549.

<sup>62</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 549.

<sup>63</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 550. The author maintains that this text refers to the first advent of Christ in one sense, but more fully to the second coming.

<sup>64</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 550.

“substance” of it will remain. This is not to say that the renewed creation will simply be a return to the Edenic state. *The Summe of Diuinitie* claims the renewed creation will be “better and a purer then[sic] the first.”<sup>65</sup> Creation will be characterized by righteousness and it will attain a kind of glory befitting it, though it will not participate in the heavenly glory of the saints.<sup>66</sup> The author refuses to conjecture further, encouraging the reader to “rest content” with these few basic facts “and not to feed ourselues with vaine and curious speculations, which neither it is profitable to know, nor lawfull to enquire.”<sup>67</sup> The right use of this teaching is to encourage holy and patient living, not idle speculation.

Finally, a few years after the middle of the century, Edward Leigh sets out what seems to be a fairly standard framework for the end of the world in his system of theology.<sup>68</sup> At his second coming, Christ will raise the righteous and unrighteous. The righteous will receive their rewards for good deeds and be taken to heaven. The unrighteous will be exposed as such and consigned to eternal perdition. He comments only briefly on created order. As he catalogs the various signs that will accompany the last judgment, he notes that one author lists seven signs which shall precede “the

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<sup>65</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 550.

<sup>66</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 551.

<sup>67</sup> *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 551.

<sup>68</sup> Edward Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity Consisting of Ten Books : Wherein the Fundamentals and Main Grounds of Religion Are Opened, the Contrary Errours Refuted, Most of the Controversies between Us, the Papists, Arminians, and Socinians Discussed and Handled, Several Scriptures Explained and Vindicated from Corrupt Glosses : A Work Seasonable for These Times, Wherein So Many Articles of Our Faith Are Questioned, and So Many Gross Errours Daily Published / by Edward Leigh*, Early English Books, 1641-1700 / 1288:20 (London : Printed by A.M. for William Lee, 1654). The work was enlarged before its second edition was released in 1662. In his address to the reader of the 1662 edition, Leigh informs his audience that he has both expanded on former subjects and added some brand new material. See Edward Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, a2.

destruction of the world.”<sup>69</sup> This latter event he calls “the conflagration of the whole frame of nature.”<sup>70</sup> The only clarification of this event provided by Leigh is his noting that the fire of 2 Peter 3 is a literal fire since Peter contrasts this fire with the literal water that destroyed the world during the Noachic flood. Consistent with the majority of theologians and biblical interpreters of the age, Leigh notes that the destruction is not one of annihilation but one of purgation and restoration.<sup>71</sup>

Leigh’s final topic in his system of divinity is everlasting life. The place of everlasting life is “the highest Heavens, . . . a place that no Philosopher ever wrote of”.<sup>72</sup> This heaven was ordained to be a “receptacle of his Saints” and Leigh devotes several pages describing it.<sup>73</sup> Leigh closes his discussion of heaven (and the system as a whole) by posing the question of whether the saints will inhabit the earth or at least visit it.<sup>74</sup> The question is surprising given that, in his explanation of everlasting life, he clearly asserts heaven to be the eternal abode of the saints. He has given no hint that the earth would be of any concern of the glorified church.

Leigh never provides a definitive answer to his query but quotes Voetius favorably: “*Curiose quaritur & docte ignoratur*”—it is carefully examined, shrewdly

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<sup>69</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1161.

<sup>70</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1161.

<sup>71</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1163. Leigh references Romans 8:21 without comment at the end of this paragraph.

<sup>72</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1175.

<sup>73</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1175.

<sup>74</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1178.

passed over.<sup>75</sup> He does mention that as best as he can recall, Andrew Willett believed the earth would be part of the saints' experience based on Matthew 5:5.<sup>76</sup> Others maintained a similar sentiment in light of Peter's statement that in the new heaven and earth, righteousness—meaning righteous persons—would dwell. Yet Leigh does not endorse this idea, content to note its presence in the literature.

To sum up, bodies of divinity went beyond creedal statements in that they did comment on the new heavens and earth. The heavens and earth would not be destroyed at the second coming of Christ but rather would be purged from all traces of sin. The common view was that the elect would not dwell in the cleansed earth, but be taken by Christ to the third heaven.

The preceding summary of confessions and systematic works reveals that if one wishes to traverse the seventeenth-century landscape of the new heavens and earth, creeds and theological summaries will not be the best places to visit. Rather, the terrain to be explored can be found in more focused works—sermons, commentaries and treatises devoted to that particular topic. The chapters to come are based on such an exploration, and they expose a varied eschatological topography.

Chapters 1 and 2 will consider those who adopted metaphorical interpretations of the new heavens and earth. Chapter 1 focuses on those who believed that the new heavens and earth is a cipher for the age of the gospel, an age commencing with the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. In this tradition, the new heavens and earth stood for dramatic

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<sup>75</sup> Leigh, *A Systeme or Body of Divinity*, 1178. Translation provided by Dr. Richard Muller. Note: in this dissertation, all italicized words in quotations of primary sources reflect the original font style of the documents unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>76</sup> Leigh's memory was correct; Willet's views will appear more fully in chapters four and five.

changes in the civil and ecclesiastical circumstances of the early church rather than for a transformation of the created order at the end of the age. Chapter 2 probes the works of those who saw the new heavens and earth as a phrase descriptive of a coming millennium. The millennium would spring from colossal changes in the circumstances of the church; the papacy would fall and true religion would begin to flourish, inaugurating a one thousand year period of political and religious peace.

Chapters 3-5 will explore a more literal interpretation of the new heavens and earth that was extant in seventeenth-century Britain. In this strain of interpretation, the phrase was thought to be a description of the material heavens and earth that would undergo a restoration at the end of the age. Chapter 3 investigates several questions about this restoration that frequently arose amidst discussions of the meaning of Paul's teaching that the creation would one day be delivered from bondage and vanity to the glorious liberty of God's children (Romans 8:19-22). Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to those writers who departed from the traditional view that heaven would be the home of the elect rather than the renovated earth. Conscious of the novelty of their view, these writers claim the refurbished heavens and earth will serve as the saints' and Christ's final home, with the majority of them restricting the saints' dwelling to the earth. This departure from the theological mainstream demands extra scrutiny of the exegetical grounds upon which it was based and thus will be the topic of two chapters.

No interpretation of scripture occurs in a historical vacuum; most of the interpretations of the new heavens and earth on offer in the seventeenth century occurred during a period fraught with eschatological speculations. Such speculations were not new in church history. As Bernard McGinn argues, two strands of eschatology work

their way through the fabric of theological history.<sup>77</sup> One strand was initiated by Augustine who demurred from trying to connect current events with biblical prophecy and contented himself with the fact that the end would come when Christ returned and that no one knew when that might be. The second strand is an apocalyptic one that preached the end was very near and soon-to-be realized. According to McGinn, this strand was itself bifurcated in its approach in that a “duality of optimism and pessimism has been a constant tension in the history of apocalypticism.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, apocalypticists tended to interpret the Bible through the lens of historical events (often of their own time period) and these events portended either a glorious extended future on earth for the church or as forecasting trouble and persecution until the church’s dramatic deliverance by God to an extra-terrestrial existence.

Church historians largely agree that Augustinianism “dominated the official doctrine and learned thought of the Latin west for fifteen hundred years, from Augustine through the Reformation at least” [although many writers have misunderstood the Augustinian approach as “amillennial”].<sup>79</sup> But the apocalyptic strand grew thicker during

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<sup>77</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages*, *Records of Civilization: Sources and Studies*, 96 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998; reprint, paperback). See the Introduction, 25-27.

<sup>78</sup> McGinn, *Visions of the End*, xvi. In his attempt to define the nature of apocalypticism, McGinn categorizes it as a sub-genre of eschatology with the following elements: “first, a sense of the unity and structure of history conceived as a divinely predetermined totality; second, pessimism about the present and conviction of its imminent crisis; and third, belief in the proximate judgment of evil and triumph of the good, the element of vindication.” See McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 10.

<sup>79</sup> Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow, eds., *Anglo-American Millennialism, from Milton to the Millerites*, ed. Robert J. Bast, *Studies in the History of Christian Traditions*, 63 (Boston: Brill, 2004)., viii.

the Middle Ages,<sup>80</sup> the Reformation and beyond, at least partly due to the interpretive decision to equate the biblical figure of the anti-Christ with the papacy and partly due to the hermeneutical trend of historicizing the book of Revelation, a trend decidedly un-Augustinian.

Seventeenth-century England offers examples of both Augustinian and apocalyptic eschatology, but the latter position certainly challenged the former in popularity, not only among the poor and underprivileged but also among the educated and powerful. Richard Bauckham traces a shift in England from the more pessimistic trajectory of apocalypticism to a more optimistic one. Bauckham asserts that in the sixteenth century, the feeling seemed to be that human history was on the cusp of its climax; the end was imminent and would in fact come when the papacy, i.e., the Antichrist, was defeated by Christ's second coming. Until then, one could do no more than to expect persecution and trouble in this life. Bauckham concludes that Tudor Protestants in the sixteenth century were "apocalyptic but not millenarian."<sup>81</sup> That is, they believed something was surely afoot in God's plan for history, namely, the end of

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<sup>80</sup> Norman Cohn provides an example of this particular strand in his study of millennial movements in the medieval period. His conclusion is that during that period, millenarian thought "had such enormous attractions that no official condemnation could prevent it from recurring again and again to the minds of the unprivileged, the oppressed, the disoriented and the unbalanced." See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974; reprint, 1974), 30. McGinn treats the same time period and argues that apocalyptic movements of that age cast a wider net. He believes Cohn ignores "those manifestations of apocalyptic traditions that were intended to *support* the institutions of medieval Christianity rather than to serve as a critique, either mild or violent" [emphasis in the original]. See McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 28-29.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation: From John Bale to John Foxe and Thomas Brightman*, vol. 8 of *The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics*, (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1978?), 208. Bauckham's belief is that "[t]his pessimistic outlook on the historical future we have seen to be that of the consensus of Tudor theology." See Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, 209.



Romanism to be followed rather swiftly by the final judgment, but an earthly golden age for the church was not part of the divine script.

Bauckham argues that it is this pessimistic outlook on history that underwent some adjustment in the seventeenth century. He maintains that a more optimistic approach to the future emerged and he identifies four roots to this new optimism: 1) the influence of Joachim's idea of the age of the Spirit,<sup>82</sup> 2) the reinterpretation of the book of Revelation as a continuous sequential narrative covering the flow of history, 3) the belief that God had miraculously intervened on England's behalf in the defeat of the (Catholic) Spanish Armada and thus England had a special role to play in the defeat of the Antichrist, and, 4) the expectation that a Jewish conversion of mass proportions was to be expected before history's end.<sup>83</sup> In sum, the prospects for the church did not appear as troublesome to divines in the seventeenth century as they did in the sixteenth century. God was beginning the work of destroying Romanism and converting his ancient people, and all of this optimism could be supported, at least partially, by the exegetical efforts of men such as Brightman, Mede and Alsted, respected scholars who advanced the belief in a future millennium of peace for the church.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Apocalypticism Explained: Joachim of Fiore*, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/joachim.html>. Accessed 6/9/2014. Joachim divided human history into three successive stages, one belonging to the Father (already past), one belonging to the Son (present and drawing to a close) and one belonging to the Spirit (beginning to dawn). McGinn claims that Joachim of Fiore's commentary on Revelation broke new ground by tying actual historical events to the visions of the book and anticipating the imminent arrival of the age of the Spirit once Antichrist was defeated.

<sup>83</sup> Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse*, 212-227.

<sup>84</sup> To be precise, Brightman believed in two millenniums and the second one was, in his view, already partially fulfilled. His views will be explored more fully in chapter 3. Bauckham is not the only scholar to mention a change from pessimism to optimism. In an attempt to explain how English Calvinists became revolutionaries willing to go to war, Walzer points to "an increasingly secure feeling that the saints did know the purposes of God." Walzer claims that "[t]he shift to a more optimistic and historical theory

Bauckham's analysis of eschatological trends in England is echoed in James De Jong's treatment of the relationship between millennial hopes and missionary enterprises.<sup>85</sup> His first chapter is a helpful summary of the millennial thought in England and on the Continent prior to 1640. His opinion is that "[w]hile most Protestants concurred with Calvin's condemnation of the extreme chiliasm of some of the church fathers and Anabaptists, they were nevertheless optimistic about the course of history in the sixteenth century."<sup>86</sup> De Jong surveys both Continental and English sources that reveal that optimism, paying particular attention to Alsted on the Continent and to Brightman and Mede in England.<sup>87</sup> After surveying the Continental sources, De Jong concludes that "...after the initial days of the Reformation many heirs of that movement—both Lutheran and Reformed, theologians as well as scientists—expressed in one form or another their optimism regarding the dawn of an era of growth, purity, and unity for the church. From Scripture they calculated that it was imminent."<sup>88</sup> They

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of Christian warfare can probably be dated from the appearance of Mead's *Clavis Apocalyptica* in 1627." Mede's placement of the one thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 into the future provided the biblical basis for some Puritans to embrace revolution as God's work. See Michael Walzer, *The Revolution of the Saints: A Study in the Origins of Radical Politics* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), 290-293.

<sup>85</sup> James A. De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810* (Laurel: Audubon Press, 2006).

<sup>86</sup> De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 7. Like Bauckham, De Jong mentions evidence of this optimism: "Anticipation of the approaching fall of the Roman Catholic and Turkish Antichrists; hope for the conversion of the Jews and many heathen to the Reformed faith; predictions of an age of peace, unity among Christians, and a great decline in the power of Satan and evil; the belief in the destined wealth and prestige of the Protestant powers." See De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 7.

<sup>87</sup> De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 9-27.

<sup>88</sup> De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 12.

expressed this optimism without capitulating to radical forms of chiliasm embodied by the Anabaptists.

In England, millennialism was slower to develop since during the Tudor period, millennialism was still connected to the excesses of the Anabaptists.<sup>89</sup> The return to Catholicism under Mary temporarily dashed hopes of an optimistic future; Augustine was right—history is one long struggle between good and evil until Christ intervenes. But after Mary’s death, hope revived and the belief that England would assume a key role to play in the flourishing of the church is reflected in the writings of John Jewel, John Aylmer and especially George Foxe. This burgeoning hope fueled the publication of many works focused on prophecy, especially the book of Revelation. Brightman and Mede were the first influential English writers to combine their optimism for the church’s future with a more chiliastic understanding of the one thousand years of Revelation 20. De Jong asserts that “[t]his was a new element in English expositions of Revelation which was to gain widespread acceptance by the 1640’s and which was to markedly affect English and New England political, social, and religious history.”<sup>90</sup>

All of this to say that eschatology was “in the air” in seventeenth-century England, and profoundly linked to contemporary perceptions of the course of history and politics, whether contemporary scholars were more Augustinian or more apocalyptic in their theology of last things. The topic could not be ignored.<sup>91</sup> The subject of the new

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<sup>89</sup> De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 16.

<sup>91</sup> The same could be said about discussions on the Continent. For an introduction to the Continental conversation, see W. J. Van Asselt, "Chiliasm and Reformed Eschatology in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Christian Hope in Context*, ed. A. van Egmond and D. van Keulen, (Mienema: Zoetermeer: 2001), 11-29.

heavens and earth inevitably arose amidst this discussion due to its appearance in biblical passages that were so often interpreted as prophetic of the end times. The interpretation of the phrase was made to fit the larger eschatological framework adopted by the interpreter. Yet the phrase was not always viewed in eschatological categories. For some it was a past event, fulfilled in the first century. Rather than attempt to force McGinn's categories of Augustinian or apocalyptic on to each interpretation of the new heavens and earth that appeared in seventeenth-century England, the chapters below attempt to lay bare the categories and structures employed by the original authors of the documents. The interpretations of new heavens and earth texts is the focus of this dissertation, but those interpretations reveal how that phrase was related to the larger conversations regarding the world's future.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GOSPEL TIMES

As mentioned in the Introduction, not every English expositor of scripture envisioned the promised new heavens and earth as an event aimed at renovating the physical creation. There were those who proclaimed that the new heavens and earth was a metaphor for momentous changes dealing with ecclesial and/or political conditions rather than material ones.<sup>1</sup> For some interpreters, these ecclesial and political alterations were still future, to be realized in a glorious millennium soon to come. For others, these changes had already been fully accomplished or had been inaugurated in the past and were continuing into the present. In spite of the disagreement among these thinkers as to the *timing* of the new heavens and earth, they shared a metaphorical understanding of the phrase.

If understanding the new heavens and earth as a metaphor was not novel in seventeenth-century British thought—Calvin, for example, embraced this view in his comments on Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22<sup>2</sup>—it was not the norm. Nevertheless, a

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<sup>1</sup> Such an understanding antedated the seventeenth century by more than a millennium. For example, in his commentary on Isaiah 65:17, Ephrem the Syrian (AD 306-373) takes new heavens and earth to be a reference to the church, specifically, “to the heavenly and spiritual gifts that have been granted to it.” Ephrem also mentions Christ’s bringing spiritual life at his coming as what Isaiah meant by new heavens and earth. Several church fathers viewed Isaiah 66:18-24 as referencing their own times when the gospel is reaching the Gentiles. Like Ephrem, Cyril of Alexandria (c. AD 376-444) identifies the church as the new heaven and earth: “For we are the new heaven and the new earth and his promised things, just as they are written about.” Thus very early in church history, the new heavens and earth received a figurative sense at the hands of at least a few church fathers. See Mark W. Elliott, ed. *Ancient Christian Commentary: Old Testament XI: Isaiah 40-66*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (InterVarsity Press, 2007), 274, 291.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin’s commentary on Isaiah was translated into English and published in England as early as 1609. See Jean Calvin and Clement Cotton, *A Commentary Vpon the Prophecie of Isaiah. By Mr. Iohn Caluin. Whereunto Are Added Foure Tables ... Translated out of French into English: By C.C.* (At London : Imprinted by Felix Kyngston, and are to be sold by William Cotton, dwelling in Pater noster Row, at the signe of the golden Lion, 1609), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. Calvin did not reject entirely a physical renewal of the world, but he downplays this element of the new heavens and earth and instead emphasizes the symbolic meaning of the phrase. In his commentary on Isaiah 65:17, he goes so far

metaphorical treatment of the concept is set forth by three prominent figures of the age—John Lightfoot, Henry Hammond and John Owen. It is somewhat ironic that although all three shared a similar approach to the interpretation of the new heavens and earth, they each maintained different stances with respect to other critical issues of their times.<sup>3</sup> In particular, Owen advocated ecclesiastical independency and personally assisted Oliver Cromwell, Lightfoot initially had Presbyterian leanings and participated in the Westminster Assembly but eventually accepted the Act of Uniformity after the restoration of the monarchy, and Hammond was an ardent Episcopalian and royalist who refused to accept the invitation to participate in the Westminster Assembly and instead remained a staunch supporter and confidante of King Charles I. However, as the following analysis will reveal, these ecclesiastical and political variances did not prevent them from reaching comparable, though not identical, exegetical conclusions with respect to the new heavens and earth.

### **John Lightfoot**

John Lightfoot (1602-1675), minister and noted rabbinic scholar, assigned a thoroughly figurative sense to the biblical texts which proclaimed a new heavens and

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as to say that the *new heavens and earth* are not to be understood literally but instead are “exaggerated modes of expression” signifying the time period encompassing the first advent of Christ through to the second advent. Again, on Isaiah 66:22, Calvin insists that the *new heavens and earth* is Isaiah’s way of speaking of “the reign of Christ”. Isaiah did not want any to think the new heavens and earth “relates to trees, or beasts, or the order of the stars; for it must be referred to the inward renewal of man.” See Jean Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, trans., William Pringle, 4 vols., vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), 397, 437.

<sup>3</sup> This proves the point that the various interpretations of the new heavens and earth that existed in seventeenth-century England did not necessarily follow ecclesiastical or political allegiances.

earth. His stance on the new heavens and earth is easily discernible from his commentaries as well as two published sermons. The first sermon was delivered in 1645, the second sermon in 1663, and the commentaries were published over a period of years.<sup>4</sup> The sermon of 1645 before the House of Commons provides a convenient launching pad into his thought.

In the introduction to the printed version of the sermon, Lightfoot reveals that the purpose of his sermon was to call into question the teaching of millenarianism in order that

*the Millenary Opinion, which I cannot but judge erroneous, might not goe on altogether uncontrolled, and one man take it at another for a truth without gainsaying; but that it might receive some check by the way, and it might bee shewed, that Posse vinci Hannibalem, that there is a faire possibility that that Opinion is but a falshood.*<sup>5</sup>

Not surprising then is his text for the occasion—Revelation 20:1-2—which narrates an angel that comes down from heaven to bind the devil for a thousand years. Lightfoot posits that this text is “the hardest peece in all the Bible by many degrees” and briefly notes that the angel had been interpreted as Pope Calixtus, Pope Innocent III and

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<sup>4</sup> Lightfoot produced a variety of works on the Bible, including a harmony of the Gospels, a harmony of the Old Testament, and several volumes of biblical commentary that drew extensively from his knowledge of rabbinics.

<sup>5</sup> John Lightfoot, *A Sermon Preached before the Honorable House of Commons: At Margarets Westminster, Upon the 26. Day of August 1645. Being the Day of Their Solemne Monethly Fast. / by John Lightfoot, a Member of the Assembly of Divines* (London : Printed by R.C. for Andrew Crook, and are to be sold at his shop at the signe of the Greene Dragon in Pauls Churchyard, 1645), no page, *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

Constantine.<sup>6</sup> But the more recent interpretation of this text by the millenarians is the one on which Lightfoot sets his sights.<sup>7</sup>

It is not in the purview of this chapter to delineate Lightfoot's objections to the millenarianism of his day, but to examine Lightfoot's interpretation of the new heavens and earth. Fortuitously, his objections to the millenarians of his time lead him to offer his own alternate explanation of Revelation 20, and this explanation contains a glimpse of his understanding of the new heavens and earth.

Lightfoot places the beginning of the one thousand years of Revelation 20:2-6 with the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.<sup>8</sup> At this event "Judaisme...wholly ceased, and Christianity onely set up," the Jews were rejected and the Gentiles were brought in as God's people.<sup>9</sup> The magnitude of this change is signaled by the language the Scriptures

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<sup>6</sup> Lightfoot, *A Sermon Preached*, 2.

<sup>7</sup> Lightfoot gives an indication of how prevalent the belief in a millennium had become when he comments that "the glosse and exposition upon this prophecy which hath got the deepest root and the highest seate in the hearts and estimations of very many in these times, and carrieth the greatest cry with it, is the opinion of the chiliasts of old, refined by the Millenaries alate....An opinion so strange to mee that I must confesse I could not but make it a sad *omen* and a presage a good while agoe what opinions we should fall into in time, when such an opinion as this could bee so swallowed downe and entertained as I saw it was." Lightfoot, *A Sermon Preached*, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Like many of his contemporaries, Lightfoot did not reject a literal sense of the *thousand years*. However, unlike the millenarians who placed them in the future, Lightfoot places the thousand years in the past. He thinks they began with the fall of Jerusalem, though they could have begun earlier when the gospel first came to the Gentiles. In either case, the thousand years reached their fulfillment somewhere in the eleventh century. At this point, "when now the world began to be in deepest darkenes again, & to become heathenish anew," Satan is released from captivity in order to once again deceive the nations by means of the idolatry of the papal Antichrist. Hence for Lightfoot, the binding and releasing of Satan are fully accomplished events. Rather than a flourishing, peaceful time for the church, the thousand years was a time when the devil was bound by the preaching and reception of the gospel by the Gentile world, but the devil was still free to persecute the church by means of the Roman Empire and then by the Roman church. Lightfoot presses the point that Satan's binding is strictly for the purpose of being prevented from deceiving the nations while still being free to inflict persecution on the church. He maintains that the failure to observe the distinction between *deceiving* and *persecuting* "is to misse of the very key that letteth in to the understanding of this prophecy." See Lightfoot, *A Sermon Preached*, 4.

<sup>9</sup> Lightfoot, *A Sermon Preached*, 8.



employ to describe it. It is as if a whole new world had emerged from the old one. The old world was brought to a close on the day of the Lord; the new world, the new heavens and earth, sprung up after the day of the Lord. This new world is the “Church of the Gospel” and is the referent for the first resurrection seen by the author of Revelation (Rev. 20:5). Lightfoot does not attempt to defend his construal of the new heavens and earth, but is content to use it in with his main focus of refuting millenarianism. Yet what is readily discernible from these brief comments in this sermon is Lightfoot’s symbolic interpretation of the new heavens and earth.

Nearly two decades after Lightfoot delivered this sermon, he preached a sermon on 2 Peter 3:13 to his congregation at Hertford.<sup>10</sup> In this epistle, Peter asserts the following: “Nevertheless, we, according to his promise, look for new heavens, and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13). Like the sermon before the House of Commons, the aim of this sermon is not a systematic treatment of the new heavens and earth; the burden of the sermon is on the kind of righteousness Peter had in mind. Nevertheless, Lightfoot finds it necessary to begin the sermon by disposing of the notion that the new heavens and earth are a reference to a renovation of the earth’s qualities at the last day. The latter interpretation of Peter’s words “would make our apostle say

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<sup>10</sup> John Lightfoot, *The Works of the Reverend and Learned John Lightfoot D. D., Late Master of Katherine Hall in Cambridge Such as Were, and Such as Never before Were Printed : In Two Volumes : With the Authors Life and Large and Useful Tables to Each Volume : Also Three Maps : One of the Temple Drawn by the Author Himself, the Others of Jervusalem and the Holy Land Drawn According to the Author's Chorography, with a Description Collected out of His Writings*, ed. B. G and John Strype (London : Printed by W. R. for Robert Scot, Thomas Basset, Richard Chiswell, 1684), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library. This first edition of the complete works of Lightfoot was published posthumously in 1684. Before he died, Lightfoot had written a Latin commentary on some of the New Testament books utilizing his considerable knowledge of Judaica. During his own lifetime, he published separate commentaries on each of the four Gospels and 1 Corinthians. His commentaries on Acts and Romans were published posthumously as part of the collected works volumes. Any of Lightfoot’s works originally published in Latin were translated into English in these volumes.

Sibboleth...whereas he speaks Shibboleth, plain enough, to a far differing sense.”<sup>11</sup>

Rather than referencing a cosmic renewal at the end of human history, Peter uses the language of a new heaven and earth to describe the destruction of the Jewish dispensation by the Romans in the first century.

According to Lightfoot, the destruction of the Jewish economy is frequently described in Scripture as the destruction of the whole world. This manner of expression began with Moses (Deuteronomy 32:22), continued with the prophets (Jeremiah 4:23) and used by Christ (Matthew 24:29) and the Apostle John (Revelation 6:12-14).<sup>12</sup> The context of all of these texts makes it clear that the destruction described within them is not universal, but is limited to Jerusalem or the Jewish nation; the Jewish state is referred to under the figure of the whole world. Thus when Peter writes of the heavens dissolving and the elements melting (2 Peter 3:10, 12), “he intends no other thing, than the dissolving of their church and economy, by fiery vengeance; the consumption of their state, by the flame of God’s indignation; and the ruin of their elements of religion, by God’s fury.”<sup>13</sup> Unlike many of his contemporaries who took the “elements” as a reference to the Aristotelian elements of earth, water, air and fire, Lightfoot thinks Peter

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<sup>11</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1073. Lightfoot declares that his exposition of this text will help in the interpretation of other biblical texts as well.

<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 32:22—“For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest hell, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains.” Jeremiah 4:23—“I beheld the earth, and, lo, [it was] without form, and void; and the heavens, and they [had] no light.” Matthew 24:29—“Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Revelation 6:12-14—“And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood; And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.”

<sup>13</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1074.

uses the term as Paul did. It is a reference to the rites and traditions of the Jewish cult.<sup>14</sup> These will be done away in order to be replaced by new elements of the gospel.

Although Lightfoot thinks his hearers can now “plainly see” what Peter had in mind by the phrase “new heavens and the new earth,” he reviews four types of biblical texts that together solidify his conclusion regarding the new heavens and earth. The four types are texts which speak of the ‘last days,’ texts which speak of the ‘end,’ texts that mention the ‘coming’ of Christ, and texts anticipating a ‘new heavens and earth.’<sup>15</sup> The last days frequently mentioned in Scripture are not the final days of the world but the last days of the city of Jerusalem. Lightfoot appeals to Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost to defend this assertion. In Acts 2:16-17, Peter proclaimed to the crowd that what they were witnessing was none other than what the prophet Joel had prophesied. In Joel 2:28, Joel places the coming of God’s Spirit in the last days. By appropriating Joel 2:28 to his own day, Peter implicitly identified his generation with the last days. Hence, Lightfoot concludes that the outpouring of the Spirit in the last days was not to be fulfilled in the last days of the world but in the last days of the city of Jerusalem.<sup>16</sup> He comments that this understanding of ‘last days’ iterated by Peter was shared by Paul and John as well.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1074. Lightfoot is drawing on Paul’s use of the word *elements* in Galatian 4:3 and 4:9 where it signifies Jewish rites.

<sup>15</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1074.

<sup>16</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1074. Lightfoot does not consider the possibility that the last days embrace all that would occur between the first and second advents of Christ.

<sup>17</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1074. Lightfoot cites 1 Timothy 4:1, 2 Timothy 3:1 and quotes 1 John 2:18; in the latter verse John states plainly that “it is the last time.”

Biblical texts announcing ‘the end’ receive a similar treatment from Lightfoot; the destruction of the Jewish state is the referent for expressions about the end of the world (1 Cor. 10:11), the end of all things (1 Peter 4:7) and similar expressions.<sup>18</sup> Again, the destruction of Jerusalem is the fulfillment of those texts which speak of Christ’s coming, his coming in power, in glory, in his Kingdom. In the Olivet discourse, Jesus himself indicated that his coming would take place before that generation had ended (Matthew 24:34). Consequently, the coming of Christ in power and glory (Matthew 24:30) is not the final judgment of humankind but the judgment upon Jerusalem. Jerusalem’s destruction is the day of the Lord.<sup>19</sup>

The last days, the end of the world and the coming of Christ issue forth into a new age. The conditions following the end of the Jewish economy are described variously as ‘the world to come’, ‘new heavens and new earth’ or ‘all things new’. In 2 Peter 3:13, Peter employs the imagery of new heavens and new earth to describe conditions following the destruction of the Jewish state and religious system. Lightfoot points out that Peter bases his hope of a new heavens and earth on the promise of God. Where was this promise made? It was made in Isaiah 65:17 where God announces he will create a new heavens and earth following the dissolution of the Jewish system.<sup>20</sup> Lightfoot selects

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<sup>18</sup> Lightfoot does not present an exegetical argument for this conclusion but merely asserts it. 1 Corinthians 10:11—“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. The antecedent for “them” and “whom” in this verse are clearly the Jewish people.” 1 Peter 4:7—“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

<sup>19</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1074.

<sup>20</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1075. Lightfoot takes this opportunity to comment on the belief in a future mass conversion of the Jews—a view popular at the time. He argues that in Isaiah the *new heavens and earth* are promised to coincide with the Jews’ rejection and *not* their conversion. Lightfoot states it thus: “It is a strange opinion that would persuade you, that the most glorious things, that

several statements from Isaiah 65 to indicate the thrust of the prophet's message; God had rejected his people and was creating a new people from the Gentiles. The turn from the Jews to the Gentiles is none other than a destruction of the old world and the creation of a new one.<sup>21</sup>

In defense of his position that the new heavens and earth is figurative language for the first-century destruction of the Jewish political and religious systems, Lightfoot also draws on Peter's statement that in the new heavens and earth righteousness will dwell (2 Peter 3:13). He poses the question as to what kind of righteousness does Peter have in mind?<sup>22</sup> It is not God's justice since God has always been just and always will be. It is not that humans will be more righteous at the end of the world as some imagined; Scripture never makes such a promise. It is not a reference to the righteousness the saints will have in glory, "for where do you find righteousness applied to that estate?"<sup>23</sup> Righteousness is a term Scripture employs to describe believers in the present age.

The righteousness Peter has in mind is the righteousness received by way of justification; it is the righteousness of God. God's "condemning justice" was made evident by the Law but God's "justifying justice" was made evident by the gospel.<sup>24</sup>

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are foretold by the prophets, should come to pass when the Jews are called, which calling is yet expected: whereas, those glorious things are plainly enough intimated to come to pass at the *Jews* casting off." See Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1075.

<sup>21</sup> Lightfoot echoes Calvin's emphasis in his commentary on Isaiah, namely, that Isaiah spoke of the day when the Gentiles would be welcomed as the people of God whereas the Jews would be rejected. Unlike Calvin and other commentators, Lightfoot does not allow for degrees of fulfillment over time. Hence he does not extend the new heavens and earth to the time of Christ's Second Advent as did Calvin.

<sup>22</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1075

<sup>23</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1075.

<sup>24</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1075.

Lightfoot admits that God's justifying justice was not entirely absent prior to the times of the gospel, but it is in the new heavens and earth, the time of the gospel rather than the Law, that " 'justifying righteousness' should dwell most evidently, and appear most glorious, when such abominable ones, as the Gentiles had been, should be justified."<sup>25</sup> Its glorious nature would appear most wonderfully due to the vast number of Gentiles who would believe and due to the Gentiles' extreme alienation from God.

The position reflected in Lightfoot's sermon on 2 Peter 3:13 also appears in several places in his commentary on some New Testament books, two of which are especially instructive. In John 21:22, Jesus comments to Peter that if Jesus desires for John to remain until Jesus returns, that should be of no concern to Peter. Lightfoot notes that the return Jesus has in mind is his return to destroy the Jewish nation.<sup>26</sup> This is consistent with what Jesus said in Matthew 16:28—that some of the disciples standing there that day would not die until they had seen Christ come in his kingdom.<sup>27</sup> Lightfoot then encourages the reader to observe four items in the reading of Scripture, items that replicate hermeneutical themes from his sermon on 2 Peter 3:13.

First, the destruction of Jerusalem is frequently referred to in Scripture under the figure of the destruction of the world. The extremity of the description is fitting given that the Jews were "once so dear to him" and "accounted of as much or more than the

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<sup>25</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 1075-1076.

<sup>26</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 625.

<sup>27</sup> Though Lightfoot does not point it out, this is also consistent with what is known of the lives of Peter and John. It is fairly well accepted that Peter died in Rome prior to Jerusalem's fall (i.e., Christ's coming) and John's death, though not definitively known, was subsequent to that event.

whole world beside”.<sup>28</sup> When Peter mentions the elements melting in 2 Peter 3:10, he is speaking of “Mosaic elements” and “only of the conflagration of Jerusalem, the destruction of the nation, and the abolishing of the dispensation of Moses.”<sup>29</sup> Second, the days preceding this return of Christ to judge Israel are what Scripture designates as the last days or last times.<sup>30</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by the apostle John in 1 John 2:18 where he indicates that there are already many antichrists in the world—a condition that signifies the presence of the last time.

Third, the days which will follow the end of the Jewish state are described as a new heavens and earth or a new creation. God had announced through Isaiah (65:17) that he would create a new heavens and earth. Lightfoot argues that the timing of the new creation is clear from the entire chapter of Isaiah 65; the new creation will occur following the cutting off of the Jews and the establishment of the “evangelical world among the Gentiles.”<sup>31</sup> Paul agreed with Isaiah when he wrote that old things have passed away and all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17). John’s vision of the new heaven and new earth and Peter’s forecasting the same are all simply in fulfillment of God’s promise through Isaiah of creating a new people of God among the Gentiles via the gospel.

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<sup>28</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626.

<sup>29</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626.

<sup>30</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626. Lightfoot comments that “[t]his manner of speaking frequently occurs”.

<sup>31</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626.

Fourth, Scripture denominates the time of the Jews' overthrow as " 'the day of the Lord,' 'the day of Christ,' 'his coming in the clouds, in his glory, in his kingdom.' " <sup>32</sup> Christ's first coming was marked by humility; he himself was ridiculed and hated and eventually murdered. His teachings were rejected and his followers persecuted. But on the day of the Lord, Christ will come to avenge himself on his enemies, specifically the nation of Israel which had rejected him. Many of the scriptural texts which mention the coming of Christ being "near" or "at the door" or "at hand" all refer to his coming to enact judgment on the Jews. <sup>33</sup> These texts "must be understood of Christ's coming in judgment and vengeance against that wicked nation." <sup>34</sup> Thus Lightfoot concludes that Jesus' reference to his coming in his words to Peter in John 21 point to this coming in judgment against his people, a coming fulfilled via the Roman army.

What remains is to investigate Lightfoot's treatment of Romans 8:19-21 to see if he regards this text as a first-century event or if it pertains to the end of the world. He begins his exposition by asserting, "There is a twofold key hanging at this place that may unlock the whole, and make the sense plain and easy." <sup>35</sup> This two-fold key is the proper understanding of two Greek expressions. The first expression is *πάσα κτίσις* (every creature) in verse 22 and the second is *ματαιοτητι* (vanity) in verse 20. <sup>36</sup> Lightfoot does

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<sup>32</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626.

<sup>33</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626. Lightfoot cites 2 Thessalonians 2:2, Hebrews 10:37, James 5:9, Revelation 1:7 and 22:12.

<sup>34</sup> Lightfoot, *The Works of ...Lightfoot*, 626.

<sup>35</sup> John Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament From the Talmud and Hebraica: Matthew-I Corinthians*, 4 vols., vol. 4 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1989), 156.

<sup>36</sup> Lightfoot treats the two expressions in this order and not in the order in which they appear in the verses.



not understand the former phrase to refer to the natural world—the earth and the non-rational creatures that inhabit it. Rather, the phrase refers to just the opposite—to the world of rational creatures, i.e., the world of humans. His proof relies on the use of this Greek expression in two other instances in the New Testament. In the first instance, Mark records Jesus as commanding his disciples to preach the gospel to every creature (πάση τη κτίσει) and in the second instance, Paul announced that the gospel had been preached to every creature (πάση τη κτίσει).<sup>37</sup> Lightfoot maintains it is obvious that in these two texts the phrase refers to “all nations, or the heathen world”.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, Matthew sustains such an interpretation for in his version of the last words of Jesus, Jesus tells his disciples to go and teach all nations. To teach all nations (Matthew) is clearly equivalent to preaching the gospel to the nations’ inhabitants (Mark and Paul). Appealing to his knowledge of Judaica, Lightfoot further argues that the phrase “every creature” was a Jewish cipher for Gentiles.<sup>39</sup>

The second key to grasping Paul’s meaning in Romans 8 is the interpretation of the word ματαιοτητι, or *vanity*. Lightfoot has no quibble with the translation of the word but to what is being described by it. He avers that the word is often “improperly applied to this vanishing, changeable, dying state of the creation.”<sup>40</sup> However, the word is more

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<sup>37</sup> Mark 16:15, Colossians 1:23.

<sup>38</sup> Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 156.

<sup>39</sup> Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 156. Lightfoot argues this point in his Mark commentary. See Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 478.

<sup>40</sup> Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 157.

aptly descriptive of the “inward *vanity* and emptiness of the mind.”<sup>41</sup> Paul uses this word in other texts with respect to the cognitive disposition of the Gentiles in their unregenerate state.<sup>42</sup>

These two keys, forged by linguistic comparison of texts, unlock the meaning of Romans 8 for Lightfoot. Rather than describing the restoration of the created order at the glorification of believers as many of his contemporaries believed, Paul is describing an entirely different scenario. It is the Gentile nations who are earnestly expecting God to call out a people from among the Gentiles, for that is what the Old Testament prophets had led them to expect. The Gentiles had concocted false views of God ever since the first instance of idolatry at Babel and it was at Babel that they became vain in their thinking.<sup>43</sup>

Consequently, in verse 21, Paul iterates that the Gentile nations will be liberated from their bondage to corruption. That is, according to Lightfoot, the Gentiles will be delivered from their sin. He collates several New Testament texts to argue that “corruption” (φθορά) is typically a reference to sinful desires and affections.<sup>44</sup> From

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<sup>41</sup>Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 157. Lightfoot cites Romans 1:21 and Ephesians 4:17 and I Corinthians 3:20.

<sup>43</sup> Lightfoot makes a distinction here to help him explain what Paul meant by the Gentiles becoming subject to vanity not willingly: “May we not say...*it became vain willing* but ...*it was made subject to vanity not willingly*?” At Babel, the Gentiles willingly succumbed to the vanity of their minds by their idolatry. However “that they were subjected to that vanity proceeded from the just indignation and vengeance of God.” In other words, the perpetual condition of vain thinking was a judgment of God to which the Gentiles were subject, but they were not subject to this judgment by their own choice or desire. The vain thinking of the Gentiles lasted from the time of Babel until the time of the gospel when God was pleased to send his Son and bring light to the Gentiles. See Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 157-158.

<sup>44</sup> 2 Peter 1:4, 2 Corinthians 11:3, I Corinthians 15:33.

these desires the Gentiles will be freed. Lightfoot's paraphrase of verse twenty-one is transparent: "The Gentile world shall in time *be delivered from the bondage of their sinful corruption*, that is, the *bondage* of their lusts and vile affections, (under which it hath lain for so long a time,) into a noble liberty, such as the sons of God enjoy."<sup>45</sup>

Bondage to sin becomes the cause of the Gentiles groaning (Romans 8:22). That is, the Gentile world had been groaning under the vanity of its mind until now—until the time when they heard the gospel.<sup>46</sup>

The above analysis of Lightfoot's exegesis proves that he interpreted the new heavens and earth in a figurative sense. He self-consciously denied that the new heavens and earth were to be construed as a future state of affairs coincident with the final judgment of the world in which the physical creation would be released from the effects of Adam's sin. The new heavens and earth sprung to life even while the Jewish civil and religious way of life perished at the hands of the Roman legions. In the new heavens and earth, the gospel of justification is proclaimed to the Gentiles who had been so long subject to vanity.

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<sup>45</sup> Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 158.

<sup>46</sup> In his commentary on Mark 16:15, Lightfoot comments again on Romans 8, essentially repeating his comments in the Romans section of his commentary. He mounts the argument that the phrase *every creature* in Mark 16:15 and in Romans 8:22 signifies the Gentile world. The Gentiles had been lost in vain thinking but were soon to be found by the preaching of the gospel. Lightfoot adds that the *we* of Romans 8:23 designates Jews who had embraced Christ as the Messiah. Christian Jews of Paul's day were the first fruits of the gospel; they like the Gentiles "sigh among ourselves for their sakes, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our mystical body, whereof the Gentiles make a very great part." See Lightfoot, *A Commentary on the New Testament*, 480.

## Henry Hammond

Henry Hammond (1605-1660) shared Lightfoot's basic approach to the new heavens and earth. This fundamental agreement is evident in his *A paraphrase, and annotations upon all the books of the New Testament* published in 1653.<sup>47</sup> His comments on 2 Peter 3, Revelation 21:1-4 and Romans 8:19-21 expose a metaphorical understanding of the new heavens and earth. Still, when one scrutinizes Hammond's exposition, it becomes evident that Hammond does not simply mirror Lightfoot in every exegetical particular. Hammond's interpretive nuances will introduce a new plot line into the story of the new heavens and earth, a plot line absent from Lightfoot's account.

Before investigating the details of Hammond's exegesis of certain texts, it will be advantageous to attend to his exegetical method, a method he explains in his introduction to the book of Romans.<sup>48</sup> There, Hammond takes the time to instruct the reader about two historical realities that the New Testament authors constantly had in mind when writing to the churches. Consequently the interpreter of Scripture must likewise keep them central or risk misunderstanding the segments of the epistles. The first reality was the persecution of the church by the Jews in the time of the Apostles and the second was

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<sup>47</sup> Henry Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations Upon All the Books of the New Testament Briefly Explaining All the Difficult Places Thereof / by H. Hammond* (London : Printed by J. Flesher for Richard Royston ..., 1653), *Early English Books Online*, Union Theological Seminary Library. A paraphrase with annotations was a common method of writing biblical commentary. The paraphrase was typically written as a gloss alongside the text with the annotations written at the end of each chapter to allow for further interaction with specific issues—doctrinal, historical, linguistic, etc.—raised by the text.

<sup>48</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 463-466.

the appearance of Gnosticism. Of the two, the former reality will greatly inform Hammond's exposition of 2 Peter 3 with its promise of a new heavens and earth.<sup>49</sup>

Jewish persecution of the church followed hard upon the resurrection of Christ, in part because of the apostles' refusal to require adherence to the Mosaic law and in part because of their mission to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Hence the apostles felt the necessity of both defending their actions and encouraging the church to persevere amidst these troubles. This encouragement took the form of reminding the Christians of the benefits of persevering. These benefits included the advantage of developing certain Christian virtues and the promise of eternal life in heaven. Yet a more tangible, earthly motivation for faithfulness amidst Jewish persecution is not lacking in the apostolic writings. That motivation consisted of Christ's promise that he would return

to own and protect and secure those who should cleave fast to him, and to that end to come in an eminent and notable manner, and that speedily, to the destruction of the obdurate Jews, and, at the same time, and by that means, to the deliverance of all his faithful servants the persecuted Christians.<sup>50</sup>

Hence many of the New Testament statements regarding Christ's return are not to be taken as statements about the bodily return of Christ at the consummation of all things; they are statements about the impending downfall of Jewish nationalistic hopes. It is this

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<sup>49</sup> Hammond posits two presuppositions for interpreting the New Testament epistles: 1) the epistles were written to established churches and therefore certain doctrines were assumed to be known already, allowing casual allusion to them by the author, and 2) the epistles were written to support and stabilize the churches against false teaching. Hammond concludes from this that "It is consequently to be resolved, that the best way to interpret the *difficult* parts of all these *Epistles*, is to learn and consider by the *stories* of those times, what was the state of those *Churches*, what the *oppositions* which they then met with, *what the dangers* that were most *cautiously* to be *prevented*." The "*stories* of those times" especially included Jewish persecution of the church and Gnostic teaching. See Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 463.

<sup>50</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 463.

reality upon which “are founded many interpretations of several passages, as in the process will appear.”<sup>51</sup> One of those passages affected was 2 Peter 3.

Hammond’s commentary on 2 Peter opens with some introductory comments largely given over to defending Petrine authorship of the letter. Part of that defense includes arguing that the letter was written before the destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>52</sup> That imminent destruction was what Peter has in mind as he prepares his readers for the soon approaching day of the Lord.<sup>53</sup> Hammond’s dating of the book prior to Jerusalem’s destruction is a stance that significantly informs his explanation of chapter 3 and its reference to the new heavens and earth.

In order to grasp Hammond’s treatment of the new heavens and earth mentioned in 2 Peter 3:13, it is necessary to summarize Hammond’s paraphrase of the entire chapter.<sup>54</sup> Peter is calling to mind for his readers that which the Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles and Christ had taught them; a day was coming soon when Christ would return to judge the Jews for their unbelief while delivering faithful Christians from this judgment (3:1-2). Prior to that day of judgment, many would defect from the faith, doubting the promises of its arrival due to the constancy of all things since creation (3:3-4). Peter disposes of the idea of creation’s steadfastness by reminding the “Atheistical

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<sup>51</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 463.

<sup>52</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 853. “But the other *passages* of the *coming* of the *day* of the *Lord* as a *thief*, and the like, belong all to that *judgment* on the *Jewes*, expressed in like phrases by *Christ*, *Mat. 24.* and by the *Apostles* in their *Epistles*, and not to the *day* of *universal doom* or *destruction* of the *whole world*....” See Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 853.

<sup>53</sup> Hammond states that the end of the corporeal world is mentioned only in 3:7—“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

<sup>54</sup> 2 Peter 3:13 reads, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

scoffers” of the Noahic flood which engulfed the whole world.<sup>55</sup> He then proceeds to answer the scoffers’ questioning of the coming of Christ. The scoffers err in thinking that the promise of Christ’s return “must be instantly performed, as soon as Christ is gone to heaven, or else twill not be performed at all.”<sup>56</sup> God’s relationship to time is vastly different from humanity’s relationship. Decades seem long to humans, but a millennium is but as one day with God. Even so, any perceived delay on God’s part is due to his desire that many of these scoffers will yet be moved to repentance before the day of destruction arrives.<sup>57</sup>

In spite of this sense of delay, Christ shortly will return to judge the Jews and destroy Jerusalem. Christ’s promise that the temple would be destroyed would soon come to pass (cf. Matthew 24:1-2). In light of this fast-approaching dissolution of Jerusalem, Peter urges his readers to holy living and to anticipating the deliverance the Christians would enjoy from that judgment. Rather than judgment, Christians anticipate a new heaven and earth, that is to say “a new, a Christian state, in which all provision is made by Christ for righteousness to inhabit, according to the promise of Christ, concerning the purity that Christ should plant in the evangelical state....”<sup>58</sup> Hammond obviously is not thinking of the new heavens and earth in terms of the material world but in terms of spiritual categories.

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<sup>55</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 862.

<sup>56</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 862.

<sup>57</sup> Hammond cites Acts 3:19 in connection with this point: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”

<sup>58</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 863.

Hammond enlarges on the theme of the new heavens and earth in his annotations on the chapter. He comments first on the use of the phrase “heavens and the earth” in 2 Peter 3:7.<sup>59</sup> Hammond argues that in this verse the phrase does indeed refer to the physical planet, to all that was destroyed by the Flood and which will one day be destroyed by fire.<sup>60</sup> However, that literal interpretation of 3:7 does not hold in the verses that follow according to Hammond. Verses 10 and 12 tell of the heavens, earth and elements dissolving and melting. In those verses, the terms are to be taken figuratively to represent “the whole *city of Jerusalem, temple, and palace, towres, and buildings of the city, not one signified by one, another by another, but all by all together, and proportionally to that, the new heavens and new earth are a Christian people, ver. 13.*”<sup>61</sup> He goes on to add that the fiery destruction of the heavens, earth and elements is the devastation brought by the Roman army upon Judea and Jerusalem during the Jewish War, culminating in the burning of Jerusalem and the Jewish temple.<sup>62</sup> Hence Hammond moves from the heavens and the earth being the entire earth (verse 7), to a metaphor for Jerusalem (verses 10, 12), to a metaphor for a Christian people (verse 13). This metaphor is the new heavens and earth anticipated by Peter.

Hammond is aware that other scholars had expounded this chapter in a manner different from his own. He acknowledges that some think Peter envisions the end of the

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<sup>59</sup> 2 Peter 3:7: “But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.”

<sup>60</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 865. Hammond does not comment on whether the world will be renovated or annihilated. He simply notes that “by perpetual tradition” it is held that the world and its creatures will be destroyed.

<sup>61</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 865.

<sup>62</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 865.



world while others view it as a renovation of the world prior to the commencement of the millennium.<sup>63</sup> These interpreters misunderstand not only Peter’s words, but also Paul’s treatment of this subject in his epistles and Jesus’ discourse on the Mount of Olives.

Hammond argues that Peter, Paul and Jesus agree in that they all understood the second coming of Christ to signify a coming to execute judgment on the rebellious Jews rather than to bring an end to the world or prepare it for a millennium. He maintains that the whole epistle of 2 Peter was written to encourage steadfastness of belief among believers in Christ in light of the imminent return of Christ in judgment. Hammond believes the cause of the two false interpretations was the “*hideousness* of those *judgments*, which fell upon that people of the *Jewes*...”<sup>64</sup> These judgments were unparalleled in Jewish history, leading the prophets—“who use *tropes* and *figures*, and not *plain* expressions, to set down their *predictions*”—to employ images of cosmic changes in the heavens and on earth in order to express its severity.<sup>65</sup> Once the destruction had fallen, then “peaceable days of *servng Christ*” would arrive, a new heaven and earth. Hence, for Hammond, the new heavens and earth are a Christian people serving Christ in peaceable circumstances, a state of affairs that commenced in the first century following Jerusalem’s devastation by the Roman armies.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup>Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 865.

<sup>64</sup>Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 865.

<sup>65</sup>Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 866. Though he is not dogmatic about it, Hammond identifies the scoffers who doubted of Christ’s return as Gnostic apostates.

<sup>66</sup>Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 867. Hammond does not attempt any explanation of how the persecution of the church under the Roman Empire for over two centuries comports with the “peaceable days of serving Christ” that supposedly began with the demise of the Judean province.

Hammond revisits the topic of the new heavens and earth in his exposition of Revelation 21:1. He observes that the chapter division between Revelation 20 and 21 is misplaced since the subject matter of 21:1-22:5 is an enlargement on certain events mentioned in chapter 20. In light of Hammond's belief that Revelation 21:1 is an expansion on the previous chapter, an overview of his understanding of chapter 20 will aid in appreciating his comments on the new heavens and earth found in chapter 21.

Consistent with many of his contemporaries but differing from Lightfoot, Hammond held that the thousand years of Revelation 20 started with the ascendancy of Constantine to the throne of the Roman Empire.<sup>67</sup> His ascension to power effectively bound the power of Satan from inflicting persecution on the church. Satan's binding began a literal one thousand year period which Hammond describes as "a tranquillity and flourishing estate of Christianity for some time, though not forever."<sup>68</sup> These days will come to an end when, on account of moral laxity in the church, God will release Satan to trouble the church once again. Hammond identifies this troubling of the church with the rise of the "Mahomedane religion" in Greece, adding further that the city of the saints which is surrounded by Gog and Magog is Constantinople.<sup>69</sup> Yet God will destroy Gog and Magog—" 'tis to be expected in God's good time."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 996.

<sup>68</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 996.

<sup>69</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 996. Hammond notes that the worship of Mohammed was begun just two hundred years earlier in Constantinople's chief church, the Church of Sophia.

<sup>70</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 996.

In his annotations on this chapter, Hammond mounts an argument against the millennialists of his day to prove the point that the thousand years of chapter 20 have already passed and are not a future glorious state of the church.<sup>71</sup> He points out that “here is no mention of any *new reign of Christ on earth*, but only of them that were *beheaded ... living and reigning with Christ.*”<sup>72</sup> Those who were beheaded (Revelation 20: 4) refers to Christians who maintained their witness for Christ, some even to the death, during the times of persecution under the Roman Empire. Their living again—contra the millennialists—is not to be taken as the bodily resurrection of “the same *particular* persons, or *individual* members of the *Church*, that had formerly been *slain*” but is to be taken as signifying “the *Church* in the *perpetual succession* of *Christians.*”<sup>73</sup> With Constantine came the reviving of the church so that it lived and reigned with Christ in that the outward circumstances of the church changed from trouble to prosperity.<sup>74</sup>

As mentioned above, Hammond’s paraphrase and annotations on chapter 21 divulge his belief that the chapter is a further description of the thousand years mentioned in the previous chapter.<sup>75</sup> The new heaven and earth of Revelation 21:1 is a figure of

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<sup>71</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 997.

<sup>72</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 997.

<sup>73</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 997.

<sup>74</sup> Hammond later comments that the ‘first resurrection’ is “figuratively used to expresse the flourishing condition of the *Christian Church* for that *thousand years* wherein the *Christian professors* in opposition to *idolatrous heathens*, and *Gnostick Christians* have safely and happily in the enjoying the *assemblies*, which is, saith he, as if the *primitive Martyrs* were fetcht out of their *graves* to live again here in tranquillity upon the earth.” See Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 998.

<sup>75</sup> The fact that John sees the new Jerusalem descending from heaven to the earth convinces Hammond that Revelation 21 describes the church on earth rather than in heaven. He maintains that this movement from heaven to earth is “a key to interpreting this *chapter.*” Hammond does consider the possibility that chapters 20 and 21 run consecutively, thus putting the new heaven and earth of chapter 21 after the thousand years of chapter 20. He decides against that possibility, arguing instead that it is not

speech for “that flourishing estate of the Christian Church for a thousand years” in which idolatry vanishes.<sup>76</sup>

Although Hammond thinks the *meaning* of the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:13 is essentially the same, the *event* described by the two texts is not the same. The new heavens and earth of 2 Peter 3 and the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21:1 both signify an alteration in the church’s external circumstances. In Peter’s letter, the new heavens and earth is a new situation for the church that would shortly emerge following the destruction of Jerusalem, putting an end to the “*old Judaical mode*”.<sup>77</sup> In John’s vision in Revelation 21, the new heaven and earth is a flourishing condition of the church that commenced at the succession of Constantine almost 250 years after the destruction prophesied by Peter. Thus there were two fulfillments of the promise of a new heavens and earth, one initiated in the first century that presumably would last in perpetuity, and one in the fourth century that would last one thousand years.<sup>78</sup> It is in this second fulfillment that Hammond goes beyond what Lightfoot had proposed.

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unusual in the Scriptures that “two *visions* should belong to the same matter.” Hence he takes chapter twenty-one to be a further description of the state of the church that began with Constantine’s rule. He settles on this position because he thinks the main design of the book of Revelation is to provide hope to the seven churches in Asia who were the initial recipients of the vision. In spite of the current experiences of these churches, a day was coming when the church would enjoy peace and stability, a situation realized soon after Constantine’s conversion and subsequent rule. See Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 1003.

<sup>76</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 1001.

<sup>77</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 1003.

<sup>78</sup> Hammond does not every comment on the duration of the new heavens and earth that commenced in AD 70 but since he describes it as the end of the “*Judaical mode*” and the beginning of the evangelical state, one could conclude that it would continue until Christ’s Second Advent.

Hammond does not ever equate the new heavens and earth passages with any incidents or states of affairs at the consummation of human history and his treatment of Romans 8:19-22 follows in the same trajectory. As was noted earlier, this Pauline text was commonly understood as describing the release of the physical creation—the heavens and earth—from its bondage to corruption following the deliverance of the sons of God at the last day. Although the passage spawned various questions that produced differing answers, the identity of “the creature” was generally agreed upon.<sup>79</sup> It was the entirety of the physical creation excepting rational beings—humans and angels.

However, displaying his commitment to keep in mind the stories of the Jewish rejection of Christ and their persecution of the early church when studying epistles, Hammond interprets the meaning of the creature in light of the impending doom on the Jews. He maintains that Paul is speaking directly to Roman Jews in chapter eight and when he comes to verse nineteen, Paul briefly adumbrates the hope of the creature, the creature being none other than the Gentiles. The Gentiles anxiously await the response of the Jews to the gospel of Christ.<sup>80</sup> For thousands of years they had continued in a path of

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<sup>79</sup> The question of the identity of the creature, as well as other questions raised by interpreters about Romans 8, will be treated at length in chapter 3.

<sup>80</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 501. Hammond enlarges on the expectation of the Gentiles in his annotations section. He insists that the phrase “must be understood according to the *sacred prophetick dialect*.” That is, the Gentiles desire and hope for something “they do not distinctly *know* or *think* of.” So Gentiles desire deliverance from their idolatry because they desire their own good even though they do not know the exact means by which that is achieved. Hammond writes, “And so here it is not at all necessary to the verifying of this speech of the *Apostle*, that the *Gentile* world all this while, (or even at the time, wherein he spake) should either *know Christ*, or what ‘twas, to be the *sons of God*, or that the *revelation* of this by the preaching of the *Gospel* to the *Jewes*, tended so particularly to their advantage. But, as the *Gospel of Christ* was the *collection* of all those advantages that they aspired to, and as being the *sons of God* ] was the *beleiving* [sic] on *Christ*, when he was *preached*, so the *Apostle*, that knew, that upon the having *preacht over all the cities of Jewry* (and so made *discovery*, who of them would *repent* and *beleive* the *Gospel*” who would be finally contumacious) the *Gospel* should immediately be *preached* to the *Gentiles*, and so the blessedst thing in the world befall them, the satisfaction to all their *desires* and

blind idolatry and unwilling subjection to Satan's desires.<sup>81</sup> Wishing to be free from bondage to Satan, the Gentiles eagerly await the response of the Jews to the gospel in hopes that they (Gentiles) too will be rescued from their bondage to Satan and made to be children of God and heirs of eternal life.

Paul's own ministry gives proof to this longing of the Gentiles because wherever Paul preached, the Gentiles were "very forward to receive the Gospell, when they hear it, while ye Jewes generally reject it...."<sup>82</sup> The Gentile world is eager to deliver true sons of God into the kingdom of God. The "manifestation of the sons of God" (Rom. 8:19) is not an end of the age event; rather, it was a discovery of who were genuine sons of God among the Jews of the first century. This discovery followed the preaching of the Gospel by the apostles to the Jewish nation. As Christ was preached to the Jews, many did not believe, thus proving they were not truly sons of God, while others did receive the message of Christ, revealing just the opposite. Only after the rejection of Christ by the

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*groanings*, may truly say, that the *expectation* of the *Gentile* world *attended* and *waited* for this." See Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 505.

<sup>81</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 502. Hammond lays the responsibility of Gentile vanity on Satan rather than the Gentiles themselves. Gentile ignorance of the true God was a condition foisted upon them by Satan. The paraphrase of verse 20 reads thus: "For the heathen world hath for these many years been (for the generality of them) enslaved to Satan, and, by him, to that wretched miserable estate of ignorance and Idolatry, and all those vain and unclean bestiall worships, and so as many as have gone on in those vile courses have been involved also under that desperate impossibility (as to the eye of man) of recovering to the least degree of bliss, And all this, not (absolutely) willingly, or upon their own free choise, but by the devils imposing it on them, as an act of religion, a concomitant, and effect of their Idol-worships...in which he commanded all these villanies." Hammond cuts across the grain of the usual interpretation of this text by arguing that it is not God who put the creature into subjection to futility by abandoning them to their idolatry but rather it is the devil "who by *God's* permission (in just *punishment* for their *Idolatries*) had, and exercised such *power* among the *heathens*, and engaged them in all *wickednesse*." In worshipping false gods, the Gentiles were worshipping the devil, and the devil took full advantage of his power over them by inducing them to believe faulty notions and practice vile sins, even the sin of human sacrifice. See Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 501-502.

<sup>82</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 502.

majority of the Jewish people did the apostles turn their focus to the Gentiles. The Jewish rejection would become the means for the Gentiles to receive the gospel and that is why Paul says the Gentiles are eagerly waiting for the revelation of what Jews truly were sons of God, because only then would the Gentile hope of also being adopted as sons of God be realized.<sup>83</sup>

It is now apparent that Hammond and Lightfoot reached similar conclusions regarding several themes. Both accepted the idea that the millennium spoken of in Revelation 20 was a literal thousand years that had already been completed centuries earlier, though they did not agree on the timing of its commencement. Both denied that the new heavens and earth concerned the material world's renewal after the final judgment but rather explained it as a metaphor describing new conditions for the church after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, and, in the case of Hammond, another set of conditions after the rise of Constantine. Both adopted a non-standard approach to Romans 8:19-22 by identifying the creature with the Gentile world rather than with the physical world, thereby placing the fulfillment of the passage in the distant past instead of the future. The burden of the final section of this chapter will be to determine how John Owen's interpretation of the new heavens and earth meshes with his two contemporaries.

### **John Owen**

John Owen (1616-1683) rose to prominence throughout the turbulent decade of the 1640s in the midst of England's civil wars, rising to national prominence in the

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<sup>83</sup> Hammond, *A Paraphrase, and Annotations*, 505.

Cromwellian era.<sup>84</sup> His political influence waned after the Restoration but his pastoral and scholarly pursuits fully occupied his time and retained his high public profile. Many of his sermons were published, some during his lifetime and some posthumously. One of the latter sermons expresses very clearly Owen's belief that the new heavens and earth was a metaphor for a people bound together by civil and religious bonds.

Owen preached four sermons on 2 Peter 3:11, each continuing where the last ended.<sup>85</sup> In the first sermon, Owen sets the historical context for both Petrine letters. He explains that Peter is addressing the same audience in both of his epistles—Christian Jews who were dispersed in various lands of Asia. In response to mistreatment at the hands of their unbelieving expatriates, the Christian Jews posted warning that Christ would soon come to execute judgment on the Jewish people for their rejection of their Messiah. That judgment would be nothing less than the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple with its rites and rituals. As years passed and the judgment was not forthcoming, some of the unbelieving Jews began to deride the warnings as nothing but empty threats. The temple worship continued as it had for centuries.

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<sup>84</sup> For a recent work on Owen's life and theology see Carl R. Trueman, *John Owen: Reformed Catholic, Renaissance Man*, ed. John Webster, Trevor Hart, and Douglas B. Farrow, Great Theologians Series (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2007). A more traditional biography of earlier vintage is Peter Toon, *God's Statesman: The Life and Work of John Owen, Pastor, Educator, Theologian* (the Attic Press, Inc., 1971).

<sup>85</sup> Many of Owen's sermons were published posthumously in collections. A single sermon was published in 1690, thirty sermons in 1721, thirteen sermons in 1756 and another thirteen in 1854. The four sermons on 2 Peter 3:11 come from the 1721 collection, John Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons of the Reverend and Learned John Owen, D. D. Formerly Published: With an Addition of Many Others Never before Printed. Also Several Valuable Tracts, Now First Published from Manuscripts: And Some Others, Which Were Very Scarce. To Which Are Added His Latin Orations, Whilst Vicechancellor of Oxford, Taken from His Own Copies. And to the Whole Are Prefix'd Memoirs of His Life: Some Letters Written by Him Upon Special Occasions: And His Funeral Sermon, Preach'd by Mr. David Clarkson* (London: 1721), *Eighteenth Century Collection Online*.



Peter, aware that Jesus' promise to return in judgment upon the Jews was being mocked, writes to Christian Jews to encourage them in the face of the scoffers' attacks. Peter draws upon the Flood narrative to make the point that just as the antediluvian generations refused to listen to Noah's warnings of judgment soon to come, the Jews of the first century were refusing to listen to the warnings of Christ's return to judge the Jewish nation. Owen points out that Peter contrasts the heavens and earth that perished in the Flood with the heavens and earth that would perish by fire and thinks it necessary "for the clearing our foundation, a little consider what the apostle intends by 'the heavens and the earth' in these two places."<sup>86</sup>

Owen's main approach is to argue for a parallelism between the world that perished in the Flood and the world that would soon perish by fire. He first argues that the heavens and earth destroyed by water (2 Peter 3:5-6) is the same heavens and earth to be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7). Sheer logic forces Owen to conclude that if they did not reference the identical heavens and earth there "there would be no coherence in the apostle's discourse, nor any kind of argument, but a mere fallacy of words."<sup>87</sup> Second, Owen stresses that the Flood did not destroy the "fabric of heaven and earth" but only the world's inhabitants. Hence the impending destruction by fire of the heavens and the earth would not destroy the material heavens and earth but certain inhabitants of the world.<sup>88</sup> Finally, he draws attention to three other biblical texts that he believes sustains his position that the world and the heavens and the earth mentioned in 2 Peter 3 ought to

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<sup>86</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 50.

<sup>87</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 50.

<sup>88</sup> Owen adds that the substance of the heavens and the earth will not be consumed until the last day.

be interpreted as references to human beings. In Isaiah 51:15-16, God rehearses before Israel what he had done for her; he had divided the sea for them to escape Egypt, he put his words in their mouths when he gave them the law at Sinai, he protected them in years of wandering. He did this so that he might “plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth and say unto Zion, Thou art my people” (Isaiah 51:16). The planting of the heavens and the laying of the foundations of the earth is another way of saying that God rescued Israel from Egypt and created them into a church-state in the wilderness. God “brought forth order, and government, and beauty, from the confusion wherein before they were.”<sup>89</sup> If the formation of a new civil and religious people is described in the Bible in terms of planting the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, then it is not surprising that the demise of a people group is depicted as the destruction of the heavens and earth. After citing three more instances of this phenomenon in Scripture, Owen thinks he has established his case: “It is evident, then, that, in the prophetic idiom and manner of speech, by ‘heavens’ and ‘earth,’ the civil and religious state and combination of men in the world, and the men of them, are often understood.”<sup>90</sup> Having established that the judgment by water (Genesis 6-9) and the judgment by fire (2 Peter 3) do not concern overthrowing the structure of the material world but rather the inhabitants of that world, Owen’s next task is to demonstrate that the destruction prophesied by Peter

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<sup>89</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 51.

<sup>90</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 51. The other three instances he cites are Isaiah 34:4, Revelation 6:14 and Matthew 24.

is not the final judgment at the consummation of all things but an imminent restricted judgment on the “Judaical church and state.”<sup>91</sup>

Owen first argues that whatever Peter is addressing in chapter three, it “was to have its peculiar influence on the men of that generation.”<sup>92</sup> The Jews of that generation were not debating the truth of a general judgment at the end of the world. This doctrine was standard fare for all Jews. Rather, the controversy concerned whether Christ would execute a prior judgment on that specific generation of unbelieving Jews. Christian Jews believed he would soon visit the Jews with judgment and no doubt warned their unbelieving Jewish neighbors about its proximity. It obviously would matter a great deal to that generation as to whether or not judgment on the Jewish nation was imminent. In Owen’s thinking, the power and authority of Christ hung in the balance for both believing and unbelieving Jews for the truthfulness of his words and those of his apostles and prophets was now at stake. Owen is making the case that Peter’s letter was not concerned with a judgment far in the future but with events that could directly affect his listeners in their lifetimes.

Owen’s second argument relies on the import of three other biblical texts that mention the heavens and the earth, the first two from Isaiah and the third from Hebrews. Peter tells his readers that after the judgment of which he writes, he and his readers look for the promised new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13). The promise of a new heavens and earth is also found in Isaiah 65:17 and Isaiah 66:21-22. Together these two Isaianic passages are “a prophecy of gospel times only; and that the planting of these new heavens

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<sup>91</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 51.

<sup>92</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 51.

is nothing but the creation of gospel ordinances, to endure for ever.”<sup>93</sup> Understanding Owen’s phrase “gospel times” will help pinpoint the moment when he believed the new heavens and earth commenced.

Owen does not define the phrase but it certainly was not peculiar to Owen in his day. It appears frequently without comment or explanation in other works, suggesting its meaning was transparent to readers.<sup>94</sup> Fortunately, Thomas Hall, a Presbyterian minister at Kings Norton in Worcestershire, does provide an explicit definition in his commentary on 2 Timothy chapters 3 and 4 that comports with its usage by his contemporaries. 2 Timothy 3:1 contains Paul’s warning that the world will experience difficult times in the “last days”. Hall gives a brief but explicit explanation of what he believes the phrase means.

That is, all the time from Christs first coming in the flesh, till his second coming to Judgement. In scripture the latter or last times, are taken two wayes: 1. More generally for all Gospel-times, from that time since Christ came in the flesh and publisht the Gospel; this is called the Gospel-time in opposition to the Legal

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<sup>93</sup> Owen, *A Complete Collection of the Sermons*, 51.

<sup>94</sup> For examples, see Thomas Hall, *A Practical and Polemical Commentary, or, Exposition Upon the Third and Fourth Chapters of the Latter Epistle of Saint Paul to Timothy Wherein the Text Is Explained, Some Controversies Discussed, Sundry Cases of Conscience Are Cleared, Many Common Places Are Succinctly Handled, and Divers Usefull and Seasonable Observations Raised / by Thomas Hall* (London : Printed by E. Tyler for John Starkey ..., 1658), 2, *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library; John Tillinghast, *Knovledge of the Times or, the Resolution of the Question, How Long It Shall Be Unto the End of Wonders. By John Tillinghast, a Servant of Jesus Christ* (Printed at London by R.I. for L. Chapman, and are to be sold at the sign of the Crown in Popes-head Alley, 1654), 301, *Early English Books Online*, British Library; Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae, or, a Rational Account of the Grounds of Christian Faith, as to the Truth and Divine Authority of the Scriptures and the Matters Therein Contained by Edward Stillingfleet* (London : Printed by R.W. for Henry Mortlock ..., 1662), 189, *Early English Books Online*, Bristol Public Library; George Hughes, *Aphorisms, or, Select Propositions of the Scripture Shortly Determining the Doctrin of the Sabbath Written by George Hughes, B.D.* ([London : s.n.], 1670), 168, *Early English Books Online*, University of Illinois Library; and Anthony Tuckney, *Forty Sermons Upon Several Occasions by the Late Reverend and Learned Anthony Tuckney ... Sometimes Master of Emmanuel and St. John's Colledge (Successively) and Regius Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, Published According to His Own Copies His Son Jonathan Tuckney* (London: Printed by J.M. for Jonathan Robinson and Brabazon Aylmer ..., 1676), 86, *Early English Books Online*, Union Theological Seminary Library.

administrations: and this is frequently in scripture phrase called, The last time, and, The last dayes.<sup>95</sup>

Following this comment, Hall proceeds to give reasons why the period between Christ's first and second comings are named the "last days". His second reason claims that human history comprises three major epochs: from creation to the giving of the Law, from the Law to the incarnation of Christ, from the incarnation to the second coming of Christ. Hall writes that "the Gospel-time is the last of The three."<sup>96</sup>

If it is assumed that Owen shared Hall's explanation of gospel times, then Owen clearly equates the Isaianic prophecies of a new heavens and earth with the period extending from Christ's first coming to his coming in glory. Isaiah was not speaking of physical alterations in the cosmos, but of the establishment of the gospel by Christ and the apostles.

The third text mustered by Owen to show that the judgment of 2 Peter 3 was the impending doom of the Jewish nation and not the final judgment at the end of all things is Hebrews 12:26-28. In this sermon, Owen merely cites it without comment; however, this text receives fuller attention in another sermon and in Owen's lengthy Hebrews commentary.

In a sermon before the House of Commons roughly three months after the execution of Charles I, Owen chose Hebrews 12:27 as his preaching text.<sup>97</sup> The text

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<sup>95</sup>Hall, *A Practical and Polemical Commentary*, 2.

<sup>96</sup> Hall, *A Practical and Polemical Commentary*, 2.

<sup>97</sup>John Owen, *Ouranon Ourania, the Shaking and Translating of Heaven and Earth a Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons in Parliament Assembled on April 19, a Day Set Apart for Extraordinary Humiliation by John Owen* (London : Printed by M. Simmons, and are to be sold by John Cleaver ..., 1649), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. Owen spoke on several occasions to the House of Commons. In 1643, the Long Parliament declared the final Wednesday of each month a fast day.

states, “And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.” Although none of the four biblical texts that mention the phrase “new heavens and earth” in the Bible—Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1—are the textual basis for his sermon, each of those texts surfaces in this sermon in an explanatory role.

The sermon consists of 3 main sections: an exegetical section focused on meaning, a second section where Owen records some observations and a third section where he discusses the uses of the doctrine. In the exegetical section, Owen wonders what the author of Hebrews thought was going to be shaken. That query he easily answers, noting that verse 26 provides the answer as to what will be shaken, i.e., heaven and earth. But what exactly does it mean for heaven and earth to be shaken? Since the meaning “is dubious, is not apparent”,<sup>98</sup> Owen takes it upon himself to dispose of several interpretations before offering his own.

He rejects the view of Rollocus, Piscator “and sundry other famous divines,”<sup>99</sup> who argued that by the term “earth” the author of Hebrews meant humans on the earth and by the term “heaven” the author meant angels. According to this understanding,

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On these days preachers were invited to speak to the House of Commons. Owen’s second address to the House of Commons was on the day following the execution of the king. According to Peter Toon, Owen both witnessed and approved of the execution, believing it was “part of God’s righteous judgement.” Toon writes that “these days of prayer and preaching were a means of renewing and propagating the conviction that, in its just demands, God was on the side of Parliament and against the King and his evil advisers.” These sermons were often printed. See Toon, *God’s Statesman*, 34-35, 19.

<sup>98</sup>Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 6.

<sup>99</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 7.

humanity and the angelic community were shaken at the time of Christ's birth and at the preaching of the gospel by Christ. Against this approach, Owen protests that when the author of Hebrews was writing, the shaking had not yet occurred but was still anticipated. Since the birth and earthly ministry of Christ had ended by the time Hebrews was written, the shaking of heaven and earth could not be referring to humans and angels who witnessed any part of Christ's earthly life. In addition, according to verse twenty-seven, what is shaken is also removed; hence Owen wonders, "Now, how are angels and men removed by Christ? Are they not rather gathered up into one spiritual body and communion?"<sup>100</sup> Owen further complains that the divines who proffer this interpretation inevitably end up interpreting those things which are shaken in two different ways in Hebrews 12:26-27. In verse 26, the shaken things are men and angels at the nativity whereas in verse 27 the shaken things are Jewish rites which are removed. Owen finds this hermeneutical move disconcerting for its lack of exegetical consistency.

Others—"[s]o Junius, and after him most of ours"—preferred to assign material significance to what was shaken.<sup>101</sup> Certain cosmic events surrounding the birth and death of Christ fulfilled this shaking of the heavens and earth. These events include the discovery of a new star in the heavens to lead the magi to Christ's home and the darkness and earthquake that accompanied Jesus' crucifixion. According to Owen, this view also fails to do justice to the text, suffering from similar weaknesses as the former view. He again levels the charge that in this interpretation the shaking of heavens and earth had already passed even though the author of Hebrews presents the shaking as an event yet to

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<sup>100</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 7.

<sup>101</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 7.

come. And again, such an interpretation fails to explain in what way these shaken elements are removed. Finally, the events in the natural world that accompanied Jesus' birth and death are clearly the works of the God the Father, but Hebrews manifestly assigns the shaking to the power of Christ.

The third interpretation rejected by Owen is that the shaking of heaven and earth denotes the renovation of the created order at the consummation of all things.<sup>102</sup> This interpretation correctly recognizes that the author of Hebrews was speaking of an event yet to come, “yet this gloss also is a dress disfiguring the mind of God in the text.”<sup>103</sup> Owen draws attention to the fact that what is shaken is replaced by something that cannot be shaken, and something is removed in order to be superseded by something that cannot be removed. His point is that what is shaken is identical to what is removed and what cannot be shaken is identical to what cannot be removed. Since what cannot be removed is, according to Owen, the kingdom of Christ,<sup>104</sup> then what is shaken and removed must be something other than the material world since the material world and Christ's kingdom are not proper opposites. Owen's point is that that if the material world is what is shaken, then the consequence of such a belief is that the kingdom of Christ could not be realized at all on earth until the restoration of creation takes place at the last judgment. But in Owen's view, the kingdom of Christ was initially established on earth at the time of his earthly ministry even though it would not be revealed in its full glory until later.

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<sup>102</sup>Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 7. Owen mentions Pareus, Grotius “and many more” as adherents of this position.

<sup>103</sup>Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 8.

<sup>104</sup> Owen takes this from the first clause of Hebrews 12:28: *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved...*



Thus having disposed of three wrong interpretations,<sup>105</sup> Owen offers his own through which he will manifest his understanding of the new heavens and earth. Aware that the author of Hebrews is quoting a brief portion from Haggai 2:6, Owen leans on the Haggai text to supply the meaning of the shaking of heaven and earth.<sup>106</sup> He argues that Haggai 2:7 supplies the correct interpretation of Haggai 2:6. The two verses read as follows: “For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts.” In Owen’s view, to shake the heavens and earth (verse 6) and to shake the nations (verse 7) is all of a piece. These are not separate shakings but a redundancy of words—a “pleonasm”—articulating God’s intention to shake the heaven and earth of all nations.<sup>107</sup> The “heaven” of a nation denominates that nation’s government and the “earth” of a nation is the people that endorse and uphold that government. For God to shake the heaven and earth of a nation is for him to bring momentous changes to a nation’s government and citizenry.<sup>108</sup>

Owen’s defense of his interpretation depends upon an awareness of what he believes is a common prophetic rhetorical device. The terms heaven and earth in

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<sup>105</sup> Owen comments, “Those are the most material and likely mistakes about the words. I could easily give out, and pluck in again three or four other warping senses; but I hope few in these days of accomplishing will once stumble at them.”

<sup>106</sup> Owen’s justification is transparent: “The Spirit of God in the Scripture is his own best interpreter.” See Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 9.

<sup>107</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 9.

<sup>108</sup> In the final analysis, Owen does accept the identification of *earth* with human beings, an identification adopted in the first interpretation that he rejects. The difference lies in the fact that the first interpretation placed these humans prior to the writing of Hebrews while Owen placed them after the writing of Hebrews.

prophetic literature are typically allusions to civil governments (heaven) and the populaces subject to those governments (earth). Owen employs several examples to buttress his case. In Revelation 12:16, the author of Revelation sees a vision in which the earth swallows the flood waters that issue from the dragon's mouth. Owen asserts that "none doubts" the identity of the earth in this text—it is the people of the earth.<sup>109</sup> In Isaiah 51:15-16, God rehearses before Israel what he had done for her; he had divided the sea for them to escape Egypt, he put his words in their mouths when he gave them the law at Sinai, he protected them in years of wandering. He did this so that he might "plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth and say unto Zion, you are my people." Owen believes a material understanding of heavens and earth in this prophecy would be nonsense. Had not God already planted the visible heavens and earth over two thousand years earlier at the time of creation? Rather, God's intention in delivering them from Egypt, revealing to them His law and safeguarding them in the desert was to create Israel as a nation, that is, to plant the heavens and lay the foundations of the earth.

After providing additional texts from which to establish the legitimacy of his interpretation, he ends his defense by collating the four new heavens and earth passages found in the Bible—Isaiah 65:17-18, Isaiah 66:22-24, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1. These passages provide "plentiful demonstration" that ". . . the promises of the restoration of God's people into a glorious condition after all their sufferings, is perpetually, in the Scripture, held out under the same terms. . . ."<sup>110</sup> The new heavens and earth in all these passages is not a change in the fabric of the physical creation but a

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<sup>109</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 9.

<sup>110</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 12.

change in the structure or conditions of the church. They refer to civil and religious alterations, rather than material ones.<sup>111</sup> Owen does not detour from his main preaching text in Hebrews in order to expound further on the meaning of the new heavens and earth as it is found in Isaiah, 2 Peter or Revelation. Yet he says enough to reveal his belief that these texts symbolically express changes to peoples' circumstances rather than to cosmic geography.

Having established what it means for God to shake the heavens and the earth, Owen moves on to consider when this shaking will take place. He draws attention to his text to establish the general truth that the purpose of the shaking of the nations is to remove them so that something enduring may take their place. That which will not be shaken or removed is Christ's kingdom. Owen thinks the promise of this text was fulfilled once in the past and will be fulfilled once again in the future, though the latter fulfillment will exceed the former.

The first fulfillment occurred in the early years of church history when Christ's kingdom was initially proclaimed by the preaching of the gospel. The church became the object of persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire but God shook that empire to its core and it finally collapsed altogether.<sup>112</sup> Still "[t]he immovable things were not yet in their glory to be brought in."<sup>113</sup> The shaking of the Roman state was "only for vengeance

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<sup>111</sup> Owen wonders aloud what a shaking of a civil structure looks like. How is such a shaking worked out in the world? His answer reflects the age in which he was living at the time of his sermon: "Truly, the accomplishment hereof is in all nations so under our eyes as that I need not speak one word thereunto." See Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 12.

<sup>112</sup> Owen, unlike many of his contemporaries, completely ignores Constantine's conversion and subsequent elevation of Christianity within the Empire.

<sup>113</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 13.

upon an old, cursed. . . state;” it was not a shaking that would establish what would be immovable. The Roman empire was soon replaced by the papacy, which insinuated itself into all western European countries, bringing persecution to true believers even as the Roman emperors did in ancient times. The shaking of the power of papal Rome must yet be accomplished. Once that is completed there will be no more sea (Rev. 21:1)—i.e., no other power or state will arise to persecute the church ever again for the kingdom of Christ will be immovable.

In spite of the ease of melding Owen’s interpretation of the new heavens and earth with the millenarian views of his day, Owen makes no attempt to do so. He dismisses the topic in one sentence: “For the personal reign of the Lord Jesus on earth, I leave it to them with whose discoveries I am not, and curiosities I would not be, acquainted, Acts iii.21.”<sup>114</sup> As for those who were acquainted with those discoveries and on their bases hoped to further their own earthly conditions and circumstances—these Owen disavows for they not only misinterpreted “innumerable promises” but they also have adopted a theology as merely a pretense for “the disturbance of all order and authority, civil and spiritual.”<sup>115</sup> Such disorder is utterly offensive to Christ. Unlike some of the radicals of his day, Owen restricts his description of the future unmovable kingdom to three

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<sup>114</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 16. Toon states that Congregationalists “to a man were millenarians of one kind or another and chiliasm was recognised by contemporaries as one of their peculiar doctrines.” By 1649 when Owen preached this sermon, he had adopted congregational polity but Toon correctly notes that he was not “explicitly millenarian” even though he believed the church would flourish in the final days prior to the second coming. See Toon, *God’s Statesman*, 30. The purpose of Owen’s citation of Acts 3:21 is not altogether clear. The verse states that heaven would be the abode of Christ until the final restitution of all things. Perhaps Peter’s statement that heaven would be Christ’s dwelling up until the consummation is used by Owen as a thinly veiled rebuttal to those who would posit an earthly reign of Christ for a thousand years.

<sup>115</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 16-17 [in the original, page 16 is misnumbered as page 8]. Owen does not specify what any of the “innumerable promises” are or where they may be found.

elements: the numerical and spiritual growth of the church “from the special presence of Christ,” an acceptable expression and practice of “gospel ordinances,” and a manifest security of the church from all threats.<sup>116</sup>

In a final exegetical comment, Owen devotes a paragraph to the term ‘removal’ or *μετάθεσις*. He rejects this translation, thinking the translators adopted it on the basis of believing the shaking of heaven and earth was the removal or end of the Jewish cultic practices at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple. However, he maintains the word *μετάθεσις* never means ‘removal’ in sacred or pagan writers. Instead, “Translation, or changing, is the only native, genuine import of it: . . . removal is of the matter, translation of the form only. It is not, then, a destruction and total emotion of the seat things of the nations; but a change, translation, and a new-moulding of them, that is here intimated.”<sup>117</sup> Hence the removal of what has been shaken is really a metamorphosis of the nations to a condition in which the kingdom of Christ can flourish.

Having dealt with the meaning of key terms in the text in the first half of the sermon, Owen moves on to make some observations based on those meanings. He affirms three propositions; the first regards the time at which the heavens and earth will be shaken, the second concerns the certainty of this event and the third asserts the permanence of what will replace it.<sup>118</sup> With respect to the first concern, Owen is loath to set any dates or be very specific as to when this shaking will occur. He supposes “a speedy accomplishment” of it though he does not know if he will live long enough to

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<sup>116</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 16.

<sup>117</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 14.

<sup>118</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 17.

witness it.<sup>119</sup> He does accept the theory that the shaken nations are the vestiges of the Roman Empire scattered throughout Europe.<sup>120</sup> Though the shaking initially “shall be transacted with so much obscurity and darkness, Christ not openly appearing unto carnal eyes,” that the obdurate will not repent, in the end Christ will clearly manifest his glorious presence to all, defeating all his enemies.<sup>121</sup> Owen singles out the man of sin, which is the papacy along with his monarchial partners in Europe, as the focus of Christ’s wrath in response to their persecution of Protestants.<sup>122</sup>

Even though Owen does not align himself in this sermon with the millenarians of his day, his rhetoric, measured and precise as it is, discloses an unmistakable confidence that the shaking of the nations was not far off. As Owen moves to the application section of his sermon, he first urges his listeners to be observant of the signs which forecast this shaking. The House of Commons was not to be like the religious leaders of Jesus’ day who refused to believe the signs of his ministry and insisted on ones of their own making.<sup>123</sup> Instead, they were to be like the men of Issachar who understood the times in

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<sup>119</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 18.

<sup>120</sup> He refers to it as the “ten-partite empire of the west” which he believes is headed by the papacy and he delves into Daniel 4 and Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of an image of gold, silver, bronze, iron and clay/iron to elucidate his position. See Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 18.

<sup>121</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 21.

<sup>122</sup> Owen advances an argument that in his day the nations of Europe were “purely framed for the interest of Antichrist. . . . I believe it will be found a difficult task to name any of the kingdoms of Europe (excepting only that remotest northward) in the setting up and establishment whereof, either as to persons or government, the pope hath not expressly bargained for his own interest, and provided that should have the chiefest place in all the oaths and bonds that were between princes and people.” In all of the major political changes in Europe from the 5<sup>th</sup> century onward, “the pope had a hand in every one of them” bringing the nations so affected “into subjection to his Babylonish usurpations.” See Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 23-24.

<sup>123</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 28-29.

which they lived and what Israel ought to do (I Chron. 12:32). He urges Parliament to “labour for that spiritual wisdom and prudence which may acquaint your hearts, at least in some measure, with the mind and will of God concerning his work in the generation wherein you live.”<sup>124</sup> Owen follows this admonition with how one comes to the knowledge of God’s will for a specific point in history. One way is by the light God gives each generation. For example John the Baptist brought new light regarding the one who was to follow him so that Jesus’ ministry could be understood for those willing to hear and respond. The light God was giving Owen’s generation was “the mystery of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny.”<sup>125</sup> God has exposed the papacy as the “antichristian mortar” binding the nations of Europe together.<sup>126</sup> God’s work is “the untwining of this close combination against himself and the kingdom of his dear Son.”<sup>127</sup> Nothing less than a vigorous shaking of these nations will loosen the grip of Rome. Owen thinks the shaking has already begun though he resists making any predictions with respect to particulars.<sup>128</sup> Yet he iterates here and at other points in the sermon that the stone from heaven has been cast to earth to shake the nations that oppose Christ in order to make the nations of the earth become the kingdom of Christ. Hence he urges Parliament not to build anything contrary to Christ lest it also be shaken and destroyed. It is not enough to merely not

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<sup>124</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 31.

<sup>125</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 35.

<sup>126</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 35.

<sup>127</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 35.

<sup>128</sup> “What speedy issue all this will be driven to, I know not;--so much is to be done as requires a long space. Though a tower may be pulled down faster that it was set up, yet that which hath been building a thousand years is not like to go down in a thousand days.” See Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 37.

oppose Christ; rather what is built must advance his interests: “Say not, in the first place, this or that suits the interest of England; but look what suits the interest of Christ, and assure yourselves that the true interest of any nation is wrapped up therein.”<sup>129</sup> Whether or not the interest of England and the interest of Christ were identical is certainly debatable, but Owen clearly believed he lived on the cusp of this great shaking of the heavens and earth which would bring an end to the papacy and establish the church in peace and prosperity.

This sermon by Owen on the shaking of the heavens and earth was a topic he revisited in another sermon to the House of Commons on October 24, 1651<sup>130</sup> and in his massive commentary on the book of Hebrews.<sup>131</sup> In the former work, Owen again argues that God “*will worke wonderfull providentiall alterations*” among the nations for the

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<sup>129</sup> Owen, *Ouranon Ourania*, 40.

<sup>130</sup> The sermon was delivered after Cromwell had defeated the Scots at Worcester. Owen confidently equated the plans of the House of Commons with the plans of God. Owen’s opening sentence of his preface to the sermon declares that “[o]f *all the times which the Holy One of Israel hath caused to passe over the Nations of the World, there hath not any (from the dayes of old) beene so filled with eminent Discoveries of his presence, power, and providence, in disposing of all Affaires here below according to the counsell of his owne Will, as the Season wherein he hath made you a Spectacle unto men and Angells, being the Instrument in his hand, to performe all his pleasure.*” See John Owen, *The Advantage of the Kingdome of Christ in the Shaking of the Kingdoms of the Vworld: Or Providentiall Alterations in Their Subserviency to Christ’s Exaltation. Opened, in a Sermon Preached to the Parliament Octob. 24. 1651. A Solemne Day of Thankesgiving for the Destruction of the Scots Army at Worcester with Sundry Other Mercies, by John Owen Minister of the Gospell* (Oxford : Printed by Leon. Lichfield printer to the University, for Tho. Robinson, anno Dom. 1651), A2, *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>131</sup> Owen’s Hebrews commentary was published over a period of years, the first volume in 1668, the second in 1674, the third in 1680 and volumes four and five in 1684. The volume containing his exposition of chapter twelve is John Owen, *A Continuation of the Exposition of the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews (Viz) on the Eleventh, Twelfth & Thirteenth Chapters, Compleating That Elaborate Work : Wherein, Together with the Explication of the Text and Context ... : With an Index of the Scriptures Explained in This Volume : As Also a Table of the Principal Matters Threin Contained : Together with a Table to the Third Volume, Preceding This, and an Index of Scriptures Explained in the Same / By ... John Owen, D.D.* (London : Printed for Nathaniel Ponder ..., 1684), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. The reprinted edition used in this chapter is John Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 4 vols., vol. 4 (Evansville 13, Indiana: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1960).



furtherance of the kingdom of Christ.<sup>132</sup> Owen brings forth both of the scriptural texts he used in his sermon before the Commons two years earlier—Haggai 2:6-7 and Hebrews 12:27. God is going to shake the nations; the nations “are to be *civilly* moved, that they may be *spiritually* established.”<sup>133</sup> Their shaking precedes their renovation in order to advance Christ’s kingdom on earth.

In his commentary on Hebrews, Owen’s exposition reveals he had moved very little from his interpretation of the shaking of heaven and earth roughly thirty years earlier.<sup>134</sup> Heaven and earth are figures of speech for civil structures. However, two slight interpretive modifications appear in the commentary. In the sermon before the House of Commons in 1649, the shaking of the heavens and earth had its initial fulfillment in those events that brought about the Roman Empire’s demise. In the commentary, Owen asserts that the first advent of Christ shook the religious and political structures of Judaism resulting in their eventual destruction and the establishment of the “evangelical church-state.”<sup>135</sup>

The second modification revealed by the commentary is that he is not so dismissive of a literal interpretation of what is shaken as he had been in his sermon. Reminiscent of Calvin in allowing a literal and metaphorical interpretation of the new

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<sup>132</sup>Owen, *The Advantage of the Kingdome of Christ*, 9.

<sup>133</sup> Owen, *The Advantage of the Kingdome of Christ*, 9.

<sup>134</sup> This in spite of the fact that by this time in Owen’s life, he had lost all influence on the religious and civil life of the nation, contrary to what he had had during his years with Cromwell. The monarchy had been restored and he himself was a casualty of the Great Ejection of 1662. His high hopes for advancing the kingdom of Christ via civil means must have been dashed, or at a minimum, put on hold.

<sup>135</sup> Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 366. Owen continues by adding that “[t]his was the greatest commotion and alteration that God ever made in the heavens and earth of the church, and which was to be made once only.”

heavens and earth, he allows that a more literal interpretation is permitted provided it remains secondary in importance. The coming of Christ did affect the material heavens: a new star appeared, angels from heaven appeared to herald his birth, the heavens opened at Jesus' baptism when the Spirit descended and voices from heaven attended several events in Jesus' life. His coming affected the earth as well: the magi traveled from the east, Jesus wrought nature miracles affecting bodies, food, water and the weather. Therefore the shaking of heaven and earth received a "*literal accomplishment*" at the first coming of Christ.<sup>136</sup> In spite of this concession, Owen maintains that the author "principally intended" his words to be received symbolically.<sup>137</sup>

In spite of Owen's general agreement with Hammond and Lightfoot that the new heavens and earth was a phrase that should be treated metaphorically, he disagreed with them with respect to Romans 8:19-22. He adopts a more traditional stance on the identity of the creature that is subject to vanity than did Hammond or Lightfoot. In a sermon from 1673 on 2 Peter 3:11,<sup>138</sup> Owen charges his audience to pursue a holy life since

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<sup>136</sup> Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 365. It should be apparent that even this literal interpretation has no reference to a renewal of the created order at the end of world history.

<sup>137</sup> Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 366. It is worth observing that in the sermon he delivered to the Parliament in 1649, Owen freely identified the upheavals in England as evidence of God's shaking of the nations and of his good providence to England. A mere three months prior to the sermon, Charles I had been executed. This clear connection disappears in the commentary. No comparisons are drawn between England's current conditions and the kingdom of Christ. He still holds that all things that oppose Christ "must give way...unto the gospel, and the kingdom of Christ therein." But the tone is subdued and he is no longer quick to correlate scriptural prophesy and current affairs. Some of this reluctance is explainable by genre differences—a sermon delivered to the governing body of a nation in upheaval and a commentary intended for scholars and ministers. Yet surely some of the difference can be attributed to Owen's diminishment in civil influence after the Restoration. See Owen, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 368.

<sup>138</sup> Owen, John, *Holiness urged from the liability of all things to dissolution* in the Christian Classics Ethereal Library, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/owen/sermons.vi.viii.html> (accessed February 20, 2013). 2 Peter 3:11 reads, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness."

everything else—the heavens and earth, the inhabitants of both, human achievements—will be dissolved unless supported by Christ. As he gathers scriptural support for this thesis, he considers Paul’s teaching in Romans that the creation, which he interprets as the heavens and the earth, was made susceptible to vanity or change because of sin.<sup>139</sup> Owen does not portray the change as a renovation to a better condition but as destruction. Consequently, creation is groaning because it desires “to preserve itself as long as it can from dissolution.”<sup>140</sup> Anticipating that someone might produce Psalm 102:25-26<sup>141</sup> in opposition to creation’s dissolution, Owen offers the following rebuttal:

What will he [the psalmist] conclude from thence? Therefore they shall endure? It is quite otherwise; “They shall perish, but thou shalt endure,” are the next words: “yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.” A man would have thought from that great preface, “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands,” the conclusion would certainly have been, ‘Then they should endure.’ No, saith the psalmist; “They shall perish.”<sup>142</sup>

Owen concludes that everything will be destroyed excepting the kingdom of Christ. Creation desperately tries to rid itself of this destiny but these attempts “are but vain endeavours, for there is a dissolution waiteth for it.”<sup>143</sup> These remarks by Owen on Romans 8:20-22 reveal his willingness to believe that Paul spoke of the eventual

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<sup>139</sup> Owen equates the *creature* of Romans 8:20 with the *creation* of 8:22: “The ‘creature’ in one place is the ‘whole creation’ in the other.” His subsequent comments link the “whole creation” with the heavens and the earth. See Owen, *Holiness urged*, 457.

<sup>140</sup> Owen, *Holiness urged*, 457.

<sup>141</sup> Psalm 102:25-26—*Of old has thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.*

<sup>142</sup> Owen, *Holiness urged*, 457.

<sup>143</sup> Owen, *Holiness urged*, 457.

annihilation of the material world—a position rarely advanced by any English theologians in the seventeenth century.

The above analyses of Owen, Hammond and Lightfoot have demonstrated that they accepted a nonliteral interpretation of the biblical references to a new heavens and earth. Each maintained that the phrase referred to changes in political and/or religious circumstances rather than material alterations to the physical world. Owen identified the new heavens and earth with the shaking of the nations—an event that had two fulfillments. The first fulfillment came with the tumultuous end of the Roman Empire; the second fulfillment yet lay in the not too distant future when the papacy would be abrogated and the true church would flourish. These two historical fulfillments of new heavens and earth are altogether different from what Paul had in mind when he wrote of the destruction of the corporeal world in Romans 8.

Hammond also held to two fulfillments of new heavens and earth. The first fulfillment was the destruction of Judea, Jerusalem, and the Temple in the first century. It was to this affair that Peter addressed his comments in 2 Peter 3. John's vision of the new heavens and earth in Revelation 21:1 references the second fulfillment when Constantine converted to Christianity and rescued the church from its persecution and promoted its interests. In Romans 8, Paul narrates the longing of the Gentiles to hear the gospel once the majority of the Jews had rejected it.

Lightfoot prefers to see only one fulfillment of the new heavens and earth; the end of the Jewish state in AD 70 commenced the realization of the new heavens and earth. Christ had indeed returned as promised to judge the Jews for their impenitence and to fling open the doors of his kingdom to the Gentiles. As announced by Paul in Romans 8,

the Gentiles were eagerly awaiting this day, longing to be delivered from their sinful desires and to join the remnant of Jews who had embraced Christ.

All three of these notable figures rejected the notion that the new heavens and earth had anything to do with a renovation of the world on the Day of Judgment. Instead, they interpreted the new heavens and earth as a term describing a better state for the church militant. All three acknowledged that at the very least, the new heavens and earth received their first instantiation with the rise of 'gospel times' under the ministry of Christ and the apostles. Lightfoot was content to leave it at that; all occurrences of the new-heavens-and-earth language in Scripture spoke of first century events. Hammond added a second fulfillment by suggesting that the new heavens and earth of Revelation 21:1 depicted the thousand year period of Revelation 20, a period that commenced with Constantine. Owen allowed a dual fulfillment as well, one in the first century and one yet to be realized in the future. This future realization of a flourishing time for the church seized the minds of many in the seventeenth century. They viewed it as the coming millennium, a one thousand year time frame in which the kingdom of Christ would come to earth. The next chapter will explore their conceptions of the new heavens and earth.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE MILLENNIUM

As indicated in the previous chapter, one seventeenth-century approach to the biblical theme of the new heavens and earth was to treat the phrase metaphorically, as a figure of speech for momentous changes in the circumstances of the church. The new heavens and earth came into existence when “gospel times” replaced the Jewish rites and institutions of the Mosaic era. These times began with the ministry of Christ and apostles and culminated in the “last days” when Christ poured out his judgment for the Jews’ unbelief in AD 70 when the Roman armies obliterated Jerusalem and its temple. Henry Hammond allowed for a second fulfillment of the new heavens and the new earth, a one thousand year period beginning with Constantine’s reign. John Owen also accepted a second installment of the new heavens and earth, but he placed this installment in the not-to-distant future from his own day. He believed the new heavens and earth would come when the papacy was dethroned of its power. However, he fell short of equating the new heavens and earth with a coming millennial reign of Christ.

Owen’s exegetical reluctance was not mirrored by all of his colleagues. There were plenty of divines in the seventeenth century who accepted the idea that the new heavens and earth was a glorious one thousand year period for the church, a time *prior* to the final conflagration and eternal state.<sup>1</sup> Before investigating how they arrived at such a conclusion, a brief historical overview of the interpretation of the thousand years of

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<sup>1</sup> Not all who held to a future millennium adopted such an interpretation. For example, Johann Heinrich Alsted firmly held to a future golden age of the church but he believed the new heaven and earth would follow the millennium. His view will be examined at the end of the chapter.

Revelation 20:1-6 will provide a context from which to view its resurgence in the seventeenth century.<sup>2</sup>

The belief in a one thousand year reign of Christ and his saints on earth did not initially arise in the seventeenth century. Its roots reach down to the first centuries of the church's existence.<sup>3</sup> Although the extent to which millennialism—or chiliasm, as it was often called—permeated the early years of the church is difficult to ascertain, its presence cannot be disputed. Elements of chiliasm clearly appear in Papias, Justin, Irenaeus, Tertullian and Lactantius, men who lived from the end of the first century to the first third of the fourth century.<sup>4</sup> After considering a large number of early church writers, Kromminga draws the following conclusion:

The evidence is uniformly to the effect, that throughout the years from the beginning of the second century till the beginning of the fifth chiliasm, particularly of the pre-millenarian type, was extensively found within the Christian Church, but that it never was dominant, far less universal; that it was not

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<sup>2</sup> Several works covering the historical development of millennialism can be found. See Robert Clouse, "Christian Hope through History", Presence Ministries International [www.presence.tv/cms/christianhope\\_clouse.shtml](http://www.presence.tv/cms/christianhope_clouse.shtml) (accessed June 14 2004); Richard Kyle, *Awaiting the Millennium: A History of End-Time Thinking* (Leicester: Inter-varsity Press, 1998; reprint, 1999); Michael J. St. Clair, *Millenarian Movements in Historical Context* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1992). For focused attention on seventeenth-century English millennial thought see Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium* (Portland: Four Courts Press, 2000); Joy Gilsdorf, *The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. John Murrin, Outstanding Studies in Early American History (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1989) and James De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea: Millennial Expectations in the Rise of Anglo-American Missions 1640-1810* (Netherlands: J. H. Kok N. V. Kampen, 1970).

<sup>3</sup> Perhaps still one of the best detailed historical discussions of the millennium appears in an older work by D. H. Kromminga who works predominantly with primary sources. See D. H. Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church: Studies in the History of Christian Chiliasm* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1945). The survey above relies heavily on his extended discussion.

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho*, 80-81. It is worth noting that Justin, in support of a thousand year reign of Christ in Jerusalem, quotes Isaiah 65:17-25 in support of his position. Since the Lord declares he will create a new heavens and earth in 65:17, it is clear that Justin also took the new heaven and earth—at least in this Isaianic text—as a reference to an earthly reign of Christ and the saints. Irenaeus' views can be found in *Against Heresies*, 5.26-36.

without opponents, and that its representatives were conscious of being able to speak only for a party in the church.<sup>5</sup>

This partial acceptance of millenarianism slowly disappeared so that “[a]fter Augustine chiliasm seems to have disappeared from the ancient Church.”<sup>6</sup> Kromminga surmises that a combination of several factors produced chiliasm’s departure: its lack of able champions to espouse it, the theological knowledge that survived the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire was largely Augustinian due to Augustine’s disciple, Gregory the Great, and the emergence of more fundamental doctrinal problems to debate, e.g., Pelagianism.<sup>7</sup>

Whatever the causes for the doctrine’s eclipse, Augustine’s interpretation of the thousand years would dominate the medieval church.<sup>8</sup> He opposed a future earthly reign of Christ and the saints because of what he believed were excessive preoccupations on the part of chiliasm’s exponents with the physical pleasures that would be enjoyed during the millennium.<sup>9</sup> Hence, he offered his own interpretation of Revelation chapter twenty,

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<sup>5</sup> Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church*, 51. It should be noted that the terms ‘pre-millennarian’, ‘a-millennarian’, and ‘post-millennarian’ are not found in documents until after the seventeenth century. It is of course anachronistic and sometimes misleading to describe a former age’s ideas using categories unknown to it. On the other hand, historical theology has not produced terms that handily describe the varying views on the thousand years that existed prior to the eighteenth century. In former eras, those who believed in a glorious reign of Christ and the saints on earth prior to the final judgment were known simply as ‘chiliasts,’ ‘millennarians,’ or ‘millennaries.’ This usage will be retained in this dissertation.

<sup>6</sup>Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church*, 29. Though aware of other forces and influences leading to the eclipse of chiliasm in the ancient church, Kromminga highlights the importance of Origen, Constantine and Augustine in this disappearance.

<sup>7</sup> Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church*, 112-113.

<sup>8</sup> Kromminga states that premillennialism was absent in the Middle Ages. See Kromminga, *The Millennium in the Church*, 164.

<sup>9</sup> *City of God*, 20.7. Augustine admits he once held to a coming millennium and wouldn’t object to the position if it emphasized that spiritual delight would be the chief pleasure of this time rather than carnal ones.



an interpretation denying a literal thousand year kingdom of Christ yet to come and advocating a spiritualized interpretation in which the thousand years stands either for the latter part of the sixth millennium since creation, or it stands for the entire history of the world.<sup>10</sup>

Although Augustine's eschatology held the upper ground during medieval times, that ground was large enough to allow for modifications to his thought. Resting on Augustinian foundations, the most striking development during the Middle Ages was the appearance of a post-millennialism that argued for a literal interpretation of the thousand years. However, unlike early chiliasm, this post-millennialism claimed the thousand years had already begun and with its completion Christ would return.<sup>11</sup>

During the Reformation, eschatological interest grew. The identification of the papacy with the biblical Anti-Christ became standard fare among Protestants of all stripes. Since the downfall of the Antichrist was widely considered an end-time occurrence, the diminishment of papal power during and after the Reformation, coupled with the recovery of what was considered pure Christian doctrine, provided sufficient reason for some Protestants to believe the coming of Christ was imminent. The Apocalypse of John received greater scrutiny and many commentaries appeared attempting to draw parallels between historical events and John's visions. Among those who accepted a literal interpretation of the thousand years of Revelation 20, an exegetical debate arose as to whether those thousand years were already past or were yet to be realized in the future. Initially, the belief that a literal millennium had already occurred,

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<sup>10</sup> *City of God*, 20.7.

<sup>11</sup> Differences existed as to when the millennium had begun so the time of its completion varied as well.

or was soon to be finished, held the dominant position. However, the belief in a future millennium emerged in the sixteenth century and flourished in the seventeenth, especially in England.<sup>12</sup>

The seventeenth-century millennialists were not ignorant of church history. They had read the church fathers and frequently cited the chiliasts among them to defend against the notion that chiliasm was a new doctrine. They were also aware of the doctrine's fall into disfavor due to hedonistic expectations that sometimes accompanied its elucidation and due to the debacle at Munster in 1534.<sup>13</sup> But by the end of the sixteenth century, millennialism had rebounded from relative obscurity and had gained a strong foothold in England. In 1645 the Scot Robert Baillie, who vehemently opposed chiliastic interpretations of Scripture, commented in a letter to William Spang that "The most of the chief divines here, not only Independents, but others, such as Twisse, Marshall, and Palmer, and many more, are express Chiliasts."<sup>14</sup> English millennialists, however, were

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<sup>12</sup> John Piscator (1546-1625), prolific commentator on Scripture, was a well-known scholar on the Continent who adopted the view that the millennium had yet to occur. Robert Clouse also mentions Alfonso Corrado of Mantua as another early adopter of this position. See his article "Johann Heinrich Alsted and English Millennialism," *Harvard Theological Review* 62, (1963), 38.

<sup>13</sup> The incident at Münster tended to make people skittish about any ideas of a kingdom of God on earth. But even prior to that event, opposition to millennial leanings is evidenced in Article 17 of the Augsburg Confession which reads in part, "They condemn also others who are now spreading certain Jewish opinions, that before the resurrection of the dead the godly shall take possession of the kingdom of the world, the ungodly being everywhere suppressed."

<sup>14</sup> Robert Baillie, *The Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie, A.M.: Principal of the University of Glasgow. M.Dc>Xxxvii.--M.Dc.Lxii.*, 3 vols., vol. 2 (Edinburgh: Alex. Lawrie & Co. Printers to Her Majesty, 1841), 313. The location of "here" is London, England as Baillie was one of five Scottish divines sent to the Westminster Assembly. Baillie also wrote a lengthy refutation of the doctrine of the Brownists and the Independents of his day. In this work, he assigns chiliastic thinking to the Independents and he labors to dismantle its arguments. See Robert Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time Wherein the Tenets of the Principall Sects, Especially of the Independents, Are Drawn Together in One Map, for the Most Part in the Words of Their Own Authours, and Their Main Principles Are Examined by the Touch-Stone of the Holy Scriptures / by Robert Baylie* (London : Printed for Samuel Gellibrand ..., 1645), 224-252, *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. Ironically, Richard Baxter claims the principal millennialists were conformists. See Richard Baxter, *The Glorious Kingdom of Christ, Described and Clearly Vindicated against the Bold Asserters of a Future Calling and Reign of the Jews, and 1000 Years*

not monolithic; they differed over many of the details about the millennial period.<sup>15</sup> However, a substantial case can be made that the many millennialists construed the biblical texts that refer to a new heaven and earth, or texts that refer to a change in creation's state, as descriptions of events that will obtain at the beginning or throughout the millennium rather than as events that wrap up human history at the commencement of the eternal state. The burden of this chapter will be to substantiate this claim by examining the writings of several key English millennialists of the seventeenth century.

Before starting this task, three additional notes should be made. First, the number of English writers who accepted a future fulfillment of the thousand years was considerable and so the problem arises as to which scholars should be studied as representative of the whole. Fortunately, authors from the seventeenth century occasionally listed the leading lights of this position and provide today's historian with the names of thinkers who made a lasting mark on their generation.<sup>16</sup> The writers to be examined below were recognized during the seventeenth century as principal advocates of a future millennium.

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*before the Conflagration and the Asserters of the 1000 Years Kingdom after the Conflagration : Opening the Promise of the New Heaven and Earth and the Everlastingness of Christ's Kingdom against Their Debasing It, Who Confine It to 1000 Years ... : Answering Mr. Tho. Beverley ... In His Twelve Principles and Catechisms, &C. / by Richard Baxter* (London : Printed by T. Snowden, for Thomas Parkhurst ..., 1691), n.p. (see his opening letter to Increase Mather), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding millennialism of the seventeenth century Gribben writes, "The tradition developed through a tangled web of publications engaged in a dynamic and impassioned debate, quoting and refuting one another with inter-textual abandon." See Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical Millennialism in the Trans-Atlantic World, 1500-200* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 47. Baillie confirms Gribben's assessment when he observes that the chiliasts of his day "doe differ all of them among themselves in sundry materiall conclusions, the old Chiliasts from the late, and the late from one another *Alstedius, Mead, Archer, Goodwin, Burrowes, Matton*; every one of them have their proper conceits wherein they differ from the rest, as will be found by any who compare their Writings." See Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time*, 234.

<sup>16</sup> It is often opponents of a position that provide the best catalog of names. The lengthy title of a work by Thomas Hayne provides such a list as does Robert Baillie—both from the 1640s. Richard Baxter provides a comparable list near the end of the century. See the title page of Thomas Hayne, *Christs Kingdome on Earth, Opened According to the Scriptures. Herein Is Examined, What Mr. Th. Brightman, D.*

Second, rightly interpreting the new heavens and earth was not the catalyst that spawned so many literary efforts among millennialists. The catalyst was the thousand years of Revelation 20. Hence, among the defenders of a future millennium, any mention of the new heaven and earth tends to be embedded within discussions of the millennium itself.<sup>17</sup> What follows is an attempt to cull from those discussions their exegetical foundation for equating the millennium with the new heavens and earth.

Third, it was noted in the Introduction that a more optimistic tone began to emerge in England at the start of the seventeenth century with respect to the future. Surely the millenarians embodied this hopeful attitude more than any other set of thinkers of the age. To expect a protracted earthly period of prosperity for the church was the height of optimism and many millenarians not only expected this period, but believed it would arrive before the century lapsed. This idea became very prevalent after Archbishop Laud was deposed and censorship collapsed in the early 1640s.<sup>18</sup> Millenarian literature poured

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*J. Alstede, Mr. I. Mede, Mr. H. Archer, the Glympse of Sions Glory, and Such as Concurr in Opinion with Them, Hold Concerning the Thousand Years of the Saints Reign with Christ, and of Satans Binding: Herein Also Their Arguments Are Answered. Imprimatur; Ia. Cranford. Feb. 12. 1644* (London, : Printed by Ric. Cotes for Stephen Bowtell, and are to bee sold at his shop at the signe of the Bible in Popes-head Alley, 1645), *Early English Books Online*, British Library; Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time*, 224, and Baxter, *The Glorious Kingdom of Christ*, n.p. [See Baxter's letter to Increase Mather for the list].

<sup>17</sup> An exception to this is the book by Thomas Burnet. His main focus is the history of the planet earth itself. One discovers he believes in a future millennium through his discourse on the new heaven and earth and not the other way around. See Thomas Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth, and of All the General Changes Which It Hath Already Undergone, or Is to Undergo Till the Consummation of All Things* (London : Printed by R.N. for Walter Kettilby, 1697), 130 of Book Four, *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library.

<sup>18</sup> Laud became archbishop of Canterbury in 1633 and held the post until his arrest in 1640 for treason. A strong supporter of Charles I, he was an autocratic churchman whose attempts to enforce a rigid uniformity on the church and his perceived dalliances with Roman Catholicism alienated both Puritans and more moderate Anglicans. He used the infamous Star Chamber to regulate what books could be printed. In 1637, the Star Chamber issued a decree regarding printing. Its first declaration states "That no person or persons whatsoever shall presume to Print, or cause to bee printed...any Seditious, Schismaticall or offensive Bookes or Pamphlets, to the scandal of Religion, or the Church, or the Government...." Item four forbids the publication of any material "that is contrary to the Christian Faith, and the Doctrine and

from the presses, some of it proclaiming that the English civil war was preparatory to the commencement of the millennium.

### Thomas Brightman

Thomas Brightman (1562-1607), a Cambridge divine, exerted considerable influence on his generation with the publication of his commentary on Revelation.<sup>19</sup>

Although all of his works were published posthumously, his eschatological ones had the most lasting impact.<sup>20</sup> Clouse claims his Revelation commentary was not only popular but offered “the first cautious modification of the traditional Augustinian eschatology” and that a good deal of Brightman’s ideas on eschatology became “the normal view of

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Discipline of the Church of *England....*” Parliament abolished the Star Chamber in 1641, intending to institute its own form of censorship but its effort was in vain. See *A Decree of Starre-Chamber Concerning Printing, Made the eleventh day of July last past* (London: Imprinted at London by Robert Barker, Printer to the Kings most Excellent Maieftie: And by the Assignes of *John Bill*, 1637), n.p., *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library.

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns, That Is, the Apocalyps of S. Iohn Illustrated Vvith an Analysis & Scolions Where the Sense Is Opened by the Scripture, & the Events of Things Foretold, Shewed by Histories. Hereunto Is Prefixed a Generall View: And at the End of the 17. Chapter, Is Inserted a Refutation of R. Bellarmine Touching Antichrist, in His 3. Book of the B. Of Rome. By Thomas Brightman* (Amsterdam : Printed by Iudocus Hondius & Hendrick Laurens, 1611), *Early English Books*, University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign Campus) Library. This commentary was republished in 1615, 1616 and 1644. In this dissertation both the 1615 and 1616 editions will be used: Thomas Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation That Is, the Reuelation of St. Iohn Opened Clearly with a Logically Resolution and Exposition. Wherein the Sense Is Cleared, out of the Scripture, the Euent Also of Thinges Foretold Is Discused out of the Church-Historyes. By Thomas Brightman* (Anno Dni. imprinted at Amsterdam : [S.n.], 1615), *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library; Thomas Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohn Illustrated with an Analysis & Scholions Wherein the Sence Is Opened by the Scripture, & the Euent of Things Forê-Told, Shewed by Histories. The Third Edition Corrected & Amended, with Supply of Many Things Formerly Left Out. By Thomas Brightman* (Imprinted at Leyden : By Iohn Class [i.e. J. Claesson van Dorpe, 1616), *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library.

<sup>20</sup> In addition to the commentary on Revelation, publishers also produced his commentary on Daniel 11:26-12:13, and his prophecies regarding the church’s fortunes in Germany, Holland and Scotland. The latter work was published no less than four times in the turbulent decade of the 1640s—1641, 1642, 1643 and 1650.

English Protestant commentators in the seventeenth century.”<sup>21</sup> Before examining Brightman’s exposition of the new heavens and earth found in Revelation 21, a brief summary of his understanding of the thousand years mentioned in chapter 20 will set the stage for his comments on chapter 21.

In Revelation 20, John sees an angel descend from heaven with a chain and a key to the abyss. The angel seizes the dragon and imprisons him in the abyss for one thousand years, preventing him from deceiving the nations. Saints are resurrected and reign with Christ during the thousand years. Following this, the dragon, or Satan, is released and he deceives Gog and Magog so that they rise up against God’s people. Fire from heaven destroys Gog and Magog, and all who opposed God’s people are thrown into the lake of burning sulfur forever.

Brightman maintains that Revelation 20 presents two historical summaries—a summary history of the devil’s three eras or “moments” in the world in verses 1-3 and 7-10 and a summary history of the church during these moments in verses 4-6.<sup>22</sup> In the first moment, the devil is apprehended; in the second moment he is bound, and in the third moment he is released. Brightman dates the first moment from the “dayes of John, and some what before untill the raigne of Constantine the Great...”<sup>23</sup> The second moment commences when the angel—Constantine the Great—comes down from heaven

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<sup>21</sup> Clouse, "Johann Heinrich Alsted and English Millennialism," 59, 60. Claims of being ‘first’ are notoriously difficult to demonstrate, but later commentators sympathetic to millennialism frequently cite Brightman when amassing support for their own expositions. Clouse’s claim that much of Brightman’s eschatology was the “normal view” of English Bible scholars in the seventeenth century is an overstatement given the varieties of millennialism that developed and the rigorous opposition that all millennialists faced.

<sup>22</sup>Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1033.

<sup>23</sup>Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1037. Before John, the devil was free to “turne all upside downe at his pleasure” during the time of the primitive church.

and binds the devil (Revelation 20: 1-2).<sup>24</sup> John's vision depicts the angel as possessing a great chain which represented "the foundations that he [Constantine] layed for the Christian liberty to be built, with which he held the *Dragon* as it were tied in chaines during a long succession of Christian Emperours so that he could not stirre himselfe to make such troubles against the Church as he had done."<sup>25</sup> The termination of pagan persecutions of the Church under Constantine marks the beginning of the first of two thousand year periods and Brightman believes it ended around 1300.<sup>26</sup> This ends the second era of the devil.

The third moment of the devil begins when the devil is released for a season to deceive Gog and Magog. Brightman equates this release with the rise of the Ottoman Empire or "Barbarous Turks."<sup>27</sup> He posits that they not only wreaked havoc against the false church, i.e., papal Rome, but also against the true church for the space of 390 years.<sup>28</sup>

The experience of the church during these three moments of the devil is laid out in Revelation 20:4-6. During the first period, from the Apostle John to Constantine, was

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<sup>24</sup> Brightman tells us the identity of the angel is given in earlier chapters of Revelation. He is the "Male Childe of the Church" who waged war against heathen Roman emperors." Brightman cites Revelation 18:1 where another angel is said to come down from heaven. He thinks the two angels are the same person—Constantine.

<sup>25</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1036. Brightman was not alone in taking Constantine the Great as the angel that binds the dragon. This was a fairly common view in the seventeenth century. The thousand years were taken, contrary to Augustine's way of thinking and much of medieval theology's after him, as literal years. So many believed in a literal millennial period but they understood that period to have already transpired.

<sup>26</sup> Unlike many of his contemporaries, Brightman held to *two* literal one thousand year periods. As already noted, the first extended from 300-1300; the second from 1300 to 2300.

<sup>27</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1041.

<sup>28</sup> The 390 years is based on his interpretation of the 42 months, three and one-half days of Revelation 11.

a time of great sorrow and trouble. It “was the time wherein the sword, flames, tortures, and all kind of bodily torments did make havock of the Godly.”<sup>29</sup> During the second period of the devil, the church enjoyed rest from state-sponsored persecution.<sup>30</sup> The emperors and kings became protectors of the church instead of persecutors of it. The third period of the devil commenced with his release around 1300 and would continue until his demise. The time of the devil’s release is congruent with the beginning of the second one thousand year period. In these second thousand years, biblical truth will continue, although Brightman is unsure if at the end of these thousand years the truth will be eclipsed like it was in the previous thousand years.<sup>31</sup> He does believe that in the 300 years since the beginning of the second thousand years “the truth doth gett ground & strength every day more, blessed be God for it.”<sup>32</sup> The truth among the Gentiles will last for another seven hundred years. Brightman, believing in a future conversion of the Jews, claims there is no way of knowing if that conversion will extend this period of the truth. In the meantime, the Church is “in her warfaring estate, she must keepe in tents,

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<sup>29</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1042.

<sup>30</sup> Brightman thinks the binding of Satan did not end Satan’s influence. Since the devil was bound, the beast took his place from the beginning of Constantine’s reign (Revelation 13:2). The beast was the devil’s “*Vicar* in his place when he was away” to bring trouble against the Church. The beast’s activity has been extant since Constantine.

<sup>31</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1051. Brightman held that at the end of the first thousand years, the power and errors of the papacy had increased to the point of almost extinguishing the truth. The first resurrection refers to the beginnings of the Reformation just after 1300 with the advent of men such as Marsilius Pataninus, John de Ganduno and John Wycliffe. Brightman puts it this way: “The truth should returne into the world more and should make a glorious shew now at last, and the elect should flocke a pace every where to the light thereof when it should breake forth. Which eger desire and endeavour of theirs is called the first resurrection, namely in respect of a second of which there is speach made [in] vers. 12.” See Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1047.

<sup>32</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Iohns*, 1051.



and is to wrestle with many adversities.”<sup>33</sup> The church awaits the destruction of papal Rome and the Turks.<sup>34</sup> In defense of his position, Brightman says Papias, Irenaeus, Justinus, Tertullian, Lactantius and, to a degree, Augustine wrote of this kingdom, that is, this second thousand year kingdom. He thinks some of them spoke too much of the “bodily delights” of it but this is only because they used corporeal things to serve as shadows of spiritual delights.<sup>35</sup>

In sum, Brightman believed Revelation twenty revealed two literal millennia, the first from Constantine to about 1300 and the second from 1300 to 2300. Although the bulk of the second millennium was yet to be realized, he believed approximately one-third of it had transpired by the time he wrote the commentary.

The preceding explanation of Revelation 20 permits a clearer understanding of Brightman’s interpretation of the new heaven and earth which appears in chapter 21. Rather than viewing the two chapters as occurring sequentially, Brightman maintains the twenty-first chapter is a further description of a segment of chapter 20. In Revelation 21:1, John sees a vision of a new heaven and earth, the first heaven and earth and sea having passed away. A new Jerusalem descends from heaven and a voice announces that the dwelling of God is now with men. The former things—death, mourning, crying, pain—have passed away (Revelation 21:2-4). Brightman is very clear that this vision does not apply to the eternal heavenly life of the saints, but is still describing life on

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<sup>33</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Johns*, 1053.

<sup>34</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Johns*, 1061.

<sup>35</sup> Brightman, *The Reuelation of S. Johns*, 1052.

earth; as he puts it, the Holy Spirit “is still entreating of matters to be done upon earth...” and those matters “shall be seene openly in the world with in these fewe yeares.”<sup>36</sup>

His defense of this position rests on a text considered in the previous chapter—Hebrews 12:26: “At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.” Brightman argues that the shaking of heaven and earth means “*to abrogate the old manner of worshipping God, and to cast off[f] the old People.*”<sup>37</sup> But what manner of worship and what people does Brightman have in mind? Brightman says that in the Hebrews text, *heaven* symbolizes the Jewish temple and its rites. The shaking of heaven signifies the disappearance of that form of worship.<sup>38</sup> The word *earth* in Scripture generally represents humankind generally, but in Hebrews it has reference to the Jewish people who practiced the old way of worshipping God via their temple. The shaking of the earth is the removal of Israel from their land. The shaking of the heaven and earth recorded by the writer of Hebrews stemmed from the coming of Christ and his instituting a new way of approaching God. Since the Jews did not accept the ministry of Christ, God removed both their worship and their nation.

Now Brightman argues that the meaning of heaven and earth in Revelation 21 parallels their use in Hebrews.<sup>39</sup> When God says he will create a new heaven and earth in

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 873.

<sup>37</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 873-874. The similarity of this interpretation of Hebrews 12:26 with those of Owen and Hammond surveyed in the previous chapter is transparent.

<sup>38</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 874.

<sup>39</sup> Brightman writes, “And the usuall manner of speaking thorough out this Booke, hath not varied a whit from this signification of the words; where heaven is putt for the more pure Church; the earth for the degenerating citizens thereof, as we have seene in their due places.” See Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 874.

Revelation 21:1, he has in mind a new state of the church and a new condition for the Jews. At Christ's first advent, God shook heaven and earth;

so againe, when it shall seeme good unto him to have mercy upon that forlorne forsaken Nation, and to make them pertakers of Salvation by Christ, he shall darken the former Glory of heaven and Earth, by making the dignity and honour of the newe people to be so glorious, as if he had created all things newe againe.<sup>40</sup>

In other words, the shaking of heaven and earth in Hebrews 12:26 and the coming of the new heaven and earth that John sees in Revelation 21:1 indicate similar kinds of events but not historically identical ones. Brightman thinks the Hebrews text was fulfilled with the first coming of Christ while John's vision was yet to be fulfilled. Yet both fulfillments involved the earthly conditions of the church and the Jews. Obviously, in both texts, "heaven" and "earth" are figures of speech and not terms to be interpreted literally.

Revelation 21:1 adds that the first heaven and earth had passed away. Brightman works at length to decipher the meaning of this phrase.<sup>41</sup> The passing away of the earth poses little problem for Brightman for he believes the Holy Spirit has made it abundantly clear that that signifies the end of the Roman church.<sup>42</sup> But what does it mean to say that the first heaven passed away? Brightman offers two possible interpretations. Initially, Brightman equates the first heaven with the "reformed Church" or "more pure Church

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<sup>40</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 874. Brightman quotes Isaiah 65:17 as the prophetic anticipation of Revelation 21:1.

<sup>41</sup> At the end of his exposition of this phrase Brightman confesses his "carefulnes of satisfying the minds of mē that love the truth, hath made me thus to search into every corner to the uttermost of my power" to determine the correct interpretation. He leaves it to the reader to decide which interpretation is to be preferred. See Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 878.

<sup>42</sup> He doesn't explain why the *new* earth represents the Jews while the *first* earth represents the Roman church.

among the Gentiles”<sup>43</sup> and hence the question becomes in what sense will the future conversion of the Jews cause the pure reformed church to pass away? Does this mean the Gentile church will be displaced by the conversion of the Jews? Once the fullness of the Gentiles has been reached (cf. Romans 11:15) will the Gentile church then become estranged from Christ? Brightman thinks this is clearly *not* the case since later in chapter twenty-one it is obvious that the Gentile church will abound even after the restoration of the Jews to faith in Christ. Clearly, John and Paul agree that the salvation of the Jews will institute a change in the Gentile church but the change will be positive. For “the fullness of the Gētiles is not a certaine ende of their beleaving at the calling of the Jewes...but that there shall be a more plentifull coming in of al the nations of the Earth, that shal obeye the kingdome of Christ....”<sup>44</sup> Yet if all nations will be under Christ, then “howe shall [the] first heaven that is the more pure Church among the Gentiles passé away?”<sup>45</sup> Brightman posits that maybe a distinction needs to be drawn between the nations that still did not know anything about Christ and those that did—i.e., Christian Europe. This distinction permits both a flourishing Gentile church during the time of the Jewish restoration as recorded in Revelation 21 and it allows the first heaven—Christian Europe—to pass away by abandoning the true faith. Brightman thinks that in his own day signs of decay in religion were everywhere: “There are many feareful signes and evident prognostications, that this departure of the glory of God from amongst us, is at

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<sup>43</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 874, 875.

<sup>44</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 875. Several Old Testament prophecies are quoted by Brightman here to support the notion that one day the nations of the earth will be under the dominion of Christ.

<sup>45</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 875.

the very doors....”<sup>46</sup> So this is one way of understanding the passing away of the first heaven. It represents Christian Europe, whose commitment to Christ will wane even as other nations of the earth will gladly receive him.

Brightman offers another interpretation that is far less foreboding to Europe and falls in line with Lightfoot and Owen’s understanding of the new heaven and earth in 2 Peter 3. Rather than referencing the Gentiles in any fashion, the new heaven and earth and the passing away of the first heaven and earth speaks solely to Jewish circumstances. In the past and present, according to Brightman, Jews have greatly hoped for a restoration of their Temple and their form of worship, the latter being the first form of worship delivered by God to his people. But upon their conversion to Christ and restoration to earthly prominence, the lure of that first form of worship will disappear entirely for it will be seen to have been superseded by the ministry of Christ.<sup>47</sup> So the passing of the first heaven and earth is the passing of Jewish desires for a return to the institutions and forms of worship promulgated under the Old Testament Law. This attitude will emerge when the Jews are converted en masse. Brightman sees these two interpretations as hinging on whether the first heaven and earth is to be understood as a distinction between Jews and Gentiles or a distinction between “the Legal and Christian Jewes, themselves.”<sup>48</sup> Rather than push for one them as the better interpretation, Brightman leaves the decision up to the reader.

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<sup>46</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 877.

<sup>47</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 877-878.

<sup>48</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 878.

Brightman continues to allegorize chapter 21 in his interpretation of the phrase “there was no more sea.” This phrase refers to the false doctrine that will no longer be extant in the second millennium, but it’s just not any false doctrine. John is referring to Jewish false doctrine;

The Jewes have a proper Sea of their owne evē til this daye, which is most grosse foule & dark, like to troubled waters, by reason of many forged & fained devises of their owne touching the Messias, the legal worship, the righteousnes of the Lawe, and many other heads of saving Doctrine, which shal be al of them so dried up at this daye, that there shal remaine never a droppe of the former Sea.<sup>49</sup>

The new Jerusalem that descends out of heaven is symbolic of a pure Gentile church which will be upon the earth at this time.<sup>50</sup> Brightman posits two Jerusalems to be precise; the first is an earthly Jerusalem—described here in Revelation 21—and the second is the heavenly Jerusalem that will remain in heaven.<sup>51</sup> The heavenly Jerusalem is the place Christ is preparing for the saints and to which the saints will one day go to forever be with him.<sup>52</sup> The Jerusalem that comes down to earth is heavenly in nature though not in location because heaven is the church’s inheritance and God will work in a singular manner to build it. Just as a city has multiple offices and departments, so too the church will have great diversity yet exhibit a most wondrous harmony and unity.<sup>53</sup> The image of the tabernacle is appropriate to a church “in her pilgrimage” and not a church at

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<sup>49</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 878.

<sup>50</sup> It is not clear if Jews are a part of this. Brightman says, “The Church of the Gentiles also, is that holy, newe and heavenly Jerusalem...But this Jerusalem of ours which is deformed & defiled with many errours & contentions, will make this of the Jewes that shall be most pure, to appeare as if it were a new one altogether.” Later he describes the new Jerusalem as “the whole multitude of the faithful”. See Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 878, 879.

<sup>51</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 878-879.

<sup>52</sup> Brightman quotes John 14:3, 17:24 and I Thessalonians 4:17 together to buttress this notion. See Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 879.

<sup>53</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 882.

rest in heaven.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, this church will not be beset by enemies or troubled by divisions for during this time it will be a visible copy of the heavenly kingdom.

The primary point to be garnered from this review of Brightman is that for him, the new heaven and earth of Revelation 21 is not a reference to a renovation of any cosmological objects or spaces of the material world but is a reference to improved circumstances for both the Gentile church and the conversion of the Jews during the final period of the Brightman's proposed second millennium. Hence, Brightman appears to be among the first English divines who interpreted the new heaven and earth as describing a period coincident with, or taking place within, a millennium that is penultimate to the eternal state.

Brightman's commentary on Revelation appeared first in 1611 and went through several reprintings in England in the years that followed. Few, if any, adopted his notion of two millennial periods. Instead the belief that one millennium lay wholly in the future, though that future was frequently thought to be imminent, gained steady ground.<sup>55</sup> However, many who revised Brightman's chronology of the millennium's inception nevertheless accepted his explanation of the new heaven and earth in the main while adding some other dimensions to it. Such a development is evident in the work of Joseph Mede.

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<sup>54</sup> Brightman, *A Reuelation of the Reuelation*, 882.

<sup>55</sup> Biblical expositors were not shy in setting dates in the seventeenth century. Many interpreted the turbulent events of their own times as the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. Some placed the beginning of the millennium at 1666 and saw England as playing a key part in the eschatological drama soon to unfold.

## Joseph Mede

Brightman may have been one of the first English divines to articulate millennial thinking in seventeenth-century England, but the case could be made that the Cambridge scholar Joseph Mede (1586-1639) was perhaps the most significant figure in the revival of millennial hopes in England.<sup>56</sup> The very first work he published was his *Clavis Apocalyptica*, a structural analysis of the book of Revelation which became very popular.<sup>57</sup> In this work, Mede sets forth a millennial scheme grounded on the belief that the visions of Revelation can be understood aright if one adopts a synchronic view of them.<sup>58</sup> After Mede died, his commentary on 2 Peter 3 was published in which he argues

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<sup>56</sup> Jeffrey Jue makes such a case in Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth: Joseph Mede (1586-1638) and the Legacy of Millenarianism*, Archives Internationales d'histoire des idées, 194 (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer, 2006). He argues that Mede's apocalyptic writings were "the most influential and universally respected." See Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth*, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica Ex Innatis Et Insitis Visionum Characteribus Eruta Et Demonstrata. Ad Eorum Usum Quibus Deus Amorem Studiūmq[ue] Indiderit Prophetiam Illam Admirandam Cognoscendi Scrutandique* (Cantabrigiae : [Printed by T. and J. Buck] impensis authoris, in gratiam amicorum, anno MDCXXVII, [1627]), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. This original publication only contained Mede's structural analysis of Revelation; it did not include commentary. In 1632, the work was reissued with commentary added. Both of these editions were published in Latin. English translations appeared in 1643 and 1650 as well as in several editions of his collected works. The 1643 English edition will be used in this chapter; Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation, Searched and Demonstrated out of the Naturall and Proper Characters of the Visions with a Coment Thereupon, According to the Rule of the Same Key / Published in Latine by the Profoundly Learned Master Joseph Mede ... ; Translated into English by Richard More ... ; with a Preface Written by Dr. Twisse Now Prolocutor in the Present Assembly of Divines*, ed. Richard More and William Twisse (Printed at London : by R.B. for Phil Stephens ..., 1643), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. Jue thinks the best theory to explain the translation and republication of the book, authorized as it was by the Long Parliament in 1643, was Parliament's desire to use it as a "propaganda piece in attacking the ecclesiastical establishment endorsed by Charles I." See Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth*, 34. Mede published his exegetical efforts on Revelation during his lifetime, while his other works on eschatology were published posthumously by those who had access to his papers.

<sup>58</sup> Not everyone, of course, agreed with Mede's synchronic approach, but the book's influence can be measured by the fact that almost fifty years after *Clavis Apocalyptica* appeared, the work was still being critiqued. See Richard Hayter's, *The Meaning of the Revelation, or, a Paraphrase with Questions on the Revelation of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Divine in Which the Synchronisms of Mr. Joseph Mede, and the Expositions of Other Interpreters Are Called in Question, and a New Exposition Given of the Prophecies of the Revelation, Never Heard of before, nor Extant in Any Author Whatsoever, from the Sixth Chapter to the Eighteenth, with Variety of Reasons for the Exposition / by Richard Hayter*, ed. Joseph



that Peter wrote of events to be fulfilled in this world prior to the eternal state.<sup>59</sup> As the following analysis will reveal, Mede does not interpret the new heavens and earth in 2 Peter and Revelation in an identical manner. In spite of this dissimilar approach, the case can be made that he believed the new heavens and earth would be coincident with an earthly millennium.

*Mede: A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*

Mede's interpretation of the new heaven and earth is easily detected in his commentary on 2 Peter 3. He divides his commentary into two separate sections; the first provides a paraphrase of the chapter with some added comments at selected locations, while the second part is an essay elucidating the nature and extent of the fire which is to renovate the earth. The main burden of the first part is to argue that the coming of Christ will bring about a restoration of the world. The second part deals with the means by which that restoration will occur.

Believing that Peter was writing to fellow Jews, Mede begins his discourse on 2 Peter chapter 3 by reminding his readers that Peter believed what he wrote was in line with the Hebrew prophets. Hence, Peter is merely reiterating that which had already been proclaimed in the Old Testament—the Messiah will return and the heavens and earth will

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Mede (London : Printed by J.R. for John Williams ..., 1675), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library.

<sup>59</sup> Joseph Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter Concerning the Day of Christs Second Comming Described in the Third Chapter of His Second Epistle as Also How the Conflagration or Destruction of the World by Fire, Whereof Saint Peter Speaks, and Especially of the Heavens Is to Be Understood / by Ioseph Mede* (London : Printed by R. Bishop for Samuel Man ..., 1642), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. This work also was reprinted several times, appearing again individually in 1649, 1650, and 1652 and also as part of the collections of his works.

be renewed.<sup>60</sup> Peter notes that in the last days scoffers will question this ancient teaching, believing instead that creation will continue to labor on as it has since the beginning of time.<sup>61</sup> These scoffers are wrong for a day of judgment is coming.

Mede chooses to comment on this day of judgment and in so doing, he reveals his belief that this ‘day’ is actually one thousand years long. He paraphrases verse eight as follows: “*But whereas I mentioned (saith Saint Peter) the day of judgement, lest ye might mistake it for a short day, or a day of few houres, I would not, Beloved, have you ignorant, that one day (g) with the Lord is as a thousand yeers, and a thousand yeers as one day.*”<sup>62</sup> Mede’s paraphrase is an attempt to rebut those who think the judgment that will ensue upon Christ’s second coming will be of short duration and not a literal thousand years. Peter’s argument is that the day of judgment will not be a brief time but an actual one thousand years long from the perspective of humanity, while from God’s

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<sup>60</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 1. Mede specifically names Isaiah, Daniel and Malachi as prophets who wrote of Christ’s coming and subsequent restoration of the world.

<sup>61</sup> In his piece on 1 Timothy 4:1, Mede posits a distinction between “the last times in general” which correspond to the fourth kingdom of Daniel (the Roman Empire) and the “last times in special” which are the closing years of that fourth kingdom. He thinks the “last times in special” probably began somewhere between the middle of the fourth or fifth centuries and would last for 1260 years. These latter times are “the time of the Churches Apostasie under Antichrist” as spoken of by Paul in 1 Timothy 4:1. Consistent with the majority of Mede’s contemporaries, Mede thinks the Antichrist is the papacy. See Joseph Mede, *The Apostasy of the Latter Times in Which, According to Divine Prediction, the World Should Wonder after the Beast the Mystery of Iniquity Should So Farre Prevaile over the Mystery of Godlinesse, Whorish Babylon over the Virgin-Church of Christ, as That the Visible Glory of the True Church Should Be Much Clouded the True Unstained Christian Faith Corrupted the Purity of True Worship Polluted, or, the Gentiles Theology of Daemons I.E. Inferiour Divine Powers, Supposed to Be Mediatours between God and Man : Revived in the Latter Times Amongst Christians in Worshipping of Angels, Deifying and Invocating of Saints, Adoring and Templing of Reliques, Bowing Downe to Images, Worshipping of Crosses, &C : All Which Together with a True Discovery of the Nature, Originall, Progresse, of the Great, Fatall and Solemn Apotisy Are Cleared : Delivered in Publique Some Years since Upon I Tim. 4. 1,2,3 / by Joseph Mede*, Edited by William Twisse (London : Printed by Richard Bishop for Samuel Man ..., 1641), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>62</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 6-7. The (g) directs the reader to his exposition where he expands on the use of “day”.

perspective any length of time—a thousand years or one hundred thousand years—is but like a day is to us.<sup>63</sup> From God’s view, the day of judgment will be but a brief time, but from humanity’s view, it will be a thousand years.

Peter observes that the day of judgment had been delayed and Mede believes Peter provides the reason for God’s delay in verse nine, *viz.* God is patient “*towards us of the seed of Israel....*”<sup>64</sup> God’s patience was extended to Israel in order to provide the nation time to repent. Mede recalls that Peter had early on urged his kinsmen to repent so that they might be cleansed from sin and times of refreshing and restoration might come from the Lord (Acts 3:19). But Israel did not repent at that time and God had been patient with Israel “*not willing that any should perish at that day, but that the whole nation should come unto repentance....*”<sup>65</sup> Even though God could have granted repentance to the Jews soon after the death of Christ, God refrained from doing so “*untill they should have fulfilled a time of pittance for all the sins of their Nation*” committed from the inception of the nation to Jerusalem’s destruction.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, the Lord will return, in spite of what the scoffers say, judgment will fall and believers will experience a new heaven and earth as prophesied by Isaiah.<sup>67</sup>

Mede thinks Peter teaches not only that the one-thousand-year- long ‘day’ of judgment will come but that it will be accompanied by a renovation of the creation.

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<sup>63</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 8.

<sup>64</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 8.

<sup>65</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 8-9.

<sup>66</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 10. Mede directs the reader to Isaiah 65 and 66, the two chapters that contain references to God making a new heaven and earth.

Those scoffers who believed the creation has never undergone any change fail to remember the Flood during the days of Noah. Mede argues that whereas the Flood was a destruction that resulted in a “*degeneration of the creature*”, the destruction to come at the second advent of Christ will result in “*restauration and renovation*”.<sup>68</sup> The latter will be accomplished by fire in accordance with the words of the prophets Daniel, Isaiah and Malachi.<sup>69</sup>

Following his brief paraphrase and exposition of the chapter, Mede spends the remainder of the work on the fire that will be the instrumental cause of the renovation of the world. His first order of business is to instruct the reader as to the meaning of the two words “heavens” and “earth.” These two words, when joined in tandem, are a reference to the *mundus*, or world. Hence Peter uses the “world” as a synonym for “heavens and earth.” The Flood inundated “the world that then was” (2 Peter 3:6); the conflagration to come will burn “the heavens and the earth which are now” (2 Peter 3:7). Peter simply substitutes “heavens and earth” for “world”.<sup>70</sup>

This point leads to Mede’s second point which is that the world that was destroyed by the Flood is the same world that will be purged by fire. That world is “no

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<sup>68</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 6. Mede quotes excerpts from Daniel 7, Isaiah 66 and Malachi 4. He also thinks Isaiah 9:5 may speak of the same fiery destruction, but his explanation of why this may be the case involves his stating his approach to prophetic literature: “For the old Prophets for the most part speak of the comming of Christ *indefinitely* & in generall, without that distinction of first and second comming, which the Gospel out of *Daniel* hath more clearly taught us: And so consequently they spake of the things to be at Christs comming indefinitely and all together, which we who are now more fully informed by the Revelation of the Gospel, of a twofold comming, must apply each of them to his proper time: those things which befit the state of his first comming, unto it; and such things as befit the state of his second comming, to the second; and what befits both alike, may be applied unto both.” See Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 7.

<sup>70</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 11-12.

other than the sublunary world” composed of the air above the earth and the earth itself.<sup>71</sup> The restoration to come will not involve the realm of the stars and planets.<sup>72</sup> Mede’s third observation concerns the meaning of the Greek word στοιχῆια—“elements”—in verse 10.<sup>73</sup> The term does not refer to the four elements as described by the Greek doctors “whose termes and notions the Scripture useth not....”<sup>74</sup> Neither is the term synonymous with the heavens and earth since Peter distinguishes them. The key to the term’s meaning is noting the parallelism in Peter’s expression. Verse 10 reads, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Mede argues that just as the terms “heavens” and “earth” are parallel, so are the terms “elements” and “works”. Thus “elements” is a reference to “some furniture belonging to *coelum*” even as “works” refers to “buildings & whole furniture...belonging to *terra*.”<sup>75</sup> In scripture, the furniture of heaven is typically called “the host of them” as in Genesis 2:1. Scripture also affirms three orders of heaven—the empyreal, the ethereal and the sublunary—and ascribes inhabitants or hosts to each one. The empyreal heaven is the home of the angels and the departed saints. The

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<sup>71</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 12.

<sup>72</sup> As will be seen later, there was a debate in the seventeenth century regarding how much of God’s creation would need renovation.

<sup>73</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 13. Mede comments that Peter’s use of the term *earth* embraces two of the four physical elements found in Greek thought—earth and water. The term *heavens* would include the element of air. Fire, the fourth element, is that which is to burn the στοιχῆια. Thus στοιχῆια cannot refer to the four Greek elements.

<sup>75</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 14. Mede continues for several more paragraphs arguing the case that στοιχῆια refers to the host of heaven rather than the four Greek elements. He draws on linguistic arguments from Greek, Hebrew and Chaldean usage, as well as rabbinic studies.

ethereal heaven is populated with the stars and planets. The sublunary heaven contains visible clouds, fowl, meteors and invisible evil spirits. To which of these heavens does Peter refer?

Mede's answer is that Peter means only the sublunary heavens.<sup>76</sup> No one has ever thought the empyreal heaven would be subjected to destruction by fire and thus Mede feels no need to even consider the notion. He also fails to find any reason to believe the ethereal heaven is in Peter's purview. Given the size of this heaven and the number of heavenly bodies it contains, the fact that there are no grounds for believing the Fall or the Flood affected the ethereal heaven, and given the absence of any evidence that this heaven is infected by evil spirits, there exists no reasons to believe the ethereal heaven will be in need of restoration. Mede concludes that the sublunary heavens are "the subject of this conflagration."<sup>77</sup>

The conflagration will not consume the heavens and the earth but will purify them even as metal is refined by fire.<sup>78</sup> The end result is that the ethereal bodies—sun, moon, stars—will seem much brighter from earth, their light rays now passing through "a purer *Medium*" than before.<sup>79</sup> With regard to the heavens "passing away" (2 Peter 3:10), Mede contends the word is a Hebraism indicating a change from one state to another. Since the

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<sup>76</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 17.

<sup>77</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 17.

<sup>78</sup> Mede argues that Peter's use of the word *melting* is a metaphor for "refining and purifying." See Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 18.

<sup>79</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 18.

Flood did not annihilate the world but brought about a change of its condition, so too the fire will not obliterate the world but institute a change to a better state.<sup>80</sup>

Having argued that a renovated heaven and earth by fire is the “most literall and unforced exposition” of Peter’s meaning and “so to be preferred before any other,” Mede does not completely shut the door to a possible “*Propheticall* straine or scheme”.<sup>81</sup> Jesus used such a scheme when he spoke of his coming in Matthew 24:29: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken.” Mede believes a literal understanding of Jesus’ words will not do for the earth is of insufficient size to hold all the stars of heaven.<sup>82</sup> Jesus is clearly speaking metaphorically of great changes in human affairs.

If Peter’s discourse is understood in a similar manner, then the “heavens” signify the realm of authority and the host of these heavens would include false gods, idols and the various levels of human government from kings to magistrates. “Earth” refers to “the *Pezantry or vulgus hominum*” as well as to the animal kingdom that serves humankind.<sup>83</sup> Thus the great conflagration of which Peter speaks will destroy the wicked kingdoms of the world—their idols, rulers and subjects—along with the animal kingdom. If this

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<sup>80</sup> Mede wonders aloud about the effects of the fire on evil spirits that inhabit the sublunary heaven. He concludes that though the fire will not actually burn them, they will be “dejected from those high mansions, and bestowed in some lower place,” a position he thinks is supported by Jude 6—*And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.*

<sup>81</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 19.

<sup>82</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 19-20.

<sup>83</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 20. Mede goes on to cite several Old Testament prophecies that employ the terms *heaven(s)* and *earth* as synonyms for kingdoms and peoples (pp. 21-22).

scheme of interpretation is adopted, then the Flood offers a point of similarity as well as a point of contrast to the renovating fire. In both the Flood and the fire, the wickedness of humanity in all its forms and structures (Mede refers to this as *Mundus contentus*) was, and will be, destroyed. Conversely the physical heavens and earth (*Mundus continens*) were corrupted and distorted by the Flood but will be purged and renewed by the fire. Mede delegates this interpretation to “second place, because where the proper sense of the letter may be kept, I preferre it before any other.”<sup>84</sup> Whichever sense is embraced, Mede thinks one arrives at the same destination in the end—a world in which righteousness dwells.

Mede clearly interprets the new heavens and earth in this passage in literal and material terms. It was the physical creation that was affected by a literal flood in the time of Noah; it is the physical creation that will be affected by a literal fire during the future day of judgment. This fire will cleanse the earth and the sublunary heavens from corruption. The cleansing will occur at Christ’s second coming, an event that inaugurates a one thousand year day of judgment. It is therefore logical to infer that Mede connects the new heavens and earth with a forthcoming one thousand year period. Mede does not, however, explicitly identify this one thousand year period as a penultimate period prior to the final consummation of all things. Based on this commentary by Mede, one can conclude that Mede envisioned a restored heavens and earth as a signal event of a one thousand year period of judgment. What cannot be determined is if Mede envisaged this millennial period along the same lines as did some of his successors.

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<sup>84</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 23.



*Mede: Key of the Revelation*

Before turning directly to Mede's exposition of Revelation in this book, two features from the front matter of the 1643 English translation of the book illuminate the degree to which millennial thinking had infiltrated mainstream theology. The first feature is found in a list of three notices that precede the title page, of which the first two are relevant for the topic at hand. The first notice states that the Committee for Printing and Publishing of Books authorized Arthur Jackson to review the English translation of Mede's work on Revelation for the purposes of determining whether it should receive a license for printing.<sup>85</sup> The second notice is dated about fourteen months after the first and contains Jackson's evaluation of the work. Jackson approves the accuracy of the translation and commends it for bringing "much light for the understanding of many obscure Passages" in Revelation in spite of the fact that "*Medes* opinion concerning the thousand years of the seventh Trumpet be singular from that which hath beene most generally received by Expositors of best esteem . . . ."<sup>86</sup> Jackson himself obliquely registers his own rejection of Mede's position but because Mede's case is not overly brash or arrogant, Jackson thinks its printing "will not be perillous" but will be in the main profitable to readers.<sup>87</sup> Together these two comments by Jackson reveal that 1) at least among the recognized scholars, belief in a literal thousand year period of flourishing

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<sup>85</sup> Arthur Jackson was a Presbyterian minister and strong royalist. He devoted much of his life to writing biblical commentaries. As for licensing of books, the history of the press in England during the seventeenth century is not easy to unravel. Licensing/censorship was undertaken by Henry VIII, Edward, Elizabeth, James and Charles I. The church was frequently involved in those efforts. The Long Parliament created its own licensing system in 1640 but also had little success. Nevertheless, fear of repercussions no doubt kept some writers from publishing their works or prompted them to use pseudonyms.

<sup>86</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, title page.

<sup>87</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, title page.

for the church was still in the minority at the time, though it is hard to determine just how small that minority actually was, and 2) a fear existed of the possibility that millennial ideas might lead to “perillous” consequences if trumpeted too enthusiastically.<sup>88</sup>

The second feature of the front matter concerns the preface to the book written by William Twisse.<sup>89</sup> He observes that the church’s knowledge of Revelation had increased in recent times from the labors of many learned scholars and of these scholars Mede “surmounteth them all” having been able to glean from the insights of those who had preceded him.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, Twisse places Mede in a class of his own for he “hath many notions of so rare a nature, that I do not finde he is beholding to any other for them, but onely to his owne studiousnesse and dexteritie, with the blessing of God upon his labours.”<sup>91</sup> Such a comment from a scholar in his own right is indicative of Mede’s originality and influence. Twisse also wrote a preface to Mede’s *The Apostasy of the Latter Times* which had appeared two years earlier in 1641. In this preface, Twisse records that it was the topic of Christ’s kingdom which provided the avenue for Twisse and Mede to become acquainted, and eventually share, Mede’s understanding of a coming earthly kingdom.<sup>92</sup> Having heard a rumor that Mede had adopted the belief of an earthly kingdom of Christ, Twisse comments, “*And it seemed wondrous strange to us,*

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<sup>88</sup> This fear was not unfounded but was realized in the rise of the revolutionary ideas of the Fifth Monarchy.

<sup>89</sup> Twisse became a friend and correspondent with Mede. Twisse was a fellow at New College, Oxford and after a short stint as a chaplain to the daughter of James I, he spent his remaining years as a vicar, writing extensively against Arminianism. He was also appointed the prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly in 1643 though he apparently did not involve himself much in the heated debates.

<sup>90</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, A3. Twisse does not mention any of those predecessors by name.

<sup>91</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, "Preface".

<sup>92</sup> Mede, *The Apostasy of the Latter Times*, A3.

*that such an opinion should after so many hundred yeeres be revived; and that in so strange a manner, as now we finde, both amongst us, and amongst outlandish Divines.*”<sup>93</sup>

Clearly, Twisse did not think millennialism a conventional doctrine in 1641 nor did his peers or, for that matter, Mede himself.<sup>94</sup>

Mede’s own interpretation of Revelation brought a new approach to the book never before seen in other commentaries.<sup>95</sup> His “*Clavis*”, or key, to understanding the visions of the Apocalypse is the synchronic character of the visions. Rather than seeing the visions in the book as occurring sequentially one after another, Mede argues that certain visions, because they share similar symbols, actually deal with the same time period but from a slightly different perspective. Finding visions which contain comparable symbols allows the interpreter to synchronize the visions and produce an accurate chronology.<sup>96</sup> For example, Mede’s first synchronism asserts that the visions of

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<sup>93</sup> Mede, *The Apostasy of the Latter Times*, A3. Twisse continues the story and states that the rumor was confirmed as true by an acquaintance of Twisse and Twisse was so “stirred up” that he abandoned his current studies and wrote directly to Mede, offering arguments against his position. Mede responded and apparently Twisse was won over.

<sup>94</sup> The translator of Mede’s *The Key of the Revelation*, Rich More, adds his own preliminary note to the reader, confirming this assessment. He notes that though Mede’s understanding of the thousand years “*be not received by many as Orthodox*”, the manner in which Mede advances his position is characterized by “*moderation and subjection to the censure of the Church*” and thus is inoffensive even to those who disagree. See Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, “The Translator, to the Reader”. Mede admits to the reader that “I may seeme to have departed from the received opinion, concerning the day of the coming of Christ, immediately following the ruine of Antichrist.” See Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, Part 2, 122. He ends Part 2 of his commentary with these words: “*These things Reader I have thus discussed, not rashly affirmed. I leave the Whole matter to the Church to be determined by the Word of God: to the judgement Whereof, as it is meete, I doe willingly submit mine opinion concerning this mysterie.*” See Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, Part 2, 125.

<sup>95</sup> In tracing the conversion of Mede from a non-millennarian position to a millennarian one, Jue gives no evidence that Mede’s thought was shaped neither by other commentators nor by historical events. Rather Jue provides a convincing narrative that Mede’s millennial position evolved over a period of years, driven chiefly, if not solely, by exegetical concerns. See Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth*, 89-107.

<sup>96</sup> Mede synchronized not only the visions within Revelation alone, but also synchronized visions from multiple books, especially Daniel. According to Jue, Mede’s first synchronization was between the visions of Daniel 7 and Revelation 17. See Jue, *Heaven Upon Earth*, 101.

the woman in the wilderness, the seven-headed beast, the Gentiles overrunning the court and the ministry of the witnesses all are said to cover the same time period—1260 days—even though the visions are not found sequentially in the text.<sup>97</sup> Just before he begins the main body of his commentary, he warns interpreters who “go about to interpret the Revelation, as if the events everywhere should succeed one after another in the same order and course, as the visions are revealed.”<sup>98</sup>

Mede’s discovery of the synchronization of visions yielded an overall literary structure for the Apocalypse which compelled Mede to believe the seventh trumpet pertained to a millennium that was yet to be realized. The question remains, however, does Mede give any indication in this work that the millennium is the new heaven and earth mentioned in Revelation 21:1? Mede does not directly answer this question but indirect evidence points to a positive answer to it. In his treatment of the sixth synchronism, he argues that the bride of the Lamb in Revelation 19:7 is the new Jerusalem, the holy city of Revelation 21:2. That city will be surrounded by Satan’s armies at the end of the thousand years according to Revelation 20:9.<sup>99</sup> Hence it seems obvious that Mede takes the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7) and the descent of the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) as describing the identical event, an event which he thinks inaugurates the millennial period. In fact, Mede regards the entirety of chapter 21 as descriptive of the millennium.<sup>100</sup> Since verse one of the chapter reports

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<sup>97</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 2-3. He provides further evidence of the visions’ synchronicity beyond the 1260<sup>th</sup> day.

<sup>98</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 27.

<sup>99</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 24.

<sup>100</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 26.

John's vision of a new heaven and earth, then Mede must have viewed the new heaven and earth as a description of the millennium.<sup>101</sup>

Other evidence from *The Key of the Revelation* supports this conclusion. In his description of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-17), it becomes clear Mede interprets "heaven" and "earth" metaphorically. The sixth seal announces cataclysmic changes in the heavens and on the earth. He argues that such changes must not be understood literally but figuratively. He claims it is "the custom of the East" to speak in such language, and prophets and apostles followed that custom to describe divine activity.<sup>102</sup> For example, Mede argues that when the writer of Hebrews says God will shake heaven and earth (Hebrews 12:26), the writer is citing Haggai 2:6 which for Mede is a description of "the change and alteration [sic] of the kingdoms of the world...."<sup>103</sup> So the universal upheaval of nature narrated in the sixth seal and "els[e]wher in the Apocalyps" is not to be understood in the letter, but signifies massive changes in the kingdoms of the world, rather than to alterations of the physical cosmos.<sup>104</sup> In his

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<sup>101</sup> Mede thought chapter twenty-two was a description of Paradise with its tree of life. Of that chapter he writes, "And this is the end of the world and of the Revelation." See Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 26.

<sup>102</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 55.

<sup>103</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 56.

<sup>104</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 56-57. Mede attaches an appendix near the end of his discussion of the sixth seal justifying his utilization of Eastern literary tropes in his interpretation of Revelation. He comments, "When therefore wee willingly learne the use of words, and phrases in holy writ, from these Nations in time past bordering upon the *Hebrewes*, and more acquainted with their manners and use of speech; why should we disdain the same here in the significations of prophetical figures and representations?" See Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 64-65. Mede informs the reader he will employ this method throughout the work and provides several examples of ancient texts in which heavenly bodies represented human beings of varying ranks and stations.

description of the vials, Mede again iterates that the earth, sea, rivers and sun are symbolic of human persons or institutions.<sup>105</sup>

Mede consistently applies this allegorical approach to the interpretation of natural phenomena. In the early part of his comments on the trumpets he tells the reader to “observe that the Romane Empire with the rest of the Kingdomes of the world by the holy Ghost are tacitly resembled to the body of the world, the parts whereof are *Earth, Sea, Rivers, Heaven, Starres*.”<sup>106</sup> One would not be surprised then if Mede’s treatment of a new heaven and earth in Revelation 21 should follow the same pattern. The difficulty is that Mede does not ever directly discuss the new heaven and earth of 21:1 because something prevented him from completing the commentary in the manner he had started.<sup>107</sup> His extended commentary ends at the end of chapter 14. Topical essays over the remaining chapters ensue, albeit chapter 21 receives no treatment at all.

Still, in the essay on Revelation chapter 20, he plainly equates the thousand years mentioned there with the new heaven and earth mentioned by Peter in 2 Peter 3. The seventh trumpet commences the day of judgment which will actually last throughout the thousand years. This day of judgment, according to Mede, is the day of judgment

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<sup>105</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, Part 2, 113 and 115-117.

<sup>106</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 83. Again, “To conclude, the *Sunne* and other *Starres*, in the heaven of Sovereigne power, resembling the *Sunne*, the *Moone*, the *Starres* in the worldly heaven. This analogie being observed, the interpretation, as altogether confirmed with the figures of the old Prophets, will so be easie and altogether the most convenient to the matter in hand.”

<sup>107</sup> In Mede’s commentary, he inserts the following note to the reader following his exposition of chapter fourteen: “*Thus farre Reader I was able to proceed in this more large kinde of interpreting, and no further. In the rest which remaine, I only give Propheticall Essayes; to wit, part of those which three or foure yeeres agoe I had communicated privately to my friends upon most of the Apocalyptique visions.*” See Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, Part 2, 106. Mede does not provide the reason for his change of course.

explained by Peter in his letter to Jews.<sup>108</sup> They anticipated a “new forme of things to come” which Peter describes as a new heaven and earth promised by the prophets.<sup>109</sup> Since John had not yet written Revelation when Peter composed his letter, Peter must have had in mind Isaiah 65:17 and 66:22 “which promise surely whosoever shall read, I should marvell, if he should judge that it shall be fulfilled elsewhere, then on earth.”<sup>110</sup> Thus the promise of a new heaven and earth was a forecast of great changes in human society to be experienced during the earthly kingdom of Christ until, as Mede asserts, Christ delivers it back to the Father, never again to possess a kingdom of his own.<sup>111</sup>

To recap, Mede placed chapter 21 of Revelation as synchronous with the thousand years of chapter 20. Thus the new heaven and earth that John sees in Revelation 21:1 is not the eternal state but an earthly one. His interpretation of heavens and earth in other parts of his commentary is clearly metaphorical, signifying momentous changes in the kingdoms of the world. Assuming Mede would have remained consistent in the application of his hermeneutic had he finished his commentary, one could fairly draw the conclusion that he would have interpreted the new heaven and earth of chapter 21 allegorically as well.

Mede’s *Key to the Revelation* provides sufficient evidence to demonstrate that he took Revelation 21:1 as descriptive of the millennial state. Thus the new heaven and earth mentioned in Revelation 21:1 was an event prior to the eternal state. Because Mede never finished his exposition on Revelation, one cannot be certain if he would have opted

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<sup>108</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 123.

<sup>109</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 123.

<sup>110</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 123.

<sup>111</sup> Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, 124.

for a literal or allegorical interpretation of the new heaven and earth mentioned in Revelation 21:1. If he had followed the hermeneutic he had previously employed in his exposition of Revelation, then he would have interpreted the new heaven and earth symbolically.

However, against that hypothesis is his interpretation of the new heavens and earth 2 Peter 3. As indicated above, Mede unmistakably equates the thousand years of Revelation 20 with the thousand year judgment of 2 Peter 3. Both Peter and John prophesied of the same millennium. Yet Mede also unmistakably prefers a literal interpretation of the new heavens and earth in 2 Peter 3. Mede argues for nature's renewal by fire at the commencement of the millennium. The possibility thus exists that Mede might have adopted a metaphorical sense to the new heaven and earth in Revelation 21:1 while embracing a literal sense of the new heavens and earth in 2 Peter 3:10-13, all the while believing that both texts describe a future reign of Christ on earth.

### **John Archer**

Thirty years after the initial publication of Brightman's commentary on Revelation and on the threshold of one of England's most chaotic decades, John Archer published a work entitled *The Personall Raigne of Christ*.<sup>112</sup> In this work, influential

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<sup>112</sup> John Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth. Or, a Treatise Wherein Is Fully and Largely Laid Open and Proved, That Iesus Christ Together with the Saints, Shall Visibly Possesse a Monarchicall State and Kingdome in This World Which Sheweth, 1. That There Shall Be Such a Kingdome. 2. The Manner of It. 3. The Duration of It. 4. The Time When It Is to Begin* ([London : s.n.], Printed Ann. Dom., 1641), *Early English Books Online*, Sion College Library. Archer is not listed as the author in the 1641 edition but is identified in all five editions that were printed in 1642. In these later editions he is identified as "sometimes Preacher of *All-Hallows Lumbard-street*." Two more editions were printed in 1661. The book aroused at least one written response as an anonymous author felt compelled to decry its contents. See B. T., *The Saints Inheritance after the Day of Ivdgement. Being Also an Answer to Certaine Scruples of Late Delivered, and Others Printed, Expecially in That Book Intituled, the Personall Reigne of Christ Upon Earth. By T. B.* (London : Printed by Richard Cotes, and are to by sold by John Sweeting, in



with the Fifth Monarchists of the 1650s, Archer attempts to advance four theses with respect to the millennium: 1) the fact of a future millennium, 2) the characteristics of it, 3) the length of it and 4) the time of its beginning.<sup>113</sup> Archer begins the treatise presenting an overview of the kingdom of Christ, arguing that this kingdom appears in three states. The first state is Christ's "*Providentiall*" kingdom which commenced at the Fall by the delegation of the Father.<sup>114</sup> The Father delegated the Son to govern this world on behalf of the Father and the Spirit.<sup>115</sup> The second state of Christ's kingdom is spiritual and extends to the elect. By the word of God and the Spirit of God, Christ governs the elect so as to bring them into obedience to himself.<sup>116</sup> Archer observes that for many people "this is the onely state of Christs Kingdome" and hence they interpret all kingdom

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Popes-head-Alley, 1643), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. John Trapp, the biblical commentator, mentions Archer and Jeremiah Burroughs in his commentary on Revelation. He equates them with being dreamers for believing in a millennium. See John Trapp, *A Commentary or Exposition Upon All the Epistles, and the Revelation of John the Divine Wherein the Text Is Explained, Some Controversies Are Discussed, Divers Common-Places Are Handled, and Many Remarkable Matters Hinted, That Had by Former Interpreters Been Pretermitted : Besides, Divers Other Texts of Scripture, Which Occasionally Occur, Are Fully Opened, and the Whole So Intermixed with Pertinent Histories, as Will Yeeld Both Pleasure and Profit to the Judicious Reader : With a Decad of Common-Places Upon These Ten Heads : Abstinence, Admonition, Alms, Ambition, Angels, Anger, Apostasie, Arrogancie, Arts, Atheisme / by John Trapp* (London : Printed by A.M. for John Bellamy ...,1647), 781, *Early English Books Online*, Union Theological Seminary Library .

<sup>113</sup> John Archer, *The Personall Reign of Christ Upon Earth*, title page. Regarding the fourth thesis, Archer engages in some chronological forecasting and sets the date of 1700 as the time of Christ's return though he thinks 1666 will see the end of trouble for Gentile Christians. See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 44-57.

<sup>114</sup> Archer, *The Personall Reign of Christ Upon Earth*, A2 [1642 edition]. The first page of text from the 1641 edition is missing. The two editions appear to be identical.

<sup>115</sup> Archer thinks that if the Father had not appointed the Son as Mediator at the time of the Fall, then "his [the Father's] justice and Holinesse, according to the Covenant of works...had overthrowne mankind, and all this World." See Archer, *The Personall Reign of Christ Upon Earth*, A2 [1642 edition].

<sup>116</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 2 [1641 edition]. The remaining citations in the chapter all come from the 1641 edition.

passages in Scripture as referring to this state exclusively.<sup>117</sup> However, Archer posits a third state of the kingdom, the “*Monarchical*” in which Christ will reign on earth in a visible manner as have monarchs throughout the history of the world.<sup>118</sup>

This monarchial reign was typified from the Exodus to the time when the Israelites desired a king and even beyond to the period of the Israelite monarchy. During these times, Christ reigned over the Jewish people and was visibly present among them by means of the pillar of fire/cloud, the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle. Christ also promulgated laws and appointed judges, prophets and kings. All of these historical events were but a type of a universal reign of Christ yet to come.<sup>119</sup>

It is this monarchial form of Christ’s kingdom that occupies center stage for Archer in *The Personall Reign of Christ*, but along the way he reveals his own conception of the new heaven and earth. Since the reign of Christ on earth and the new heaven and earth are synonymous for Archer, he tends to treat them without clear distinction. The following summary will attempt to cull his view of the new heavens and earth from his explanation of the earthly monarchial reign of Christ.

Archer’s first task is to defend the thesis that Christ will personally and visibly reign on the earth<sup>120</sup> and he explores several biblical texts in this effort.<sup>121</sup> One of these

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<sup>117</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 2.

<sup>118</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 2.

<sup>119</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 3-4. Archer maintains the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 2:5-8) correctly interpreted Psalm 8 as a meditation on that earthly reign of Christ.

<sup>120</sup> Some of Archer’s contemporaries who held to a future millennium did not believe Christ would be present visibly and personally during it. Despite the title of his book, Archer himself did not think Christ would be present throughout the millennium. He believed Christ would initially appear to institute his reign but then he will “withdraw to heaven againe”, allowing the raised saints to rule, especially the Apostles and the twelve tribes of Israel. See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 23. He will come again for the final judgment at the end of the millennium. This explains why Scripture

texts records the words of Peter to the Jews following the healing of the lame man at the temple (Acts 3: 1-26). Peter told the Jews that Jesus was the one foretold by the prophets who would suffer to bring forgiveness of sins and then later would return from heaven to bring about the restoration of all things. Archer is well aware that this restoration was often taken by other exegetes as a reference to the final judgment and the end of the world, but he rejects such a view. The prophets, rather than speaking about the consummation of human history in their prophecies, speak instead about its continuance in an earthly kingdom of Christ.<sup>122</sup> It is this earthly kingdom of Christ that is promised by the prophets and by Peter and not the final judgment and end of the world.

Archer notes that while Peter speaks of a restoration in Acts 3, he later uses the language of making all things new (2 Peter 3:13). The making of a new heaven and earth is not an event that will happen at the end of the world. Indeed, at the end of the world “the earth ends, and shall not be made new” and the third heaven needs no renewal.<sup>123</sup> Hence any biblical author who speaks of a new heaven and earth or a restoration of all things must be referring to an event in the present age. Archer describes this renewal as “a reforming [of] things in this world, and a reducing them to their originall, as they were

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sometimes speaks of the kingdom belonging to Christ and at other times belonging to the saints. Of course the saints are only meditating the rule of Christ in his absence.

<sup>121</sup> The texts include the story of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the image that represented four human monarchies superseded by one divinely-wrought monarchy (Daniel 2), Christ’s parable of the talents (Luke 19:11-27) and the narrative in which the disciples ask Jesus if he will now restore the kingdom to Israel (Acts 1:6-7). Both in Christ’s parable to the crowd and in his response to the disciples, Archer argues that Jesus “confirms them in their opinion of a Kingdome, but rectifies them in the thoughts of the time, when it should bee.” See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 10.

<sup>122</sup> Archer and Mede concur on this point.

<sup>123</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 10. Archer does not attempt to defend the disappearance of the earth but just asserts it.

at the Creation.”<sup>124</sup> He does not explain what he has in mind by the phrase “things in this world,” and the reader is left wondering if he is thinking in civil/religious/social categories, material categories (e.g., the planet itself) or both. Regardless, the return to creation standards does not happen in a moment but rather proceeds throughout the one thousand years, culminating in the perfection of creation at the last judgment.<sup>125</sup>

Fortunately, Archer does eventually provide greater clarity as to what exactly will be renewed. In the midst of his discourse on the characteristics of the earthly reign of Christ, Archer first establishes that the reign will be universal. As part of this discussion, he turns the reader’s attention to a text visited by Brightman—Hebrews 12:26-27. Archer appears to adopt a similar view as Brightman, arguing that the *shaking* of heaven and earth is identical to *making* a new heaven and earth. Like Brightman, Archer explains the shaking not in terrestrial or material terms but in social and political ones. He believes Hebrews 12:26-27 reveals that Christ

. . . can and will shake Earth and Heaven also, when hee sets up his full Kingdome, and makes the new heaven and earth, for these words, *yet once more signifies the removing of old things* in Heaven and Earth, to make new, that is, to change all worldly customes, and so all kingly glory, and set up a new even his owne glory.<sup>126</sup>

Archer does not elaborate on what is involved in the changing of “worldly customes” and “kingly glory,” nor does he elaborate on all that might be involved in the setting up of Christ’s glorious rule. Yet Archer’s words at the very least indicate that the shaking of heaven and earth, their being made new, denotes a change in human behavior and ruling

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<sup>124</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 10.

<sup>125</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 10. Archer writes that “whole time of Christs Kingdome, is truly called a time of restitution....”

<sup>126</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 12.

authority, an interpretation that is parallel to Brightman's. His words do not reveal whether the shaking of heaven and earth involves cosmological alterations. So far the evidence suggests that Archer interprets the new heavens and earth metaphorically.

Another bit of information on Archer's view of the coming restoration appears in his description of the earthly reign of Christ as a time of judgment. Archer works at distinguishing between two biblical notions of judgment. Scripture uses the phrase 'day of judgment' both "more strictly" and "more largely".<sup>127</sup> The stricter usage refers to "a partiall Judgement, when some are judged, but not all."<sup>128</sup> The larger judgment is the general judgment at the end of all things when all humanity as well as all demonic spirits will be judged. Archer argues that at several points Scripture speaks of a strict or partial judgment that shall precede the general judgment.<sup>129</sup> His defense for this assertion is that scripture indicates many events occur on earth after the strict judgment whereas nothing happens on earth following the general judgment.<sup>130</sup> After the general judgment, the wicked shall immediately experience the second death while the saints will be translated to heaven, no longer to live on the earth. Consequently, when Peter claims there will be a new heaven and earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13), he cannot be referring to the eternal state, for the saints will not dwell on the earth in eternity, and the heaven in which they will reside will never need to be made new. Peter rather is describing a renovation on the earth prior to the final judgment and that renovation is

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<sup>127</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 13.

<sup>128</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 13.

<sup>129</sup> Daniel 7:9-10, 2 Timothy 4:1, 2 Peter 3:7 and Revelation 11:15,18

<sup>130</sup> In fact, nothing happens on earth because the earth will no longer exist.

characterized, at least partially, by judgment.<sup>131</sup> Archer believes that the judgment of the ungodly is what Peter had in mind when he wrote that the heavens and earth will melt (2 Peter 3:10).<sup>132</sup> The heavens and earth refer to “the Inhabitants of them, both of high and low ranks....”<sup>133</sup> Once again Archer adopts a non-literal understanding of the terms ‘heaven’ and ‘earth.’

Archer eventually comments explicitly on the physical universe when he considers what Christ’s third coming will produce.<sup>134</sup> He asserts that “*the Earth and all Creatures shall be delivered from the Curse, vanitie and bondage inflicted on them when Death was on Mankind, and then shall all the Creation be in its primitive glory as it was in the first Creation, Rom.8. 19. to 24.*”<sup>135</sup> Romans 8:19-24 is not an account of what will happen at the second coming of Christ at the start of the thousand years, because in this text Paul relates how *all* believers will experience the redemption of their bodies, an event that occurs for only the dead saints at Christ’s second coming but not the living

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<sup>131</sup> The judgment will encompass both the ungodly, who will be destroyed, and the godly, who will be rewarded. But not all the godly will experience reward. “...Christ will examine, blame, and shame the Saints who are alive at this his coming, if they be found to have walkd loosely, he will not kill them nor chang them in a moment, that is to be done at his last coming to judg all,...but he will shame them that have been loose Rev. 14.15.” See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 22-23.

<sup>132</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 21.

<sup>133</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 21. A bit later, Archer qualifies what he means by “Inhabitants” by restricting its referent to the ungodly armies that are threatening the saints. His reason for doing so is to provide for the rising of Gog and Magog at the end of the thousand years. Thus the thousand years “shall be a world of Saints with some wicked (few in comparison) Slaves and Tributaries.” See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 28.

<sup>134</sup> Archer writes unambiguously about three comings of Christ—at his incarnation, at the start of the thousand years, and at the end of all things. See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 16.

<sup>135</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 36-37.

ones.<sup>136</sup> The Romans text is also not speaking of heaven or the eternal state for Paul says *all* creatures will experience deliverance and thus he must be writing of this earth since no creatures but humans will dwell in heaven. Instead, Romans 8 is about “this general time of Judgement” which Archer claims—as did Mede—will not be brief.<sup>137</sup> The latter day of Christ’s earthly kingdom will find all of creation in the same condition as it was at the original creation. It will be able to glorify God as intended and not forced to serve sinners. Both the righteous and unrighteous will witness this great day of creation’s deliverance from bondage.<sup>138</sup> Hence Archer thinks Romans 8:19-22 prophesies a gradual improvement in the conditions of the created order throughout the long period of the general judgment.

As Archer discusses how long the righteous and the unrighteous will be able to observe creation’s restoration, he reveals that the length of the reign of Christ could actually be much longer than one thousand years, perhaps even two thousand years. He compares the reign of Christ to a day which has an evening and a morning.<sup>139</sup> The evening of the reign of Christ is preceded by the drawing to a close of the previous day. The previous day will be marked by increasing trouble for the church until the evening (i.e., beginning) of Christ’s kingdom.<sup>140</sup> The initial stages of Christ’s kingdom will

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<sup>136</sup> For millennialists, there was considerable debate about who would be raised from the dead in the first resurrection at the start of the millennium. Some said only some of the saints would be raised while others maintained all dead saints would be raised. Archer is of the latter sort.

<sup>137</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 37.

<sup>138</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 37.

<sup>139</sup> Archer patterns his day after the creation narrative which marks off each day as evening and morning.

<sup>140</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 16.

commence with Christ's visible return in the evening of his kingdom. Based on Revelation 20:4, Archer posits that the evening period of Christ's earthly kingdom is one thousand years.<sup>141</sup> Following the thousand years, Satan will be unchained for a brief season only to be swiftly dealt with by Christ.<sup>142</sup> Then will begin the morning of Christ's kingdom.

This period is the day of judgment "which shall last a great while."<sup>143</sup> It might last one thousand years, argues Archer, because time will be needed to demonstrate the righteousness and truthfulness of God's rule to all. A great length of time is also fitting for the worship due to Christ from all creatures. Paul did say that every knee will bow to Christ as Lord (Philippians 2:8) and this includes the knees of the wicked angels and wicked humans. The evening of Christ's kingdom will not see every knee bow; such obeisance will occur only during the morning of it. Besides, Christ has been waiting for this day of universal worship ever since he ascended into heaven.<sup>144</sup> "Therefore, surely God will not huddle it over in a small or short time. God hath given a long time to every worke, to *Satan*, to *Antichrist*; and will he straighten Christ in this his time?"<sup>145</sup> No, God will elongate the time of Christ's triumph.

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<sup>141</sup> Archer is aware that a literal interpretation of the *thousand years* has frequently "beene condemned by worthy men for an Heresie." Because this text was utilized to support the existence of a sensual, hedonistic age to come, many dismissed any literal fulfillment of the thousand years and leaned wholly on spiritual meanings. Archer believes these men failed to "find the Gold and separate it from the Drosse." They did not err in finding a spiritual sense "for there is a spirituall sense in most of those Scriptures" but they erred in dismissing the literal sense out of hand. Nevertheless, the literal sense ought to be embraced and the beginning of the Christ's kingdom on earth will last a thousand years. See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 40.

<sup>142</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 41.

<sup>143</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 41.

<sup>144</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 42.

<sup>145</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 42.



Another reason for this period to last a long time is a sense of proportionality. This is the time of creation's liberation from bondage for which it is groaning and anxiously anticipating. It would seem to make little sense for God to renovate creation if it were to soon dissolve into the original chaos. Rather, humanity will be able observe the splendor of God's creation as he originally intended, and do that for an extended time.<sup>146</sup>

Though Archer allows for the earth to enjoy its original pristine existence for a season, he offers no such prospects for the earth after the saints depart to heaven. In his discussion of the location of eternal hell, Archer consigns earth along with water, air, fire, sun, moon and stars to the distinction of being eternal hell.<sup>147</sup> Everything but the highest heaven (the third heaven) will be hell.<sup>148</sup> All physical reality will be reduced to the two places God created in the beginning—heaven and the primordial chaos. The latter will contain “no order, comfort, or delight in any place, nor any light...but a mere place for their bodies to subsist in, which shall live without aire, because *they shall be made*

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<sup>146</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 42. Other reasons for an extended morning of Christ's reign include the display of God's attributes in all his works, the revelation of Christ as King “*which alone one might gaze a thousand yeares*”, the truthfulness and fulfillment of every biblical text and the manifestation of every human deed. This latter will in itself require considerable time since Christ will do it in his humanity and in the presence of all humanity “and therefore leasurly”.

<sup>147</sup> Archer distinguishes between the present hell and the eternal one. The present hell is located either in the lower part of the air (the upper part of the air is probably Paradise where the dead saints dwell) or in the seas. The present hell is not in the earth, nor is it under the earth either, since the earth, being a spherical is surrounded by air and water. Archer muses the present hell might be in the waters that are above the earth (Genesis 1:6-7). Baillie criticizes Archer for creating a new kind of heaven and hell. See Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time*, 236.

<sup>148</sup> Archer thinks that in Genesis 1:1 where it says God created the heaven and the earth, the heaven refers only to the third heaven, while the earth refers to the original chaos from which God created the light, air, fire, water, etc., “so that all these lower Heavens and Earth habitable, and every Creature and Ornament were made out of that *Chaos*, which God created immediately.” See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 38.

*immortall*, to be tormented for ever.”<sup>149</sup> Archer bases his position on the fact that what God created *ex nihilo* will not ever change; this would include the third heaven, the original chaos and humankind’s souls. All other things are created out of something and will eventually revert to their prime substratum. Thus the present structure of the physical world will dissolve into the original chaos. Consequently, “... this visible world is but as a Stage, on which God and man and Devils shall act their parts, and then it shall be removed, and all the furniture thereof.”<sup>150</sup> Archer believes such dissolution is deserved since the world was made for humanity but humanity rebelled against God.<sup>151</sup> He insists that if not for the work of Christ in holding this world together, it would have reverted to chaos long before the present time. But Christ intended to one day possess a kingdom in the world; thus it must needs be preserved for a while. But once the kingdom is finished, Christ will exit this world with his saints to dwell in the heaven created out of nothing. The present world will devolve into its original chaos, also created out of nothing, in order to serve as the eternal place of torment for the devil, demons and unrighteous people. So in the final estate, there will be two kinds of rational creatures, the just and wicked, and they will experience one of only two places, heaven or hell in accordance with God’s eternal decrees of election or reprobation.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 38.

<sup>150</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 38. This is one of the points specifically denied by the anonymous author who critiqued Archer’s book. See B. T, *The Saints Inheritance after the Day of Ivdgement*, 35.

<sup>151</sup> He comments, “...and so the place of sinning shall be the everlasting Hell, and men of earthly minds shall have an everlasting Earth....” See Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 39.

<sup>152</sup> Archer, *The Personall Raigne of Christ Upon Earth*, 39.

Putting together the various strands of Archer's thought, the following scheme emerges. The new heavens and earth will commence with the start of the millennium when Christ will return to establish a new world order for humanity. Christ will then depart to heaven until his return at the end of the one thousand years to defeat Gog and Magog. Following their defeat, an extended period of judgment on earth will follow, perhaps lasting another one thousand years. During this second era, the physical creation itself will be gradually released from its bondage to corruption in order to experience its paradisiacal condition. The heavens and earth will be restored to a glorious state before finally devolving into their original primordial chaos where hell will be located.

This review of Brightman, Mede and Archer provides illustrations for how at least some of the millenarians approached the topic of the new heavens and earth. What they all have in common is the notion that the new heavens and earth is another way the biblical writers talked about an era of the church marked by peace and safety before the saints are whisked off to heaven. Others shared this understanding. For example, Thomas Goodwin, a member of the Independent party at the Westminster Assembly and prolific author, adopts a similar stance in several works.<sup>153</sup> In two sermons on Ephesians 1:21-22, he argues that when Scripture mentions a "world to come" it means the thousand

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<sup>153</sup> See Thomas Goodwin, *A Sermon of the Fifth Monarchy. Proving by Invincible Arguments, That the Saints Shall Have a Kingdom Here on Earth, Which Is yet to Come, after the Fourth Monarchy Is Destroy'd by the Sword of the Saints, the Followers of the Lamb. / Preached by Mr. Tho. Goodwin, on Rev. 5. 9, 10. By Which It Will Appear, That It Is for the Same Truth (That Formerly Was So Much Contended for) That Some of the People of God Suffer at This Day. Published for the Truths Sake* (Printed at London, : for Livewel Chapman, at the Crown in Popes-head-Alley, 1654), 10, *Early English Books Online*, British Library; and Thomas Goodwin, *The Vvorld to Come. Or, the Kingdome of Christ Asserted. In Two Expository Lectures of Ephes. 1. 21, 22. Verses. Prooving That between the State of This World as Now It Is, and the State of Things after the Day of Judgement, When God Shall Be All in All: There Is a World to Come Which Is of Purpose, and Is a More Especiall Manner Appointed for Jesus Christ to Be King, and Wherein He Shall More Eminently Reign. / Preached by Mr. Tho: Goodwin Many Years since, at Antholins, London. Published for the Truths Sake* (London, : Printed, and are to be sold in Popes-head-Alley, and in Westminster Hall, 1655), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

years of Revelation 20, and these thousand years are the new heavens and earth spoken of by Peter (2 Peter 3:13).<sup>154</sup> The new heavens and earth are the penultimate state of the world rather than its ultimate state. Jeremiah Burroughs, Independent colleague of Goodwin at the Assembly, draws on Isaiah 62:7 to argue for a blessed state of the church on earth.<sup>155</sup> The church (i.e., Jerusalem, according to Burroughs) has never been praised in the earth like Isaiah promised. But one day it will be exalted when God makes a new heaven and earth.<sup>156</sup> Hanserd Knollys, Baptist preacher and linguist, expounds on the biblical theme of the world which is to come.<sup>157</sup> The world to come is not heaven, but rather the current world in a transformed condition, which will last one thousand years.<sup>158</sup> In this section Knollys employs all the new heaven and earth passages in Scripture (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, 2 Peter 3, Revelation 21:1) as well as citing the two passages depicting the renovation of all things and the liberation of the creature (Acts 3:19 and Romans 8:19-21).

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<sup>154</sup> Goodwin, *A Sermon of the Fifth Monarchy*, 32-33.

<sup>155</sup> Isaiah 62:7—“And give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

<sup>156</sup> Jeremiah Burroughs, *Jeruselems Glory Breaking Forth into the World Being a Scripture-Discovery of the New Testament Church, in the Latter Days Immediately before the Second Coming of Christ*, ed. William Adderley, ([London?]: Printed for Giles Calvert, 1675), *Early English Books Online*, Union Theological Seminary Library. Burroughs writes, “When this Jerusalem shall be made the praise of the whole Earth, then there shall be new Heavens and new Earth created.” Burroughs also gives several paragraphs as to why Revelation 21 cannot refer to the church in heaven. This work is a sermon of Burroughs published almost thirty years after he died. See Burroughs, *Jeruselems Glory*, 18, 20-21.

<sup>157</sup> Hanserd Knollys, *The Vworld That Now Is; and the Vworld That Is to Come: Or the First and Second Coming of Jesus Christ Wherein Several Prophecies Not yet Fulfilled Are Expounded. By Han. Knollys, a Servant of Jesus Christ. Rev. I. 19* (London: printed by Tho. Snowden, 1681), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library.

<sup>158</sup> Hanserd Knollys, *The Vworld That Now Is*, n.p. Because the pagination does not run consecutively throughout the work but begins anew at each section, see the section entitled “The World to Come”.

Though the list of millennialists who equated the millennium with the new heavens and earth is long, not all millennialists of the seventeenth century interpreted the new heavens and earth as synonymous with the thousand year earthly kingdom of Christ. One notable example illustrates this point. Henry Alsted, although not English, exercised considerable influence in England in the revival of millennial thinking on English soil. In 1627, the same year Mede published his *Key of the Revelation*, Alsted, German Calvinist and scholar who experienced the ravages of the Thirty Years' War, published his commentary on Revelation chapter twenty entitled *Diatribē mille annis apocalypticis*, a work Howard Hotson believes “helped to inaugurate the most respectable and scholarly strand of Protestant millenarianism which eventually won the favour of Milton and Hartlib, More and Newton, Spenser and Petersen, Vitringa and Bengel, Edwards and Hopkins, Price and Priestley.”<sup>159</sup> With respect to the subject of the passage, Alsted claims it is the happiness of the church during its state of militancy and its state of triumph. He regards the millennium as belonging to the state of militancy and identifies it as the third period of the New Testament church.<sup>160</sup> This period will experience the resurrection of martyrs, the conversion of Gentiles, the conversion of the Jews and the freedom of the church from persecution. Of note is the fact that, though Alsted laces his

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<sup>159</sup> Hotson, *Johann Heinrich Alsted*, 182. The *Diatribē* was circulated widely throughout the European mainland and the British Isles. After Alsted's death, it was translated into English in 1643 under the name of *The Beloved City*. For this edition see John Alsted, *The Beloved City or, the Saints Reign on Earth a Thousand Yeares; Asserted, and Illustrated from Lxx Places of Holy Scripture; Besides the Judgement of Holy Learned Men, Both at Home and Abroad; and Also Reason It Selfe. Likewise Xxxv Objections against This Truth Are Here Answered* (London: no publisher, 1643), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>160</sup> Alsted, *The Beloved City*, 6. Alsted divides the New Testament church into four earthly periods to be followed by its heavenly state. He identifies the first period as occurring from the time of John the Baptist to the Council of Jerusalem (see Acts 15). The second period extends from AD 51 to the start of the millennium which he predicted would begin in 1694 or perhaps sooner. The fourth period covers the final years of the millennium through to the final judgment.

comments with a plethora of scriptural references to buttress his assertions about the millennium, he never cites texts that mention the new heaven and earth.<sup>161</sup>

Further, in laying out the connection between Revelation 20 and Revelation 1-19, Alsted provides grounds for concluding that for him the new heaven and earth is not the millennium. He counts seven visions as comprising the book as a whole. The millennium is part of the sixth vision and concerns the church on earth. The seventh vision encompasses chapters 21 and 22 and concerns “the Heavenly City”.<sup>162</sup> Hence, unlike the authors reviewed above, Revelation 21 and 22 are not to be seen as enlargements on the thousand years of chapter 20 but as descriptions of things following the thousand years. Later, commenting on the earth and sky fleeing at the appearance of the judge at the commencement of the great white throne judgment (Rev. 20:11), Alsted takes this to mean that “the fashion of this world passed away, and was consumed with fire....”<sup>163</sup> The fire follows the thousand years rather than preceding it, bringing a “Universall change of the whole world in that Judgement day.”

Alsted is the most transparent regarding the new heaven and earth in the large section of *The Beloved City* that is mainly given over to defending his millennial framework utilizing three types of argumentation—arguments arising from Revelation 20 itself, the support of other scriptural texts (he mentions no less than sixty-five other texts)

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<sup>161</sup> Later in the text, Alsted provides sixty-five biblical references that he believes had yet to be fulfilled but soon would be by means of the millennium. He again fails to list any biblical text that specifically mentions God making a new heaven and earth (Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1.). He also does not mention texts that many of his day viewed as referring to that same event using varying terms (Such as Matthew 19:28, Acts 3:21, and Romans 8:19-23.).

<sup>162</sup> Alsted, *The Beloved City*, 13.

<sup>163</sup> Alsted, *The Beloved City*, 21.

and an appeal to other pious scholars' opinions.<sup>164</sup> His second argument from chapter 20 of Revelation points out that John's vision of the new heaven and earth in chapter 21 occurs *after* the events of chapter twenty, *viz.* the resurrection of martyrs, the conversion of Gentile and Jewish peoples, a blessed estate of the church for one thousand years, a final persecution by Gog and Magog and the final judgment by Christ. As Alsted puts it:

As if he [John] should say, Hitherto I have seen and declared the estate of the Church Militant, and beginning to triumph in the last Judgement: Now followeth the vision and Declaration of the state of the whole Church goin on in it's progresse of Triumph in life eternall.<sup>165</sup>

This clearly places the new heaven and earth of chapter 21 after the millennium. This interpretive decision was largely abandoned by English millennialists.

In Richard Baxter's critique of the chiliasts of the seventeenth century, he exposes the diversity of thought among them regarding several features of the earthly reign of Christ.<sup>166</sup> This chapter confirms Baxter's observation by revealing that chiliasts also offered varying approaches to their interpretation of texts that speak of a new heavens and earth. However, the documents suggest that the predominant view among those who anticipated an extended time of triumph and glory for the church in the future prior to the eternal state was that the new heavens and earth was a cipher for this glorious earthly era. Some, like Archer, envisioned a renewal that included not only religious and civil

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<sup>164</sup> Alsted, *The Beloved City*, 32-62.

<sup>165</sup> Alsted, *The Beloved City*, 34.

<sup>166</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Glorious Kingdom of Christ, Described and Clearly Vindicated, against the Bold Asserters of a Future Calling and Reign of the Jews, and 1000 Years before the Conflagration. And the Asserters of the 1000 Years Kingdom after the Conflagration. Opening the Promise of the New Heaven and Earth, and the Everlastingness of Christ's Kingdom, against Their Debasing It, Who Confine It to 1000 Years, Which with the Lord Is but as One Day. Answering Mr. Tho. Beverly, Who Imposed This Task, by His Oft and Earnest Challenges of All the Doctors and Pastors, and His Censure of Dissenters as Semi-Sadduces of the Apostasie, in His Twelve Principles and Catechisms, &C.* (London: T. Snowden, 1691), 10, *Early English Books Online*, British Library. Baxter enumerates ten issues about which millennialists differed. He claims that all that bound them together was a belief in a future millennium.

institutions, but also the earth itself. Others, such as Brightman, never mention any alterations to the material world, preferring to restrict the renewal to changes in human society. But the majority of millennialists seem to agree in equating the new heavens and earth with a time of flourishing for the church before the consummation of all things.



## CHAPTER THREE

### EMPTY MONUMENT

Each of the previous two chapters has exposed the exegetical underpinnings of two quite distinct interpretations of the biblical promise of a new heavens and earth. The first interpretation envisioned the new heaven and earth as descriptive of that which emerged following God's judgment upon the Jews for having rejected Christ. What emerged is none other than the expansion of the church into Gentile realms via the preaching of the gospel. The second interpretation took the new heavens and earth as descriptive of a flourishing condition of the church on the earth for one thousand years prior to the final resurrection and judgment, to be followed by transport to the third heaven for the righteous and consignment to hell for the wicked. What unites both interpretations is that they both adopt a non-literal understanding of the the new heavens and earth.

However, not all biblical scholars were receptive to understanding the phrase in such a metaphorical manner. The next three chapters explore the thoughts of those who contented themselves with a literal interpretation. That is, these scholars and clerics believed a day was coming when God would transform the material world into something different from what it now is. The world of nature would undergo some kind of restorative process. Although broad agreement existed with respect to this restoration, differences can be found with respect to the nature of that renovation. In this chapter, both the similarities and differences amongst seventeenth-century authors who accepted this view will be examined in an attempt to discern the subtle hues that existed within their eschatological palettes.

As might be expected, the four new heavens and earth passages found in Scripture formed the grounds of the belief in a transformed world. These four texts were often collated with others for additional support.<sup>1</sup> But the text that generated the most speculation and raised the most questions comes from Paul in Romans 8 in the midst of his explanation of the great security and hope of believers in Christ.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected *the same* in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now (Romans 8:19-22)

This text does not specifically mention the new heavens and earth, but it was frequently cited when that topic surfaced because it was thought to describe in further detail what will occur when the heavens and earth are made new.<sup>2</sup> Creation will be delivered from the bondage of corruption to the freedom of the children of God.

A second text that also raised various questions about the world's restoration is 2

Peter 3:10-12:

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. *Seeing then that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the psalmist writes in Psalm 104:26, "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." Another text frequently cited is Acts 3:21: "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began."

<sup>2</sup> Interestingly, supporters of a metaphorical interpretation of the new heavens and earth also found Romans 8:19-22 useful to support that interpretation.

In this text, Peter appears to be describing something of the mechanism by which the world's renovation would take place, a mechanism characterized chiefly by fire, and something of the result of the fire's action, a new heavens and earth indwelt by righteousness. Together, these two apostolic texts provided the grist that generated further conjecture about the new heavens and earth.

This chapter will consider some of the questions and answers these texts fostered. A helpful resource that addresses all of the questions to be considered here is a work published in the middle of the seventeenth century. A scholar by the name of John Waite wrote a lengthy treatise on Romans 8:19-22 entitled *Of the creatures liberation from the bondage of corruption*.<sup>3</sup> In this substantial work, Waite leaves very few stones unturned in his quest to decipher Paul's meaning, frequently providing protracted analysis of questions that, in comparison, other sources touch on rather briefly. This fact will explain his prominence in the following analysis of four specific questions about the creature's liberation from bondage.

### **Will Creation be Annihilated or Restored?**

One of the major questions surrounding the interpretation of Romans 8:19-22 was the manner in which the creature would be delivered from its bondage. Would it be delivered by being destroyed or by being restored? Waite maintains that there is no

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<sup>3</sup> John Waite, *Of the Creatures Liberation from the Bondage of Corruption Wherein Is Discussed I. What Is Most Probably Meant by (the Creature.) Ii. The Vanitie or Corruption from Which It Shall Be Delivered, and Its Unwillingnesse to That Vanitie. Iii. The Manner or Way of Its Deliverance. Iv. What Creatures Are Conceived as Most Capable of This, and of Their Use after Restauration. V. And Lastly Is Discussed That Glorious Libertie of the Sonnes of God into Which the Creature Is to Be Reduced. Discursu Philosophico--Theologico*, by John Waite, B.D (Printed at York : by Tho: Broad, and are to be sold at his shop near Common-Hall-Gates, 1650), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library. The volume extends to nearly 400 pages.

established opinion among theologians, and he believes the matter will never be definitively settled in this life.<sup>4</sup> Differences of opinion upon this point are acceptable and charity should prevail when those differences emerge. Theologians may go only as far as Scripture and reason allows.<sup>5</sup> Waite employs an analogy to emphasize his point;

And in treating upon such intricate passages as this, its wisdom for us to do as skilfull Sea-men do upon dangerous and narrow Seas; they still take care to Plumbe or Sound, so that they fall upon no rocks, nor Shelves, and so long they sail safely, though they finde not their desired Haven, for the present; so God willing shall we do, we shall so sound the Sea of the Scriptures, and plumbe the road of reason, that we shall not shipwrack truth upon any Shelves of Errour, and so farre the Bark of our discourse may floate safely, though we accomplish not our intention for our desired Haven.<sup>6</sup>

Nearly twenty-five years later, Thomas Horton (d. 1673) utters a similar assessment of the state of the question: “It admits of a very great Dispute amongst Divines, who are much divided in this particular, and that amongst men of equal *Piety and Learning*.”<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, John Ray (1627-1702), a member of the Royal Society, maintains that the support for a restored earth among the ancient writers, whether Christian or pagan, is expansive. He criticizes George Hakewill (1578/9-1649)—whose view will be explored

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<sup>4</sup> He quotes Calvin’s comment to the effect that with respect to the manner of the restoration, one should not make “too curious an inquisition.” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 151.

<sup>5</sup> Waite spends several pages establishing that where Scripture is not clear, interpreters must exercise restraint. Doctrine that is derived from express statements in Scripture or is “soundly deduced” from Scripture must be believed. He quotes Zanchi to the same end: “nothing ought to be determined in the Church of God concerning Religion that hath not either open proof in Canonickall Scriptures, or by manifest and necessary consequence, may be thence evinced.” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 155.

<sup>6</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 156-157.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Horton, *Forty Six Sermons Upon the Whole Eighth Chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans Lately Preached By ... Thomas Horton* (London : Printed by A. Maxwell for Tho. Parkhurst ..., 1674), 365, *Early English Books Online*, University of Illinois Library. Horton filled several prominent positions in his lifetime, amongst which were an appointment as vice-chancellor at Cambridge during Cromwell’s tenure. Though holding Presbyterian ideals, he later conformed after the Restoration and spent his remaining years as rector of Great St. Helen’s in London.

below—for being able to produce only two Christian authors to support annihilationism whereas Ray had already mentioned several who supported the restoration of creation and could “produce many more, the whole stream of them running this way.”<sup>8</sup> There may have been a great deal of debate about this question within Christendom as a whole, but it is difficult to locate English scholars and ministers of the seventeenth century who espoused annihilationism. The two examples to follow appear to be outside the eschatological mainstream of their day.

### Annihilationism

The difficulty of finding advocates of annihilationism is demonstrated by the fact that one must dip into the late sixteenth century to find supporters of it. One such supporter appears in the final decade of the sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> The anonymous treatise covers various heads of doctrine, one of which is creation. When considering the question of whether the creation will endure forever, the author argues that it will not. The world “shall passe away as though it had never bene, nor ever created . . . .”<sup>10</sup> He challenges the reader to show him anything good in the world that does not eventually

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<sup>8</sup> John Ray, *Miscellaneous Discourses Concerning the Dissolution and Changes of the World Wherein the Primitive Chaos and Creation, the General Deluge, Fountains, Formed Stones, Sea-Shells Found in the Earth, Subterraneous Trees, Mountains, Earthquakes, Vulcans, the Universal Conflagration and Future State, Are Largely Discussed and Examined* / by John Ray (London : Printed for Samuel Smith ..., 1692), 193, *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library.

<sup>9</sup> I. S., *Bromelion a Discourse of the Most Substantial Points of Diuinitie, Handled by Diuers Common Places: Vvith Great Studie, Sinceritie, and Perspicuitie. Whose Titles You Haue in the Next Page Following* (London : Printed by Thomas Creede, 1595), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. The author seems to have been the recipient of some sort of patronage from Henry Bromley. Henry was the son of Thomas Bromley who had been Lord Chancellor and member of the Privy Council under Queen Elizabeth. In the “Epistle to the Reader,” the author speaks the praises of Bromley for providing for his “Diet, apparel, bookes, siluer & gold, preferment, countenance, fauour, goodwill, and what euer my heart might desire.” See *Bromelion*, n.p.

<sup>10</sup> *Bromelion*, 110.

perish. God created the world, but “it shall not always endure...the world was made of nothing, and to nothing shall it banish; it shall waxe olde as a garment, and at length be consumed with fire.”<sup>11</sup> God was good to sustain the world in existence for as long as He has, and were it not for sin, He would prolong its existence. But sin will bring an end to “gods bewtiful frame.” The Flood was a mere foretaste of a destruction to come that will envelop the earth as well as the heavens, including the sun, moon and stars.<sup>12</sup>

A more forceful and expansive statement of the world’s demise appears in a large volume penned by George Hakewill.<sup>13</sup> According to Ronald Hepburn, an intense debate existed in the early seventeenth century concerning whether or not the created order was manifesting signs of virility or of decline.<sup>14</sup> This discussion was fueled in part by the

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<sup>11</sup> *Bromelion*, 111.

<sup>12</sup> *Bromelion*, 111. The destruction of the earth is no cause of rejoicing for the author: “And the more that wee knowe the excellent worke of God in the creation of the worlde and his creatures, wherein we cannot choose but take passing delight, so often as we do consider and meditate on the same, even therewithal also, when we thinke that all things shall come to a ruine and downfall, that the heavens and the earth shall be consumed with fire, then may we begin to shead forth teares, in a lamentable consideration that so glorious a workmanship, and so wonderfull a frame, should come to a finall destruction.”<sup>12</sup> Contemplating such a destruction should bring the saints to mourn “co[n]sidering that the sinnes of others, as also their owne sinnes, should be the cause of so great an overthrow.”<sup>12</sup> See *Bromelion*, 113-114.

<sup>13</sup> George Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God in the Gouernment of the World. Or an Examination and Censure of the Common Errour Touching Natures Perpetuall and Vniuersall Decay Diuided into Foure Bookes: Whereof the First Treates of This Pretended Decay in Generall, Together with Some Preparatiues Thereunto. The Second of the Pretended Decay of the Heauens and Elements, Together with That of the Elementary Bodies, Man Only Excepted. The Third of the Pretended Decay of Mankinde in Regard of Age and Duration, of Strength and Stature, of Arts and Wits. The Fourth of This Pretended Decay in Matter of Manners, Together with a Large Proofoe of the Future Consummation of the World from the Testimony of the Gentiles, and the Vses Which We Are to Draw from the Consideration Thereof.* By G.H. D.D (Oxford : Printed by Iohn Lichfield and William Turner, printers to the famous Vniversity, Anno Dom. 1627), *Early English Books Online*, University of Michigan Library. Hakewill was an Anglican cleric who at one time was one of two clerics responsible for the religious training of prince Charles. His royal service was cut short when he wrote against the proposed marriage between Charles and Maria Anna of Spain. The *Apologie* underwent two more editions, one in 1627 and one in 1635. The later editions, though swelling the length of the work, present the same arguments for the end of the world as the original edition.

<sup>14</sup> Ronald W. Hepburn, "George Hakewill: The Virility of Nature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 16, no. 2 (1955): 135.

doctrine of the fall. Did the fall have any effect on the powers and abilities of humans and nature? If so, to what degree did the entrance of sin affect those powers and abilities? With respect to these questions, Hakewill adopted a minority opinion, "...arguing against the current of popular lore and fashionable wisdom."<sup>15</sup> Grounded in his idea of God's providence, he champions the cause of creation's strength and fruitfulness rather than its decay. Neither the heavens, elements, and elementary bodies, nor the life expectancy, strength and learning of humanity were in any way less than what they had been in former ages. In spite of defending this stance for over 440 pages, Hakewill ends the volume strongly asserting that the world will be annihilated nevertheless.

To defend his argument, Hakewill lays out his position in 6 sections. In section 1, he begins by asserting his primary thesis with a bold confidence: "*That the world shall have an end, is a point so cleere in Christian Religion, that it needeth not to be proved from the principles thereof, neither is he worthy the name of a Christian who makes any doubt of it.*"<sup>16</sup> In the spirit of this statement, Hakewill does not attempt to muster scriptural backing for it. Of course, one should not read too much into his statement that the world "shall have an end." All he appears to mean by the phrase is that the world will not go on indefinitely in its present state; the flow of world history eventually will end followed by the resurrection and final judgment, occurrences that "...happily we cannot

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<sup>15</sup> Hepburn, *George Hakewill*, 140.

<sup>16</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 441.

set downe the time or manner of their event.”<sup>17</sup> Hakewill claims that the end of the world is one doctrine to which all Christians subscribe.

After demonstrating in sections 2 and 3 that the destruction of the world was promulgated by Gentiles—such as Seneca, Aelian, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Lucretius and others (section 2)—and that that destruction would be by fire (section 3), Hakewill offers arguments from the Bible (section 4) and arguments from reason (section 5) to support his stance. From there, he attempts to interact with those texts commonly used by others to defend the belief in a restored world following a great cleansing fire (section 6).

Hakewill’s biblical defense consists of quoting snippets from a series of scriptural texts, snippets that in some way or another suggest that the world will meet its demise. Hakewill chooses texts that frequently mention the heavens and/or the earth as perishing, passing away, dissolving, and the like. After recording this list, he challenges the reader to consider the weight of these texts together:

Now I would demaund whether *being no more*, as *Job*; *perishing*, as *David*; *vanishing away like smoake*, *dissolving*, *rolling together*, *falling downe as a withered leafe or a dry fig from the tree*, as *Esay*; *passing away*, as our *Savior*; *passing away with a great noise*; *melting with fervent heate*, *burning up* as *S. Peter*; or lastly *flying away*, so as *their place be found no more*, as *S. Iohn*; doe not include an utter *abolition*, or at leastwise exclude a restitution to a perfecter estate.<sup>18</sup>

Hakewill not only musters scriptural arguments but claims that “[i]f we looke back to higher times before *S. Hierome* [sic] we shall not easily finde any who maintained it.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 441.

<sup>18</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 446.

<sup>19</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 447.



For instance, the author of the *Recognitions*—Hakewill thinks it might have been Clement--posited two heavens, one being the highest heaven, the abode of the blessed, and the other being the abode of the stars, destined for destruction.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of who wrote it, the document testifies to just how early the belief in the world's annihilation can be found. Still, Hakewill claims his confidence in his position is grounded on Scripture rather than human testimony.

In section 5, Hakewill proposes two arguments from reason to further bolster his views. The first argument appeals to the purpose or goal of creation. He surmises that creation was made for two purposes only—for the glory of God and for the use of humanity.<sup>21</sup> He believes the first purpose is realized only as long as humankind dwells on the earth. Hakewill assumes as obvious that humanity will not forever dwell on the earth and hence eventually no creature will be left on earth that is capable of perceiving God's glory in the created order. Hence creation will no longer bear witness to the glory of God. The second purpose of creation will also become obsolete once the redeemed are present with God in heaven. They will not need creation to supply any needs or desires since those will be perfectly met by being in God's presence. Aside from God's glory and humanity's use, Hakewill cannot think of any other reason for the world. Thus a renovated world without a purpose "is ridiculous and unreasonable."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> The *Recognitions* is part of what is now called the pseudo-Clementine literature. It was once thought to be a document of early vintage in church history because it was believed to have been quoted by Origen. The dating of the *Recognitions* has been greatly disputed by modern scholarship.

<sup>21</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 447.

<sup>22</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 447. Hakewill thinks some of his contemporaries, realizing the need for some purpose for a renovated creation, concocted purposes that were "so absurd and unwarrantable, that the very naming of them were sufficient to make a man believe there was no such matter indeed." One of these purposes was to permit humanity to have access to both heaven and earth, the latter location now finally being subject to the human dominion lost by Adam's sin. This

Hakewill's second argument from reason to support annihilationism attempts to show that unanswerable questions arise should the world be restored to its original state. For example, what creatures will be restored—all of them that have ever lived or just those that exist following the last judgment? If all creatures are restored, “where shall we finde stowage for them?”<sup>23</sup> If only some creatures are restored, why those and not the rest? How shall these creatures be kept from multiplying indefinitely? Hakewill thinks the failure to provide adequate answers to these questions had led the majority of theologians to support a restitution of the heavens and elements only, not the restitution of mixed bodies.<sup>24</sup> Yet this solution brings its own set of questions. Is a world without mixed bodies a *better* world? And with respect to the four elements, not only was there no agreement as to the number of elements that would be restored, but Hakewill also wonders if “inseparable qualities of the Elements, as thickenesse and thinnesse, weight & lightnesse, heate & cold, moissture & drynesse shall remaine?”<sup>25</sup> If these qualities of the elements do remain, what will keep them from interacting again so as to produce meteors and mixed bodies? How is an earth without vegetation more beautiful than before?<sup>26</sup> Without a miracle, how will the heavens stop their natural inclination to move in a circle?

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position will be considered in the next two chapters. Other purposes Hakewill finds absurd include the belief on the part of some that a renovated earth will be home to those who did not merit either heaven or hell and the belief that unbaptized or uncircumcised individuals who died in infancy will live on earth. See Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 448.

<sup>23</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 448.

<sup>24</sup> Mixed, or compound, bodies were physical objects made up of two or more of the four elements—earth, air, water, fire. All objects that undergo change, such as plants and animals, are mixed bodies.

<sup>25</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 448.

<sup>26</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 449.

If they do stop, will not the sun burn that part of the earth upon which it will ceaselessly shine? Will only one hemisphere of the earth receive light? For Hakewill, the claim of the restorationists that the *essence* of the heavens will be the same after the restoration as before is problematic upon close scrutiny. If their essence remains, then apart from a miracle from God the heavens will move and behave as they always have, and so will the elements.

The final section is given over to undercutting the interpretation of key biblical texts often used to support the belief in a renovation of the world. Hakewill quickly lists a litany of texts and then proceeds to demonstrate how that text had been misinterpreted. For brevity's sake, it is necessary to consider only a couple of Hakewill's rejoinders. His treatment of 'new heavens and earth' passages in Isaiah, Peter and the Revelation takes two tracks. He first insists that if these verses are taken literally, then the heavens and earth will not be renovated but created anew "(creation being a production of some new thing out of nothing)."<sup>27</sup> Rather than "a *restitution* of the old" there will be "a *substitution* of new."<sup>28</sup> But the better approach to the new heavens and earth texts is to abandon a literal sense and embrace a metaphorical one. The new heavens and earth in Isaiah signify "*the state of the Church during the kingdome of Christ,*" while in 2 Peter and the Revelation, the phrase means "*the state of the Saints in the heavenly Jerusalem.*"<sup>29</sup> When Peter says righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and earth, he means that righteous people will no longer live on earth but in the heavenly Jerusalem.

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<sup>27</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 451.

<sup>28</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 451.

<sup>29</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 451. Hakewill does allow that Isaiah may also have in mind the saints in the heavenly estate since Peter seems to ground his teaching about the new heavens and earth in this prophetic promise (see 2 Peter 3:13).

Hakewill believes John's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) is simply another way of referring to the new heavens and earth mentioned in the previous verse (Revelation 21:1).<sup>30</sup> Although John sees the city coming down out of heaven, Hakewill thinks the description of the city as a place where the sun and moon need not shine because God and the Lamb enlighten it is sufficient grounds to believe that what is described is the heavenly dwelling place of the saints. He takes solace also in the fact that Junius, as well as "the greatest part of the soundest and most judicious Interpreters" adopt a similar interpretation.<sup>31</sup>

Of all the passages Hakewill engages, he admits that Romans 8:21 "is I confesse in appearance more pressing."<sup>32</sup> His first strategy is to quickly remind his readers that even Augustine found this passage difficult and many others thought this text was what Peter had in mind when he said some of Paul's epistles were difficult to understand.<sup>33</sup> Consequently one should be cautious about building doctrine upon such a perplexing passage. With this caveat, Hakewill proceeds to offer the following interpretation. The creature can be delivered from bondage and vanity by being annihilated; a restitution is not required for deliverance. The more difficult question is how the creature is to be made a partaker of the liberty of the sons of God? It is unthinkable to Hakewill that anyone would think the creatures would receive the same inheritance as the blessed. What Paul means is that "*into the liberty of the sonnes of God*, is no more then [sic]

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<sup>30</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 452.

<sup>31</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 452.

<sup>32</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 452.

<sup>33</sup> The difficulty of this Pauline text is often brought up by seventeenth-century scholars. It is regularly collated with Peter's statement that some of Paul's epistles are hard to comprehend (2 Peter 3:16).

together with the liberty of the Sons of God, or, by reason of the liberty of the Sons of God, as Saint *Chrysostome* hath expounded it.”<sup>34</sup> So the creature will not actually partake of the liberty of God’s children; instead, the liberty of God’s children will be the occasion upon which the creatures will experience their own kind of liberty from corruption, that liberty being an annihilation.

### Restoration of the World

If seventeenth-century advocates of annihilationism among English writers are hard to come by, the same cannot be said for advocates of the world’s restoration. Examples lie readily at hand from the seventeenth century, even if one consults only the extant commentaries on Romans 8:19-21. William Cowper believes Paul has in mind the renewal of creation when he foretells the liberation of creation from its current bondage (Romans 8:19-21).<sup>35</sup> Yet Peter says that the heavens will pass away, the elements will melt and the earth will be burned (2 Peter 3:10-12), and the psalmist writes that the heavens will perish (Psalm 102:26). How is it then that Paul insists on the restoration of the creation? Cowper believes this question is easily answered if one compares Scripture with Scripture. The psalmist explains his own meaning of “perishing” when he refers to it as a “changing.” Paul merely describes what the changing will be. The creation will

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<sup>34</sup> Hakewill, *An Apologie of the Povver and Prouidence of God*, 453.

<sup>35</sup> William Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises Vpon the Eight Chapter to the Romanes Viz. 1 Heauen Opened. 2 the Right Way to Eternall Glory. 3 the Glorification of a Christian. Vwherein the Counsaile of God Concerning Mans Saluation Is So Manifested, That All Men May See the Ancient of Dayes, the Iudge of the World, in His Generall Iustice Court, Absolving the Christian from Sinne and Death. Which Is the First Benefit Wee Haue by Our Lord Iesus Christ. Written by Mr. William Cowper, Minister of Gods Word* (London : Printed by Thomas Snodham for William Firebrand, and Iohn Budge, and are to be sould at his shop at the great Southdoore of Paules, 1609), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library.

not change with respect to substance but only with respect to the qualities inherited because of sin. As silver and gold do not change substance when cleansed of their impurities, so too, the creation will not change substance when it is cleansed of its impurities. Hence creation is called “*new heavens and new earth*.”<sup>36</sup>

Andrew Willet also argues for a change in quality but not substance. He says he “detest[s]” the ancient Greek view that the heavens were incorruptible and would never undergo change.<sup>37</sup> Peter rebuked this position in 2 Peter 3, arguing that the heavens would indeed suffer enormous change. Willet equally rejects the annihilation of the world in spite of the testimony of Chrysostom and “most of the Greeke fathers” and a few scriptural texts that may seem to suggest such an idea.<sup>38</sup> Rather the substance of the physical world will remain but it will undergo such change that it will be “not the same but other heavens” that will be restored.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises*, 263.

<sup>37</sup> Andrew Willet, *Hexapla, That Is, a Six-Fold Commentarie Vpon the Most Diuine Epistle of the Holy Apostle S. Paul to the Romanes Wherein According to the Authors Former Method, Sixe Things Are Obserued in Euery Chapter ... : Wherein Are Handled the Greatest Points of Christian Religion ... : Diuided into Two Bookes* ([S.l.] : Printed by Cantrell Legge, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1611), 368, *Early English Books Online*, Harvard University Library. Willet was a Cambridge professor, Anglican cleric and biblical scholar. This work was not Willet’s first foray into the genre of biblical commentary. He had previously published commentaries on Genesis, Exodus and Daniel. These commentaries, along with his Romans commentary, share the same six-fold structure, or *hexapla*. Willet analyzes each biblical chapter in six different ways: 1) the text with its variant readings, 2) the argument and method of the chapter, 3) key questions raised by the chapter, 4) doctrinal topics, 5) controversial issues and 6) the use or application of the chapter’s contents to moral living.

<sup>38</sup> Willet, *Commentarie Vpon ... the Romanes*, 368. Willet quotes Psalm 102:27 and 2 Peter 3:10.

<sup>39</sup> Willet, *Commentarie Vpon ... the Romanes*, 368. Willett thinks he is supported by Gregory, Jerome and Pareus.

Later in the century, Thomas Horton addresses the creature's liberation from corruption in a sermon on Romans 8:21.<sup>40</sup> Horton poses the question of how the creature's deliverance from bondage will take place? He considers annihilationism to be "*repugnant*" even though it has "divers *Authors* of great note and eminency for it."<sup>41</sup> Consequently he first attempts to show why the destruction of the creation is incompatible with this text in Romans. First, Paul writes that creation earnestly desires what is to come. Since no created thing desires the extinction of itself but conversely desires exactly the opposite, then to claim that the creature greatly anticipates its non-being "is a thing wholly *incongruous and inconsistent* with the nature of the creature."<sup>42</sup>

Second, for a thing to be delivered from one state to another requires the continued existence of the thing in question. Inherent in the meaning of the term "deliverance" is the existence of the object following its deliverance. Horton provides an analogy: to have a creation subject to vanity being delivered from that vanity by means of extinction is like having a diseased person being delivered from their disease by dying. "For Annihilation can no otherwise be said to be a *Deliverance from corruption*, then as *Death* is said to be the *Remedy of all diseases*."<sup>43</sup> In sum, the very meaning of the word "deliverance" implies the continued of existence of creation.

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<sup>40</sup> Thomas Horton, *Forty six sermons upon the whole eighth chapter of the epistle of the apostle Paul to the Romans lately preached by ... Thomas Horton*, (London : Printed by A. Maxwell for Tho. Parkhurst ..., 1674), *Early English Books Online*, University of Illinois Library.

<sup>41</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 365. Horton names no one so it is difficult to determine whom he had in mind.

<sup>42</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 366.

<sup>43</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 366.

Horton's third argument against annihilationism relies on an analogy between creation and the sons of God. The sons of God are also in this life subject to vanity and corruption. However, when the elect are brought into the liberty of the sons of God, they will not be annihilated but be altered and renewed. The release of creation from its bondage to liberty will have a like effect. Since creation's liberty will be analogous to that of the sons of God, then creation will also be delivered by way of restoration and not extinction.

Fourth, Horton simply thinks it is highly improbable that such a grand testimony to the power of God as is creation would be allowed to perish. It is much more likely that they will stand as "*so many Pillars of his Greatness and Goodness to all eternity, as they prove to be in their excellent Variety.*"<sup>44</sup> Finally, Horton argues that without the heavens and the earth, there would be no dwelling place left for the damned and the fallen angels. Since they obviously will not be in heaven with the saints, they must needs be somewhere else. That somewhere else is somewhere in the new heavens and earth.<sup>45</sup>

Having shown how Romans 8:21 is inconsistent with an annihilationist perspective, Horton briefly adumbrates other biblical texts to support the dissolution of the heaven and earth, adding comments that attempt to negate the annihilationist interpretation.<sup>46</sup> Job 14:12 indicates that a time will come when the heavens will "be no more." The phrase 'no more' means "no more in that present state in which they now

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<sup>44</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 366.

<sup>45</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 367.

<sup>46</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 367-368.



are, but translated to a better and higher condition.”<sup>47</sup> When David uses ‘no more’ with respect to himself (Psalm 39:13), David does not mean he will cease to exist but that he will cease to exist in a certain manner.<sup>48</sup> So the phrase in Job means “not, No more *this*; but, No more *thus*.”<sup>49</sup>

Psalm 102:26 relates that the heavens will “perish” and “wax old as a garment.” In the same vein, Isaiah 34:4 predicts that “the Host of Heaven shall fall down, as a leaf from the Vine, and a Fig from the Fig-tree.”<sup>50</sup> These texts express the fact that creation is subject to annihilation with respect to its own nature. That is, creation does not have in its power the ability to perpetuate its existence forever. It is liable to annihilation in itself, but this does not prove that it will indeed be annihilated. God is able to preserve creation should he choose. In sum, these texts “do not so much conclude the Creatures Actual *extinction or abolition*, as rather their *disposition*, and *natural tendency thereunto*, considered in themselves.”<sup>51</sup> This natural tendency to decay can be overcome by God’s power.

Horton considers 2 Peter 3:10 as the chief weapon in the annihilationist’s arsenal yet he is not persuaded of their position.<sup>52</sup> The melting of the elements does not describe a complete destruction but an alteration of form, even as the melting of metal changes the

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<sup>47</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 367.

<sup>48</sup> Psalm 39:13—“O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.”

<sup>49</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 367.

<sup>50</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 367.

<sup>51</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 367. The tendency for creation to decay was the very thing Hakewill had attempted to refute.

<sup>52</sup> 2 Peter 3:10—“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

form of the metal but does not consume the substance of it. The burning of the earth is a burning that purifies, not one that destroys.<sup>53</sup>

Having dismissed the annihilationist interpretation, Horton takes up the cudgel to defend the renovation of the world. He asserts that the restorationist view enlists the support of an equal number of impressive divines as the opposing view and it is the view that “seems to be most *consonant and agreeable* to truth it self.”<sup>54</sup> Not only is the restorationist view supported by Romans 8:21<sup>55</sup> but it is consistent with Peter’s message in 2 Peter 3:10-13 and Acts 3:19-21. In Peter’s second letter, Peter compares the destruction of the world by water during the Deluge with the destruction of the world by fire in a coming day. As the Flood did not change the substance of the earth, so too the fire will not destroy the earth but change its fashion or qualities. Further, Peter urges his readers to holy living because a new heaven and earth is coming characterized by righteousness. The thrust of Peter’s exhortation would be significantly weakened if the heavens and earth were to perish. Finally, Peter actually refers to a “restitution” and a “refreshing” of all things in his sermon to the Jews (Acts 3:19, 21) and these terms do not indicate a destruction and annihilation but only a refurbishing.

The position of Cowper, Willet and Horton is defended at great length by Waite. Waite’s concern is on *how* the creation will be delivered from bondage to corruption. He claims there are only two avenues open. One way is for the creation to be annihilated, to

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<sup>53</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 368.

<sup>54</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 368.

<sup>55</sup> Here Horton has in mind his previous exposition of the term “deliverance.” The deliverance of creation spoken of by Paul is not only a deliverance *from* something but a deliverance *to* something, a fact proving the continued existence of creation.

be “...deprived of its Essence or Being...”<sup>56</sup> That which does not exist obviously cannot be subject to corruption or vanity. The second way for the creature to be delivered from the bondage to corruption is for the creation to be returned to its pre-fall state from which it will never cease. Which one of these two alternatives is the correct one is “...a knot worth unloosing...”<sup>57</sup> Waite attempts to untie this knot by considering the evidence for both annihilationism and renewal.

He first sounds the Scriptures for evidence that annihilation of the creation is the means whereby it will be delivered from corruption. He lands on four key texts that occupy his attention for considerable space: Psalm 102:26 (Waite includes Hebrews 1:11 and Job 14:12 with this text since Hebrews 1:11 quotes it and Job 14:12 expresses a similar idea), Luke 21:33, Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10.<sup>58</sup> He notes that “many learned men” have concluded from these texts that the world will be destroyed while “onely some few” have resisted such a conclusion.<sup>59</sup> Although the scholastic divines advanced several means by which God would bring about such a destruction by fire—

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<sup>56</sup> John Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 145.

<sup>57</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 146. A few pages later Waite reveals he does not consider unanimity of opinion on this doctrine essential: “But whether of these two wayes will the better stand with the sense of the Apostles words, is the grand quaere, and I conceive this to be one of those abstruse points...concerning which it may be lawfull or safe, even to the best Divines, to demurre upon, to be ignorant of, or to dissent in, without breach of charitie, or hurt of pietie.” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 153-154.

<sup>58</sup> Psalm 102:26—“They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.” Luke 21:33—“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. Revelation 21:1—“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” 2 Peter 3:10—“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.”

<sup>59</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 158.

believing that they were “more Eagle-eyed than the rest”—the truth is that God has not revealed specifically the manner of the conflagration.<sup>60</sup>

What is notable about Waite’s discussion of annihilationism is that he doesn’t really critically analyze it at all. Aside from the quoting of the four scriptural texts that purportedly support the destruction of the world, he never examines the works of the “many learned men” to see why they interpreted these texts as they did. Instead of reviewing Christian interpretations of the four texts, he gives his attention exclusively to non-Christian Greek thought on whether or not the world will one day be dissolved.<sup>61</sup>

Waite’s cursory treatment of annihilationism as the means of the creatures’ liberation from bondage is supplemented with his robust treatment of the other option—the deliverance will be achieved by means of a purging or “mutation,” and “most are of this judgement.”<sup>62</sup> The substance of the creation will remain, but what is corruptible will be destroyed. Waite himself accepts this interpretation as the correct one and proceeds to defend it, first by revisiting three of the four biblical texts he cited earlier that seemed to support the destruction of the world.

Waite’s handling of these three texts—Psalm 102:26, Luke 21:33 and Revelation 21:1—employs a distinction rooted in Aristotle’s ontology that gained wide acceptance

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<sup>60</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 159.

<sup>61</sup> Several pages are devoted to the opinions of a few classical writers; Plato, Porphyry, Orpheus and Hesiod believed the world would never end, though it did have a beginning. Xenophanes and Aristotle believed the world had both no beginning and no ending. Plime, Proclus, Simplicius and Averroes followed Aristotle. Some have tried to reinterpret Aristotle so as to agree with Moses’ account in Genesis but Waite is not convinced.

<sup>62</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 169. It seems somewhat strange that Waite earlier claimed that many favored abolition of the world while “onely some few” rejected this position. Here he affirms that “most” accept the notion and cites Vossius as saying it is “the more common opinion”. See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 170.

among church theologians of all stripes. That distinction consists of a differentiation between a thing's substance and its accidents. The substance of any object is made up of all the essential properties of that object. The object's accidents are the non-essential, or accidental, properties of that object. Accidental properties can change without changing the substance of the object. Armed with this distinction, Waite, like so many of his forbears and contemporaries, brings it to bear on the scriptural texts which suggest the world's demise.

In Psalm 102:26, the psalmist proclaims "They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed." What perishes are those accidental properties of the world that need to be purged from it rather than the world itself.<sup>63</sup> The sense of the verse is not that the heavens and earth will be annihilated, but that they will undergo a change. This change is nothing less than a renewal; hence the psalmist can legitimately say "they shall perish, because they shall not be the same, but others: others, not for substance, but for quality."<sup>64</sup> God will change them as a vesture and a vesture can be changed in one of two ways; it can be gotten rid of completely or it can be changed according to its accidents, i.e., it can be washed, dyed, ornamented, etc. without changing its substance.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Waite relies heavily upon Calvin here, quoting several large paragraphs from his Psalms commentary.

<sup>64</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 176. This quote is Waite's translation of Calvin's comments except for the clause following the colon; Waite adds that clause by way of explanation. Waite directs his readers to Gerhardus Vossius's work in which he compiles a list of theologians who has held to this interpretation.

<sup>65</sup> While discussing Psalm 102:26, Waite brings in Job 14:12 as well—"So man lieth down, and riseth not: till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. On this verse Waite writes, "Even as when we see a lump of Metall melted, (be it of Gold, Silver, Lead, Tinne, or any other) the drosse we know is taken out, and the substance is thereby refined, but yet the same substance still remains: so may we also conceive of the Heavens, when they shall be burned and purged." See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 182.

The substance/accidents distinction resurfaces in his comments on Luke 21:33, Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10 as well. One solution to the Lucan passage—“Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away—is to recognize that Jesus is speaking by way of comparison. His emphasis is that his words are so sure, so stable and so enduring that heaven and earth would have to disappear ere his words would ever fail. While noting that this is the sense given to the verse by Piscator, Calvin, Musculus and Bucer, Waite himself is content to utilize the same argument here as he did with Psalm 102:26; the heaven and earth will not pass away in substance but in its accidents. Revelation 21:1 and 2 Peter 3:10 yield to the same treatment. It is the accidental properties of the heavens and earth that will pass away and be burned instead of their substances.

The substance/accidents distinction is helpful not only for understanding these texts about heaven and earth, but also to understand the regeneration of an individual person as well. Waite uses the latter as an analogy for the former. Paul calls believers “new creatures” (2 Corinthians 5:17) but they are not new ontologically or substantively but qualitatively. The “old man” that is to be put off (Ephesians 4:22-24) is a reference to “vicious qualities” and the new man that is to be put on refers to the renewal of God’s image.<sup>66</sup> Regeneration does not create a new substance. A few pages later, Waite again returns to this analogy, this time to support his contention that ‘create’ need not mean ‘create out of nothing’. According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, those who are in Christ are new creatures, not new in respect of substance, but new in respect of qualities or “divine

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<sup>66</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 189-190.

habits.”<sup>67</sup> He thinks Aquinas’ distinction between being of nature and being of grace addresses the same issue. Our being of nature is corrupted, having been derived from Adam. Our being of grace is what we receive from Christ. So Waite then quotes Zanchi with approval: “there is a double, or twofold Creation of men, the first, and the Second, and both of them in Christ and by Christ. The former is the substantiall Creation of our Nature, the latter the qualitative Creation of our Grace....<sup>68</sup>” Similarly, creation received its substantial creation in the beginning, and will receive its qualitative creation when God creates the new heavens and the new earth.

Having satisfied himself that the preceding biblical texts do not champion the annihilation of the world, Waite brings forth further arguments for the destruction of the universe that he thinks pose a more difficult problem.<sup>69</sup> The first is the fact that no place was found for the heavens and the earth (Revelation 20:11) and the second is John’s statement that there was no more sea (Revelation 21:1).

In Revelation 20:11, John narrates a vision: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.” Earlier in the book, John reports that the dragon and the evil angels were defeated by Michael and his angels; consequently “neither was their place found any more in heaven” (12:8). These two texts both indicate a place could not be found, either for the earth and heaven or for the wicked angels. Waite believes the conjoining of these two texts creates a problem for those who espouse a restoration of the

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<sup>67</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 201.

<sup>68</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 204.

<sup>69</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 192.

heavens and the earth. Since the fallen angels' place in heaven was eternally gone, then consistency of interpretation would require that no place would ever be found for the heaven and earth. As Waite puts it, "And if the place of the first heaven and earth should be no more found than theirs [the angels], then should it never be found."<sup>70</sup>

To rebut this conclusion, Waite suggests that there are two ways in which a place can not be found. First of all, a place can not be found because the place does not exist. The second way a place can not be found is because the place cannot be detected. Revelation 12:8 ought to be understood in light of the first sense; a place in heaven for the fallen angels cannot be found because no place for them in heaven exists "by way of relation to them, and formally."<sup>71</sup> Heaven exists, but there is no place within heaven for the fallen angels. Waite is not saying the place they had in heaven went out of existence, for he says that "that place which was theirs, may be found, is found and is known; but other (*locata*) are, and shall be placed in it, *John* 14:2."<sup>72</sup> So the place in heaven exists but it does not exist for the fallen angels to occupy. In this sense no place was found for them in heaven.

So what does Revelation 20:11 mean when it says that "there was found no place for them" [heaven and earth]? Well it does not mean that no place existed for heaven and earth to occupy because John saw a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1). What there was no place for was a heaven and an earth which had been polluted by man's sin. After Christ's second coming, no place will be found for anything still affected by the sin

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<sup>70</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 193.

<sup>71</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 195.

<sup>72</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 195. In *John* 14:2, Jesus says he is going away to prepare a place for the disciples.



of Adam. Christ will purge the corruption from the heavens and the earth and infuse them with new qualities so that they can rightly be called new heavens and new earth.

The final passage that might be used to prove there will be an end to the heavens and the earth is Revelation 21:1b: “and there was no more sea.” Though acknowledging that the term “sea” has been interpreted as referring to the turmoil of this current life because Scripture on occasion uses it as such, Waite does not think it should be interpreted allegorically but literally. His reason is contextual; since the heavens and the earth mentioned in the verse are literal, there is “no good reason” to interpret ‘sea’ as a metaphor.<sup>73</sup> He agrees with Augustine (*City of God* 20.16) that the sea will either be consumed by the fires of the final conflagration or it will be changed so as to be ever tranquil and peaceful. In other words, there will be no more sea as we currently know it, but it, like the heavens and the earth, will be renewed.

Two further arguments against the eternity of the heavens and the earth can be found in Isaiah 65:17: “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” It could be argued that to create means to make something out of nothing; if so, this text would suggest that God will not restore the current creation but will make a brand new one. To condense his lengthy argument, Waite proposes that the verb ‘create’ need not always mean ‘to create out of nothing.’ In Isaiah 66:22, Isaiah states that God will “make” a new heavens and earth as well as “create” them. Since “make” does not imply *ex nihilo*, then “create” need not always imply *ex nihilo* either.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 212.

<sup>74</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 207. At this juncture, Waite also draws on the philological work of Pererius and Keckerman. For example, Waite claims that Pererius shows that the word ‘create’ in

The second issue Isaiah 65:17 raises comes from the latter half of the verse which declares “and the former [heavens and earth] shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” If the heavens and earth were to be restored instead of abolished, it would be difficult to argue that they would not be remembered or come to mind. Waite’s answer relies upon another distinction. One can not remember something in one of two ways—“absolutely, or comparatively.”<sup>75</sup> Now God, being omniscient, cannot forget in an absolute sense. As Lombard argued, God’s knowledge cannot increase or decrease. His knowledge of the old heavens and earth will not disappear even after He has created the new heavens and earth. The same situation is true of human sin. God indeed promises not to remember the sins of his people any more (Jeremiah 31:34), but this does not mean God will forget them in an absolute sense. When God forgets human sin, he does not punish it. When Jesus taught that a woman forgets the pains of labor after the birth of the child, he did not mean that the woman cannot recall the pain of labor (John 16:21). Yet the presence of the child brings such joy that the pain of labor recedes into the background. The woman doesn’t forget absolutely, but only comparatively. Even so, the old heavens and earth will not be forgotten absolutely, but comparatively. The glory of the new heavens and earth will bring so much joy that in comparison, the old heavens and earth will not come to mind.<sup>76</sup>

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Genesis, in addition to meaning ‘generation out of nothing’, can also mean “production out of some praeexistent matter, not naturally apt for any such things, as is produced out of it.” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 206-207.

<sup>75</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 208.

<sup>76</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 209-211.

Waite gives extra time to the continued existence of the sun, moon and stars in light of the biblical material that suggests their future demise. Although Isaiah 60:19 indicates that the sun “shall be no more thy light by day” and the moon “give light unto thee,” this in no way allows one to “conclude infallibly” that these heavenly bodies as well as planets and stars will disappear in the new creation.<sup>77</sup> The function that the sun fulfills in the present earth will indeed one day cease; it will not be necessary for light given the presence of the glory of God on earth. However, since God will renew the heavens, “...it is not probable that this new Heaven shall be lesse adorned than the old one, or lesse glorious.”<sup>78</sup> The sun will continue to exist as will the stars.<sup>79</sup>

How then should one understand Jesus’ comment that one day the stars would fall from heaven (Matthew 24:29)? After first noting that the interpretation of Jesus’ words has not been uniform in both the ancient and modern writers, Waite recollects that the prophets frequently spoke of the darkening of the stars when speaking about coming judgment upon a nation, all said judgments being “examples and patterns of the last and great judgement.”<sup>80</sup> Hence, a case can be made that Jesus is speaking metaphorically. And in spite of Musculus and Bucer’s belief that the stars will literally fall from heaven, “judicious *Calvin*, and many other learned Divines” do not believe that “the Starres shall

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<sup>77</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 222.

<sup>78</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 222-223.

<sup>79</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 223. Here Waite directs the reader to Aristotle’s conception of the stars as of “the same essence and nature with the Heavens” and of “the same matter and forme.” So if the heavens will be renewed, it is logical to conclude that the stars will be also.

<sup>80</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 226. Waite quotes these prophetic passages to illustrate his point: Joel 3:15, Isaiah 13:10, Ezekiel 32:7-8, Joel 2:10, Isaiah 34:4-5.

really be separated from their Orbs.”<sup>81</sup> Rather, it will only appear that the stars are falling from heaven because of the “...jumbling, or shaking of the Fabrick of Heaven....”<sup>82</sup>

Other scholars suggest that a plethora of meteors during the day of judgment will account for the appearance of stars falling from heaven.

The scholastics resisted the notion that the stars would actually fall from their orbs and so debated the manner in which Jesus’ words would be fulfilled. Waite himself grants that if God is so willing “...he can pull the knots out of the Timber, and yet the rest of the substance remain”—his point being that God could pull the stars from their orbs without the orbs themselves being disturbed.<sup>83</sup> There would be little “consequence in Divinitie” if one were to accept such an interpretation.<sup>84</sup> But if one were to approach the text scholastically, i.e., philosophically and rationally, then there are three reasons to accept the scholastic position that the stars would not be removed from their orbs. First, like the heavens, the natural motion of the stars is circular, not linear and not omnidirectional.<sup>85</sup> So if the stars should fall, it would necessitate that they cease their natural motion and fall downward towards the earth.

Second, Scripture does not say the planets or the sun or the moon will fall but only the stars. So if the sun, moon and planets remain in the heavens, there is no reason

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<sup>81</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 229. In Aristotle’s cosmology, stars were attached to solid celestial spheres.

<sup>82</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 229-230.

<sup>83</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 231.

<sup>84</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 231-232.

<sup>85</sup> Waite is recounting Aristotle’s understanding of motion and bodies. Every body has a natural way of moving. The sun, moon and stars move in a circular pattern, the most perfect of all movements. The elements move linearly or in straight lines, up or down. Compound bodies move omnidirectionally, i.e., in a compound motion.

to conclude that the shaking of the heavens necessitates a falling of the stars. As Waite puts it, “Now when Heaven is shaken, why these should be loosened from their eight sphaere, more than any of the Planets out of their severall Orbs, in nature we can give no reason.”<sup>86</sup> Third, if Aristotle and Scaliger are correct in believing that the stars and the heavens are of the same substance, albeit of different densities, then it is hard to conceive via natural reason how the denser part (the stars) could be separated from the more vacuous part. Hence, the scholastics rejected the idea that the stars would literally fall from the heavens. Waite adds that “...the Scriptures sometimes speak of things, not as they are in themselves, but as they appear unto men...”<sup>87</sup> Hence the words of Jesus may be understood phenomenologically; humans will be thrown into such confusion and terror at the coming of Christ that they will think the stars are falling.

One final option to explain Jesus’ comment about the stars falling is to surmise that what is falling is the corruption that infects them rather than the stars themselves.

Here Waite quotes Aquinas as saying that corporeal bodies

. . . cannot properly be said to be the subject of infection by fault, yet by the fault of another, (namely of man) for whose use in some sort they were made, there may be a certain incongruitie, infection, or impuritie from their first estate put upon them, the which if it were not removed, would keep them from a better, & a more perfect estate, therefore will God purge them in the fire, at the last day.<sup>88</sup>

Waite does not commit to this interpretation of Jesus’ words but is content to acknowledge it as a possibility.

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<sup>86</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 238.

<sup>87</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 240.

<sup>88</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 242.

The preceding review of several writers' thoughts on Romans 8:19-22 establishes the conclusion that many of them believed the new heavens and earth would be delivered from their bondage to corruption by means of a cleansing rather than an annihilation. If there was a great debate between those who held to one position and those who held the other, as some of the comments mentioned above seem to suggest, then that debate was likely the result of English divines interacting with their counterparts on the Continent. Amongst seventeenth-century English authors, believers in annihilationism were scarce, whereas believers in the renovation of creation were plentiful. This broad agreement on the restoration of the world did not extend to more detailed questions. One such question focused on the identity of the heavens that would be renewed.

### **What Heavens Will Burn?**

The cosmic geography of seventeenth-century English divines varied little from the Aristotelian model they had inherited from medieval scholasticism. That geography placed the earth at the center of the universe surrounded by a three-tiered heaven. Waite says Scripture identifies the three heavens as the "*Coelum Aereum*" where the birds fly, the "*Coelum Aethereum* or the Heavens sidereal" above the element of Fire and where the stars are located, and the "*Coelum altissimum, or sublimissimum, or beatarum sedium*" where the blessed reside.<sup>89</sup> As an appendix to his commentary on Romans 8:19-22, Waite considers whether the restoration of the creature described by Paul would envelop the ethereal heavens, the realm above the moon, or would it be confined to the

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<sup>89</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 353.

airy heavens?<sup>90</sup> A singular answer to that question does not emerge amongst those who addressed it. Proponents for both alternatives can be found

### The Scope of the Fire: Earth and Sublunar Heavens

Those who restricted the purging fire to the earth and the air above it appear early and late in the seventeenth century. Joseph Mede, a catalyst for the reinvigoration of a future millennium (see chapter 3), makes a few remarks about the fire prophesied by Peter in 2 Peter 3:10. As was noted earlier, Mede held that Peter used the term “world” when talking about the Flood but used the phrase “heaven and earth” when he spoke about the future conflagration; the heaven and earth to be consumed by fire is the same world that was inundated by the Flood.<sup>91</sup> That antediluvian world is “no other than the sublunary world” composed of the air above the earth and the earth itself.<sup>92</sup> Consequently, the fire’s scope will embrace the earth and its atmosphere.

A bit later Mede provides additional reasons for restricting heavens to the sublunar heavens.<sup>93</sup> No one has ever thought the empyreal heaven would be subjected to destruction by fire and thus Mede feels no need to even consider the notion. He also fails to find any reason to believe the ethereal heaven is in Peter’s purview. Given the size of this heaven and the number of heavenly bodies it contains, the fact that there is no

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<sup>90</sup> No one believed the empyreal heaven would undergo a cleansing fire since it was the abode of Christ, the saints and angels.

<sup>91</sup> See page 99. The Flood inundated “the world that then was” (2 Peter 3:6); the conflagration to come will burn “the heavens and the earth which are now” (2 Peter 3:7). For Mede, Peter simply replaced “heavens and earth” for “world”.

<sup>92</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 12.

<sup>93</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 17.

grounds for believing the Fall or the Flood affected the ethereal heaven, and given the absence of any evidence that this heaven is infected by evil spirits, there exists no reasons to believe the ethereal heaven will be in need of restoration. Mede concludes that the sublunary heavens are “the subject of this conflagration.”<sup>94</sup> With regard to the heavens “passing away” (3:10), Mede contends the word is a Hebraism indicating a change from one state to another. Since the Flood did not annihilate the world but brought about a change of its condition, so too the fire will not obliterate the world but institute a change to a better state.<sup>95</sup>

Late in the century, Thomas Burnet, also a cautious millennialist like Mede, lays out a similar position in his *Sacred Theory of the World*.<sup>96</sup> The world which will be consumed by fire must be understood as a reference to the sublunar world alone. The sun, moon and stars and their environs will not be affected by the coming flames. What is noteworthy is that Burnet does not offer a theological reason for limiting the reach of the fire such as the argument that the effects of Adam’s sin did not reach to the ethereal heavens. Instead, Burnet offers material reasons. The ethereal heavens are not made of a flammable substance and their distance from the earth provides a fire break; flames from

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<sup>94</sup> Mede, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Prophetie of Saint Peter*, 17.

<sup>95</sup> Mede wonders aloud about the effects of the fire on evil spirits that inhabit the sublunary heaven. He concludes that though the fire will not actually burn them, they will be “dejected from those high mansions, and bestowed in some lower place,” a position he thinks is supported by Jude 6: “And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day.”

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth Containing an Account of the Original of the Earth, and of All the General Changes Which It Hath Already Undergone, or Is to Undergo Till the Consummation of All Things* (London : Printed by R.N. for Walter Kettilby, 1697), *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library. His views appear in Book Three of the single volume. Page numbers in the footnotes citing Burnet refer to the pages in Book Three. Burnet starts the numbering of pages anew with each book.



this planet could never reach them. Hence, it is only “this Earth and its furniture” which will undergo destruction.<sup>97</sup>

A third individual who limited the cleansing fire to the earth and the airy heaven is the eminent botanist John Ray (1627-1705). Besides publishing numerous scientific works, Ray also penned a few essays blending his interest in science and his theological training.<sup>98</sup> One such essay centers on the natural history of the earth from its creation to its future conflagration.<sup>99</sup> At one point, Ray poses the question of whether the fire that will purge the earth will extend to the ethereal heavens or will it envelope only the airy heavens.<sup>100</sup> He settles for the latter view for two reasons.<sup>101</sup> First—and echoing Mede’s reasoning—Peter compares the destruction of the earth by fire to the destruction of the earth by water during the Flood. Since the Flood did not reach to the ethereal heavens, the fire will likewise not reach so far.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Burnet, *The Theory of the Earth*, 4. Burnet does allow for the possibility of the ethereal heavens undergoing a change at some point in the future, but humans have no knowledge of such an event.

<sup>98</sup> Ray took holy orders in 1660 and had preached in his college chapel at Cambridge numerous times previous to that. His career path veered exclusively towards science when he refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity of 1662 which, among other things, required individuals to swear that the Solemn League and Covenant did not bind those who had sworn allegiance to it. Ray thought it might just be binding on those persons. He himself apparently never pledged an oath to the Solemn League and Covenant.

<sup>99</sup> John Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses concerning the dissolution and changes of the world wherein the primitive chaos and creation, the general deluge, fountains, formed stones, sea-shells found in the earth, subterraneous trees, mountains, earthquakes, vulcanoes, the universal conflagration and future state, are largely discussed and examined* (London : Printed for Samuel Smith ..., 1692), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library.

<sup>100</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 187.

<sup>101</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 187. Ray says he will explain the two reasons using “Reuterus’s words” though it is unclear if he is quoting Reuter verbatim. Although relying on Reuterus, Ray’s two reasons mirror some of the thoughts of Mede and Burnet as well.

<sup>102</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 188. Ray cites Beza, Augustine and the *Glossa Ordinalia* as advancing a similar opinion.

Ray's second reason for limiting the fire to the airy heavens is that the ethereal heavens are simply too far away to be affected by the fire on the earth and, in addition, scripture, when it does speak of the heavens' demise, uses language suggesting "a consenesency and decay" rather than a sudden cataclysm.<sup>103</sup> Like Burnet, Ray concludes that bodies in outer space may indeed be destroyed, but when that might be or what means God might use is known only to him.<sup>104</sup> Ray does not, as did scholastic theology in general, limit the fire to the airy heavens because he thinks the ethereal heavens are incorruptible, requiring no cleansing. Ray considers this idea "an idle and ill grounded conceit of the *Peripateticks*."<sup>105</sup> The heavens are subject to change, a fact proved by the advent of comets and new stars and the observation of "*macule* or opaque Concretions being commonly generated and dissolved in them."<sup>106</sup> Therefore, to restrict the final fire to the aerial heavens based upon the supposed constancy of the ethereal heavens is without merit.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, in the final analysis, Ray does limit the final conflagration to the earth and its heaven.

#### The Scope of the Fire: Earth, Sublunar Heavens and Empyrean Heavens

Not everyone restricted the fire to the earth and airy heavens, believing instead that it would cleanse the ethereal heavens as well. This view appears obliquely in John

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<sup>103</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 190.

<sup>104</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 190. Ray references Burnet in *Miscellaneous discourses* but it is not known if he is simply aping Burnet's opinion or had arrived at it independently.

<sup>105</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 189.

<sup>106</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 189.

<sup>107</sup> Ray, *Miscellaneous discourses*, 189. Ray adds some scriptural texts which appear to indicate that the ethereal heavens are subject to change: Psalm 102:25-26, Matthew 24:35, Isaiah 51:6 and 65:17.

Downname's *The summe of sacred divinitie* in 1620.<sup>108</sup> Downname believes creation will not be annihilated but renewed but he warns against speculating much on this renewal. He does go so far as to say that the saints will not be the only creatures to experience glory; all creatures and the "whole frame of Gods Creation" will also undergo renewal, resulting in their incorruptibility.<sup>109</sup> Since the creatures felt the consequences of man's sin, they shall also participate in the consequences of man's glorification, i.e., they shall "put on new Liueries".<sup>110</sup>

Downname collates several texts to enlarge on this renewal. He references Paul's words in Romans 8 where Paul extends the renewal to all of creation, "exempting nothing," a renewal that according to Downname includes not only the heaven and earth but animals, plants and even metals.<sup>111</sup> Isaiah spoke of this renewal as the new heavens and earth in 65:17 and 66:22, and Peter denotes it as the restoration of all things. (Acts 3:21).

Consistent with many of his contemporaries, Downname accepts the idea that the renovation to come will affect the "qualitie" but not the "substance" of the heavens and earth.<sup>112</sup> The "deformitie" that infects the creation will be removed but the "nature" and

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<sup>108</sup> John Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie First Briefly & Methodically Propounded and Then More Largly & Cleerely Handled and Explained / Published by John Downname* (London : Printed by Willi: Stansby for William Barret, [1620?]), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library. The work was republished in 1625 and 1628. The 1628 edition will be cited in this chapter. The text of all three editions is identical.

<sup>109</sup> John Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie First Briefly & Methodically Propounded: And Then More Largly & Cleerely Handled and Explained. Published by Iohn Downname Batchelor in Diuinitie* (London: Printed by Willi: Stansby and are to be sold by Geo: Hodges, [ca. 1628?]), 549, *Early English Books Online*, Folger Shakespeare Library.

<sup>110</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 549.

<sup>111</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 549.

<sup>112</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 550.

“substance” of it will remain. This is not to say that the renewed creation will simply be a return to the Edenic state. Downname claims the renewed creation will be “better and a purer then[sic] the first.”<sup>113</sup> Creation will be characterized by righteousness and it will attain a kind of glory befitting it, though it will not participate in the heavenly glory of the saints.<sup>114</sup> Downname refuses to speculate further, encouraging the reader to be satisfied with these few basic facts “and not to feed ourselues with vaine and curious speculations, which neither it is profitable to know, nor lawfull to enquire.”<sup>115</sup> The right use of this teaching is to encourage holy and patient living.

A few short years after Downname, Edward Elton continues Downname’s trajectory in his published sermons on Romans 8. Like Downname, he does not directly address the question of what will be subject to the purging fire, but that he thinks it will encompass the ethereal heavens as well as the airy heavens seems clear from several remarks. He begins his exegesis of verse 19 with the question of the identity of the creature.<sup>116</sup> Acknowledging that this question “doth much trouble interpreters,” Elton says he will give an answer that is contextually appropriate and consistent with other Scripture.<sup>117</sup> His

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<sup>113</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 550.

<sup>114</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 551.

<sup>115</sup> Downname, *The Summe of Sacred Diuinitie*, 551.

<sup>116</sup> Edward Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian Described: Or an Explication of the Eight Chapter of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans Wherein the Sanctified Sinners Heauen Vpon Earth Is Layed Open, with Explication of the Comfort of It to as Many as Are So Qualified. Deliuered in Sundrie Sermons by Edward Elton, Bachelour in Diuinitie, and Preacher of Gods Word at Saint Mary Magdalens Barmondsey Neare London. And Now by Him Published, Intending the Good and Sauing Comfort of Euery True Beleeuing Soule That Shall Please to Read It* (London : Printed by Richard Field for Robert Mylburne and are to be sold at the great south doore of Pauls, 1623), *Early English Books Online*, Bodleian Library.

<sup>117</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 465.

answer is that the creature refers to “the whole frame of the world, consisting of the coelestiall and elementary region, as reverend *Beza* expoundeth it, that is, the visible heavens with all their goodly furniture, of staires, and of celestiall bodies, and the earth with her ornaments, and the other elements.”<sup>118</sup> The creature then refers to the entirety of the visible universe.

The creature longs for deliverance because it is now subject to vanity, not of its own accord, but because God has subjected it to vanity because of man’s sin. Whereas some of his Elton’s contemporaries restricted the effects of Adam’s sin to the sublunar world, Elton maintains that all of creation has lost its original integrity and “is now under a fleeting, fraile, and vanishing state and condition, and now subject to corruption....Now the heavens, the earth, and the elements are subject to mutability, to alteration and change, and to be dissolved.”<sup>119</sup> Even the stars “with their influence...infect the aire,” and the air infects human and animal life.<sup>120</sup> When lining out his doctrinal conclusions after his exposition, Elton reiterates that the heavens are “liable to corruption and dissolution” even if less so than the earth.<sup>121</sup> This is the dissolution spoken of by the psalmist (Psalm 102:26) and Peter (2 Peter 3:11).

According to Romans 8:21, the corruptibility of the creature will be succeeded by its being set free from its bondage to corruption, and Elton remains consistent in his understanding of the creature. As in verse 19, Elton interprets the creature to refer to the

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<sup>118</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 465.

<sup>119</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 478.

<sup>120</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 478-479. Creation actually sustains the ungodly who refuse to extol the God of creation, and the ungodly use creation to fulfill their wicked desires. So in this way too is creation subject to vanity.

<sup>121</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 481.

celestial heavens with their “furniture” as well as the earth with its elements.<sup>122</sup> The creation will enjoy a specific dimension of the freedom of the sons of God, which Elton takes to be freedom from corruption and mortality. It will possess its original integrity by undergoing a restoration even as Peter promised (Acts 3:21). As for passages of Scripture that seem to forecast the destruction of the heavens and earth, Elton utilizes the standard distinction between substance and properties. Creation will not be made new with respect to its substance but in respect to its qualities.<sup>123</sup>

It comes as no surprise that Waite addresses the reach of the fire in an appendix to his treatise on Romans 8:19-22. Waite claims that the Catholic divines “hold stiffely, that the *Coelum Aereum*, not *AEtherium* is it that shall be burned with Fire, the Airie, Heaven, not the Sidereall, Sphaericall, or that above the Element of Fire, because this they conceive to have bin more corrupted then the other.”<sup>124</sup> As an example of this claim, he recalls Aquinas’ comment that Peter uses the plural “heavens” to refer to the air (2 Peter 3:10). Peter uses the plural “because of the divers Regions of it, and because it hath more Hemisphers in it than one.”<sup>125</sup> In this way Aquinas restricts the burning to the *coelum aereum*.

Waite disagrees with Aquinas, arguing that when the term ‘heavens’ is found in Scripture, “somewhat more then the Aire onely is to be understood.”<sup>126</sup> Listing several

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<sup>122</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 498.

<sup>123</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 495-496.

<sup>124</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 351-352.

<sup>125</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 352.

<sup>126</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 355. Waite recognizes that philosophers had distinguished between “*medio Aere*” and “*infimus Aer*” and that both may be called ‘heaven’ but recognizes that this

scriptural references, Waite claims that the *Coelum aereum* appears in the singular when it is to be distinguished from the other two heavens.<sup>127</sup> In the plural, it often designates the ethereal heavens. The ethereal heavens open for the descent of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus at his baptism (Matthew 3:16); they opened again to allow Stephen to see Jesus at the right hand of God just prior to his death (Acts 7:56); and it is the ethereal heavens which declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1).<sup>128</sup>

His second argument to prove that more than just the *coelum aereum* will be purged in the final conflagration is the distinction Peter makes between the “heavens” and the “elements” (2 Peter 3:10).<sup>129</sup> One of the four elements is the air. Waite’s argument, which is implied rather than spelled out, is that Peter cannot be referring to the air under the term heavens since air is one of the elements. Consequently, the heavens that are purged must be different from the element of air above the earth, and “neither can the skill of *Aquinas*, or *Estius* upon this place, by all their evasions, avoid it [i.e., this distinction between heavens and elements].”<sup>130</sup> As for Augustine’s contention that Peter’s reference to the Flood necessarily limits the coming fire to the earth and airy heavens,<sup>131</sup> Waite’s answer is to argue that Peter’s comparison was “not between the

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distinction does not appear in Scripture. Both *medio Aere* and *infirmus Aer* are “parts of the same Aereall Heaven, and therefore receive...the same denomination with the whole” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 354-355.

<sup>127</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 354. The references he cites are Matthew 6:26, Psalm 104:12, I Kings 18:45 and Leviticus 26:19.

<sup>128</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 353.

<sup>129</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 355.

<sup>130</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 355.

<sup>131</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 356. Augustine’s explanation is clearer than Waite’s brief summary. Augustine plainly distinguishes between the lower heavens and the higher heavens. The higher

Heavens that then perished, and these that now are...but between the world that then was” and the current world.<sup>132</sup> In other words, Augustine, like Mede and Ray, argued that the world that perished in the Flood is the same world that will be consumed by the fire. Waite’s argument is that the exact opposite is the point Peter is making. The world that perished in the Flood is not the same world that will be purged by fire. The waters covered only the earth and did not encompass the heavens.<sup>133</sup> However, the purging that is to come will be of a different sort altogether. It will be of far greater magnitude, involving the heavens as well as the earth.<sup>134</sup>

Further, Psalm 102:25-26 states that the heavens will perish. Consistent with his earlier definition of ‘heavens,’ Waite understands the word as referring to the realm of the moon and stars based on Psalm 8:3—“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained.” This verse clearly locates the moon and stars in the heavens and the heavens will perish; that is, they will not “escape change” even though they would be the most likely of all objects to escape it in

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heavens “remain in their integrity”. They did not perish in the Flood nor will they in the coming judgment. But the lower heavens were affected by the Flood and will be affected by the coming judgment. See *City of God* 20. 24.

<sup>132</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 357.

<sup>133</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 357.

<sup>134</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 358. As to the elements that will burn, Waite informs us that Beda thinks all four will be burnt; two will be completely annihilated by the flames and two—air and earth, i.e., the new heavens and the new earth—will remain. Others hold that all the elements except fire will be consumed, since it seems impossible that fire could destroy fire. Waite adopts Aquinas’ position that though the fire that shall consume the elements will be of the same substance as normal fire, its “calefactive power” will arise directly from the power of God and not “its own essential Principles.”<sup>134</sup> Thus God will provide the power for the fire of the conflagration to consume all the elements, including fire. Waite is quick to add that the fire will not annihilate the elements but only cleanse them “from their grosser attracted qualities.” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 358-360.



comparison to all other objects.<sup>135</sup> Yet they will change by being subject to the fire that will encompass both the airy heavens and the ethereal heavens.

### Who Is the Creature?

Virtually all English preachers and scholars of the seventeenth century wrestle with the question of the identity of the creature that will experience liberation from bondage (Romans 8:21). The question becomes the very first issue Waite considers in his treatise. His assessment is that “truly this is an hard Text of Scripture,”<sup>136</sup> and his procedure is to try to find out the Holy Spirit’s meaning of the text from the “contextualls.”<sup>137</sup> Would the entire created order be set free or would some parts of it be left out in the renovation of the world? As one might surmise, proponents of both positions can be found.

### The Creature Is Not the Entire Creation

Two well-known figures of the seventeenth century postulated that some limitation must be put on the meaning of the term ‘creature’—Andrew Willet (1562-1621) and Thomas Manton (1620-1677). Early in the century, Andrew Willet addressed the identity of the creature at length in his commentary on Romans.<sup>138</sup> Adopting a six-

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<sup>135</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 361.

<sup>136</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 17. He claims this text is one of the difficult passages in Paul’s letters of which Peter wrote (2 Peter 3:16).

<sup>137</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 18.

<sup>138</sup> Andrew Willet, *Hexapla, that is, A six-fold commentarie vpon the most diuine Epistle of the holy apostle S. Paul to the Romanes wherein according to the authors former method, sixe things are obserued in euery chapter ... : wherein are handled the greatest points of Christian religion ... : diuided*

fold analysis of each chapter, the topic of the creature's identity surfaces in the third analytical section where Willet addresses important questions generated by the text. Material relating to the creature's identity appears in two places—question 27 and question 34.<sup>139</sup>

As he approaches the question of the identity of the creature, Willet in his usual fashion adumbrates the position of various authors from the patristic era on through to the sixteenth century, disapproving, approving or modifying the views of his predecessors. He concludes that the creature is not the human soul imprisoned in a physical body (Origen); it is not angels (another view of Origen); it is not righteous humans (Gregory); it is not unbelieving humans who will yet be called to faith (Augustine). In other words, the creature is not to be identified with any rational being, angelic or human. It is also not to be identified with the entire created order comprised of the heavens, stars, and the earth with all living creatures.<sup>140</sup> Willet describes this latter position as “[t]he most generall and received interpretation” but this fact does not dissuade him from modifying it.<sup>141</sup> His own position is that the creature refers only to “the things without life and sense, as the heavens and elements, and the earth with the things therein.”<sup>142</sup> Thus Willet

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*into two bookes* (Printed by Cantrell Legge, printer to the Vniversitie of Cambridge, 1611), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library.

<sup>139</sup> Question 27: “*What creatures the Apostle here speaketh of.*” Question 34: “*That no living creatures shall be restored in the next world but onely man.*” See Willet, *Hexapla*, 366 and 374.

<sup>140</sup> Willet attributes this position to Ambrose, Calvin, Peter Martyr (likely Peter Martyr Vermigli the theologian of the sixteenth century, and not Peter Martyr, a priest and martyr from the thirteenth century).

<sup>141</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 367.

<sup>142</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 367. He finds Chrysostom, Beza, Bucanus, Pareus, Irenaeus and Hilary to be in substantial agreement with him.

excludes all animal life from the restored creation. His initial argument against the restoration of the animal kingdom is that when the sons of God are revealed in glory, they will no longer have need of the animal kingdom, and since the non-rational creatures “onely serve for our necessarie use,” then it is “probable” they will not need to be restored since humankind will no longer need them.<sup>143</sup>

Willet further defends his position in question 34.<sup>144</sup> He makes the observation that Paul says the sons of God are waiting for their adoption, which Paul further explains as the resurrection of their bodies. Willet concludes that since no other living creatures aside from humans are ever said to be adopted, then no other living creatures will receive immortal resurrection bodies. Citing three of the four new heaven/new earth passages in Scripture—Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1—Willet argues that these Scriptures mention only the heavens and earth and the elements as subjects of renewal.<sup>145</sup>

At the conclusion of question 34, he marshals five reasons why he thinks it probable that no “unreasonable creatures, as foules, beasts, fishes” will experience restoration.<sup>146</sup> First, Willet asserts that whereas the sun, moon, heavens and earth were created for immortality, the animal kingdom was not. Willet does little more than assert this proposition, appealing to no scripture or authority other than referencing a passage in Bucanus.<sup>147</sup> His second argument is difficult to sort out but it seems to rest on the

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<sup>143</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 367.

<sup>144</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 371-373.

<sup>145</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 372. Willet goes on to note that Scripture does not communicate the particulars of this renewal “and it were curiositie for us to enquire”.

<sup>146</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 372.

<sup>147</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 373. The reference comes from Bucanus’ *Institutions of Christian Religion* where he discusses the resurrection. Written in catechetical style, Bucanus responds to the following

difference in longevity between the inanimate world and the sensible creatures. The inanimate world—the heavens, earth, sun, moon—has remained in existence since its creation in spite of being subject to corruption after the fall. Conversely, animals do not remain in existence perpetually but instead die and pass out of existence. It is only through generation that animals continue to have a continual presence on the earth. On these grounds Willet seems to be arguing that whatever has remained in existence since creation will be that which will experience restoration at the revelation of the sons of God. Those creatures that depend on generation for existence will not experience restoration. When the heavens and earth are dissolved, they will immediately be transformed from their former state of corruption to the glorious liberty of the sons of God. When animals die, they experience no such liberty. They simply cease to exist.<sup>148</sup>

Willet's third argument against the restoration of unreasonable creatures concerns the means by which such a restoration would take place. Animals would either need to be resurrected (even as humans will be resurrected in their same bodies) or God would need to create new members of the same species. With respect to the first option, Willet maintains that when animals die, "the partes of those creatures die with them" leaving

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question: "*Whereas Rom. 8.20.21 the creature is said to be [unreadable in the original], under hope, because it also shall bee delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious libertie of the Sonnes of God, doth it follow, that the brute creature shall also rise againe?*" Bucanus answers, "In no wise, because neither are they created to immortalitie, nor doe their soules outlive their bodies, but die in their verie bodies." Bucanus restricts the referent of *creature* to "an heavenly and Elementaire region, & not the inhabitants thereof..." See Guillaume Bucanus, *Institutions of Christian Religion Framed out of Gods Word, and the Writings of the Best Diuines, Methodically Handled by Questions and Answers, Fit for All Such as Desire to Know, or Practise the Will of God. Written in Latin by William Bucanus Professor of Diuinitie in the Vniuersitie of Lausanna. And Published in English by Robert Hill, Bachelor in Diuinitie, and Fellow of Saint Iohns Colledge in Cambridge, for the Benefit of Our English Nation, to Which Is Added in the End the Practise of Papists against Protestant Princes* (Printed at London : By George Snowdon, and Leonell Snowdon [, and R. Field], 1606), 459, *Early English Books Online*, Folger Shakespeare Library and Cambridge University Library.

<sup>148</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 373.

nothing to be resurrected.<sup>149</sup> And as for the second option, Scripture expressly denotes the coming deliverance from bondage as a restoration rather than a creation.

His fourth argument comes from Vermigli who argued that it is “against nature” for something to be restored unless it is to serve some purpose.<sup>150</sup> Willet accepts this assertion as self-evident and proceeds to argue that since the animals will not be needed to supply any human needs, and serving humanity was the reason for their existence in the first place, then there will no need for their restoration.<sup>151</sup>

His fifth and final argument is an argument from the silence of Scripture. Never does God promise that the animals will be restored; what is plainly promised is that the heavens and earth will be renewed. Although Willet believes his arguments render it “most probable” that animals will not inhabit the restored creation, he confesses that his opinion ought not to attain to an article of faith. Still, he believes his view “commeth nearest to the truth” and ought to convince those with good sense.<sup>152</sup>

Willet’s protracted discussion early in the century is supplemented by Thomas Manton’s perspective that appears much later. His notion of the creature appears first in

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<sup>149</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 373.

<sup>150</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 373.

<sup>151</sup> Willet admits that Vermigli did not take a position on the issue of the restoration of animals. For Vermigli’s position, see his Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Most Fruitfull [and] Learned Co[M]mentaries of Doctor Peter Martir Vermil Florentine, Professor of Deuinitie, in the Vniuersitye of Tygure with a Very Profitable Tract of the Matter and Places. Herein Is Also Added [and] Contained Two Most Ample Tables, Aswel of the Matter, as of the Wordes: Wyth an Index of the Places in the Holy Scripture. Set Forth & Allowed, Accordyng to Thorder Appointed in the Quenes Maiesties Iniunctions* (Imprinted at London : By Iohn Day, dwellyng ouer Aldersgate. These bookes are to be solde at his shop vnder the gate, 1564), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library and Union Theological Seminary.

<sup>152</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 373.

a sermon on Romans 8:19.<sup>153</sup> Like Willet, Manton initially dispenses with the idea that the term refers to any rational being such as angels or humans before stating that the creature does not refer to “the Beasts, for they are incapable of a prospect of futurity, and are made to be taken and destroyed.”<sup>154</sup> This statement tempers a following one in which Manton classifies the creature as a reference to “the whole frame of the Universe, Heaven and Earth, and the creatures in them.”<sup>155</sup> He further adds that

The whole frame of the *Universe* was first made in a beautiful state for the Glory of God, and the use of man; ’tis subject to many changes, and at length to destruction: The Earth and the Elementary Bodies shall be burnt up as a Scroll, but they shall be renewed and restored when the children of God come to their glorious estate; the deformation of the creature began with mans sin, and the reformation with his compleat happiness.<sup>156</sup>

To modern ears, “The whole frame of the *Universe*” sounds all-encompassing but in reality Manton restricted the coming renovation to just a part of the universe, which he later identifies as the “frame of the sublunary world.”<sup>157</sup> Manton confirms this limitation at the end of the sermon where he draws out the doctrine found in the passage.

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<sup>153</sup> Thomas Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons Preached by the Late Reverend and Learned Thomas Manton in Two Parts : The First Containing Xvii Sermons on the Twenty Fifth Chapter of St. Matthew, Xlv on the Seventeenth Chapter of St. John, and Xxiv on the Sixth Chapter of the Epistle of the Romans : Part Ii, Containing Xlv Sermons on the Eighth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and XI on the Fifth Chapter of the Second Epistle to the Corinthians : With Alphabetical Tables to Each Chapter, of the Principal Matters Therein Contained* (London : Printed by J. Astwood for Jonathan Robinson ..., 1684), *Early English Books Online*, University of Illinois Library. Manton was a leading Presbyterian preacher in London during the turbulent years of the civil war, commonwealth and Restoration. He played an active role in the Westminster Assembly as one its clerks, preached on at least six occasions before the Parliament and participated in the delegation sent to Charles II to urge his return as England’s monarch. He also attended the Savoy Conference. A popular speaker, many of his sermons were printed.

<sup>154</sup> Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons*, 187.

<sup>155</sup> Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons*, 187.

<sup>156</sup> Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons*, 187.

<sup>157</sup> Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons*, 188.

One of his doctrinal points declares that it is the “lower Heavens, and the Elementary Bodies, as well as the earth” that will experience “*some kind of change at the last day.*”<sup>158</sup> Manton refrains from discussing further that change but contents himself with quoting Psalm 102:26.<sup>159</sup> Another doctrinal teaching deals with whether certain creatures will be included in the renewal. In a slightly less absolute statement than at the beginning of the sermon, Manton mentions the fate of three creatures—animals, plants and “corruptible bodies.”<sup>160</sup> He considers it “*probable*” that all three will not be restored. His reasoning appears to be that this trio exists only for the maintenance of human bodily life. However, in the eternal state such maintenance will not be necessary and thus they will cease to exist.

Both Willet and Manton agree regarding the fate of non-rational living creatures; they will not be restored. Manton goes further, suggesting that plant life will also not be renewed. A key difference in their positions is that Willet believed the entire created order, the heavens and earth, needed renewal, while Manton restricted that renewal to the sublunar world.

### The Creature Is the Entire Creation

Willet’s belief that “[t]he most generall and received interpretation” concerning the identity of the creature was that it referred to the entirety of the created order remains

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<sup>158</sup> Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons*, 192.

<sup>159</sup> Psalm 102:26: “As a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed.”

<sup>160</sup> Manton, *A Second Volume of Sermons*, 192. Manton does not specify what the distinction is between corruptible bodies and animals/plants.

true among English writers throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>161</sup> Numerous examples of this viewpoint can easily be found. In one treatise, while discussing why creation longs for its restoration, Cowper pauses to consider the meaning of the term ‘creature.’ He initially appears to limit the creature to anything created that was affected by the fall: “The word creature, is a generall name of all the works of God, but here it is put for those creatures which being made by God for man, were hurt by the fall of man, and shall be restored with him.”<sup>162</sup> However soon after he claims that the word refers to “the heuens and earth, with the rest of the elements and works of God, therein contained, made for the glory of God, and the use of man.”<sup>163</sup> The term does not include reprobate angels or men or anything that resulted from the curse such as thorns, thistles and the like.

Thomas Wilson (1563-1622), an English divine who first preached through Romans and then published a catechetical commentary on it for his parishioners, concurs with Cowper.<sup>164</sup> Wilson understands the entire created order as the proper identity of the

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<sup>161</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 367.

<sup>162</sup> Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises*, 261.

<sup>163</sup> Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises*, 261.

<sup>164</sup> Thomas Wilson, *A Commentarie Vpon the Most Diuine Epistle of S. Paul to the Romanes Containing for Matter, the Degeneration of Our Nature by Adams Fall; and the Restauration Thereof, by the Grace of Christ. Together with the Perfection of Faith, and the Imbecillity of Workes, in the Cause of Iustification of Elect Sinners before God. For Forme and Maner of Handling, It Hath the Coherence and Method, the Summe and Scope, the Interpretations & Doctrines the Reasons and Vses, of Most Texts. All Which, Are Set Downe Very Familiarly and Compendiously, in Forme of a Dialogue, Betweene Tlmotheus [sic] and Silas, by Thomas Wilson, One of the Six Preachers in the Cathedrall Church of Canterbury* (London : Printed by W. Iaggard, dwelling in Barbican, 1614), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. Wilson is perhaps best known for publishing an early English concordance of the Bible which saw widespread use throughout the century. He published three editions in his lifetime and the work was enlarged by John Bagwell and later Andrew Symson. Of the Romans commentary, Wilson tells the reader that it was the result of seven years of labor, that he published it only after considerable urging of some friends and that it was in “*a forme wherein never any Comment on this Epistle was set foorth before.*” The form consists of examining the text under four heads—“Interpretations, Doctrines, Reasons, and Uses.” See Wilson, *A Commentary on the Most Diuine Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, “The Authors Epistle, to the Christian and Courteous Reader.”



creature, including all heavenly bodies, vegetation, animals, fish “with whatsoever else was made for mans use.”<sup>165</sup> Later he simplifies his description to all that is under the third heaven.<sup>166</sup>

This early seventeenth-century understanding of the identity of the creature is echoed by both mid-century and late-century authors as well. William Day (*fl.* 1666), who became divinity reader at St. George’s chapel at Windsor Castle after the Restoration, wrote

*that by the Creature is meant here, The whole Universe of irrational Creatures, as it comprehends the Heavens, Elements, and such irrational and corporeal Creatures, as are compounded and made of the Elements. But especially the Elements, and the Creatures compounded thereof in comparison of which the Heavens are not subject to vanity.*<sup>167</sup>

Day’s definition posits a distinction between the amount of restoration the heavens will need as opposed to items composed of the elements but his identification of the creature is reminiscent of Cowper’s and Wilson’s.

Later in the century, Horton acknowledges that the term does refer to humanity in other biblical texts but such is not the case in Romans. In Romans the word is a reference to the heavens, earth, sea and everything that inhabits them.<sup>168</sup> Later in the commentary, Horton attempts to disprove the opinion of other writers who allowed that only the

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<sup>165</sup> Wilson, *A Commentary on the Most Divine Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 288.

<sup>166</sup> Wilson, *A Commentary on the Most Divine Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 289. Edward Elton, mentioned earlier in this chapter, concurs with Cowper and Wilson.

<sup>167</sup> William Day, *A Paraphrase and Commentary Upon the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans by William Day* (London : Printed by S. Griffin for Joshua Kirton, and are to be sold at his shop ..., 1666), 158, *Early English Books Online*, Union Theological Seminary Library. Animals would be creatures made up of the elements.

<sup>168</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 289. Horton mentions this is the sense of the term given in the Syriac and Arabic translations since they translate the term as “*every Creature*” and “*whole Creation*” respectively. See Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 290.

heavens and earth will be renewed but their inhabitants would perish. He first argues that the term used by Paul for the creature is an indefinite word that does not specify just the heavens and the earth without their occupants. Second, Paul asserts plainly that the creatures that are subject to vanity will be set at liberty. It follows that since all types of creatures are clearly subject to vanity, then all types will experience liberty.<sup>169</sup> Horton's third argument is an argument from fittingness. To envision a renewed heavens and earth without anything inhabiting them "is not so suitable to God's dealings in other matters."<sup>170</sup> Unfortunately, Horton does not explain why an uninhabited heavens and earth is not suitable, nor does he delineate the identity of the "other matters."

Horton then sums up his thoughts on this question by stating that every sort of creature will be restored to the place it occupied before the Fall. As if this statement did not answer all queries, Horton wonders aloud if this will include "*Fowls, and Beasts, and Fishes.*"<sup>171</sup> He believes it is probable they will be restored but not each one individually that has ever lived; that would require a resurrection of their bodies and scripture never speaks of a resurrection in the animal kingdom.<sup>172</sup> Horton suggests a selective restoration of animals analogous to their preservation at the time of the Flood. God did not preserve every creature when the Flood came but only a small sample; the remainder perished. Likewise, in the restoration of the earth, many in the animal kingdom will be destroyed

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<sup>169</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 368.

<sup>170</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 369.

<sup>171</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 369.

<sup>172</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 369. Horton returns to this topic on the next page. There he argues that not only is a resurrection of all the beasts unsupportable from Scripture; the idea also lacks "any *other good foundation for it.*"

while some will be preserved.<sup>173</sup> Unlike humans, who have been destined for salvation or reprobation and who must give an account to God, animals have no such destiny or requirement; hence, there is no necessity for the restoration of all the individual animals that have ever lived.<sup>174</sup>

Waite acknowledges there are differences of opinion regarding what creatures will be renewed and he enumerates four distinct views. 1) Only those creatures created during the original creation will be renewed. 2) All creatures that have ever lived will be restored. 3) Creatures alive at the time of Christ's coming will be renewed. 4) The heavens and the earth and mankind will be renewed. His treatment of the four options is not evenly divided. He dispenses with the first two views rather quickly.<sup>175</sup> Waite rejects the first view because Paul states that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now" (Romans 8: 22). If creation was groaning and travailing in Paul's day, then it is not just the original pre-fall creation that awaits restoration. The second view—that all of creation will be restored—is simply improbable due to the vast numbers of creatures that would entail. He doubts if the world could contain such numbers and besides, "...what use for so many of them?"<sup>176</sup>

Waite believes a combination of the third and fourth views is correct; God will renew all living creatures and he will restore the heavens, the earth and humanity. With respect to the restoration of all living creatures, Waite considers the extent of such a restoration. When the creation is liberated from bondage at Christ's coming, will God

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<sup>173</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 370.

<sup>174</sup> Horton, *Forty Six Sermons*, 370.

<sup>175</sup> See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 248-249 for Waite's handling of the first two options.

<sup>176</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 249.

restore *every* extant creature, or will he restore only a select few of every species? Waite admits God has not provided definitive revelation on this question but mentions that if the destruction of the world by fire will parallel in any way the destruction of the world by water during the Flood, "...then the *species* shall remain, but not all Individualls of those *species*."<sup>177</sup> Paul's phrase, the "whole creation" (Romans 8:19) does not refer to every being that has ever existed. Millions of creatures have perished to exist no more. They cannot properly be said to be groaning. Rather, Paul has in mind every *kind* of creature that exists at Christ's coming. Species or kinds—Waite uses the two terms interchangeably—have groaned and will groan until the day of liberation. On that day, members of every kind of non-rational living creatures will be renewed. Waite considers this more restricted sense of the *creature* to be "rationall and probable."<sup>178</sup>

Of course, non-sentient beings cannot literally hope or expect, but they do possess an "instinct" and "a certain ardent desire to their restauration" placed within them by God himself.<sup>179</sup> Employing a metaphor used by other writers, Waite claims this instinct is like the needle of a compass which inevitably turns towards north, even though the compass has no reason of its own.<sup>180</sup> In the same way, "...the Creature being touched by an

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<sup>177</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 249.

<sup>178</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 251. In support of his position, Waite marshals support from the writings of others—Peter Martyr, Chrysostom, Aretius, Meyerus, Theophilact, Calvin and Olivianus. For example, Olivianus asks exactly what is the "earnest expectation" and "hope" the creation has? Waite translates Olivianus' answer to the query: "...it is certain that it is not nothing, otherwise the spirit of God would not have used so many significant words as it hath."<sup>178</sup> See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 261.

<sup>179</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 261. It was generally accepted that Paul anthropomorphized creation in Romans 8:19-22. The creation's longing for release from bondage was often described as an instinct put within creation by God.

<sup>180</sup> It is possible Waite may have gotten the metaphor from either William Cowper or Elnathan Parr both of whom used it in earlier works. See Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises*, 250 and Elnathan Parr, *A Plaine Exposition Vpon the Whole 8. 9. 10. 11. Chapters of the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Romans*

instinct of nature, or naturall appetite of liberation put into it from God, it hath a metaphoricall hope of attaining it, which works constantly in it, and in which it remains with vehement desire and expectation, though it want reason.”<sup>181</sup>

Waite’s final consideration is the fourth view of the identity of the creature. This position limited the creature to the heavens, the earth and humanity but excluded plants, animals and other mixed bodies. After spending several pages on the differences in opinion that existed among the scholastic theologians regarding whether all the elements or just some elements would be refurbished, Waite informs the reader that many scholastics as well as some Protestant and some papist theologians agreed that the restoration of creation would exempt plants, animals and “mixt Bodies, except onely men” from participating in creation’s renewal.<sup>182</sup> Rather than engage them *en masse*, Waite turns his attention to a renowned Catholic writer, Robert Bellarmine.

According to Waite, Bellarmine maintained that only celestial bodies, the elements and humans are “such as have obtained incorruption, *from their nature*, either wholly, or in part” [emphasis added].<sup>183</sup> For Bellarmine, this incorruptibility was somehow intrinsic to the nature of these three creatures.<sup>184</sup> No other creatures possessed

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*Wherein the Text Is Diligently and Methodically Resolved, the Sence Giuen: And Many Doctrines Thence Gathered, Are by Liuely Vses Applied, for the Benefit of Gods Children Performed with Much Variety, and Conuenient Breuitie: Being the Substance of Neere Foure Yeeres Weekedayes Sermons.: By Elnathan Parr, Bachelor in Diuinity, and Preacher of Gods Word* (London : Printed by George Purslowe for Samuel Man, dwelling in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the Swanne, 1618), 84, *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library.

<sup>181</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 262-263.

<sup>182</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 302-303.

<sup>183</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 303.

<sup>184</sup> Bellarmine concluded that because the heavens are simple and possess “no contrarietie of qualities” then they are wholly incorruptible. The four elements are corruptible “*quoad partes*” but not

natures that were incorruptible, either wholly or in part; hence, they would not be restored. In response, Waite rejects the idea that any part of creation is incorruptible by nature. The heavens are indeed corruptible because the heavens are not the cause of their own being and are therefore vulnerable to losing their being.<sup>185</sup> The elements are likewise corruptible since they too will burn.<sup>186</sup> On the whole, Waite contends that the immortality of any object is the result of God's gift.

Again as immortality is *liberali acmerum Dei donum*, the liberall, and mere gift of God, and not simply from any Principle in nature independently, ...; so God can immortalize any Creature *a parte post*, which he would have to endure forever, as well other creatures, as the Heavens. For he which made the matter of the Heavens, and their forme, to satisfie that matter, and keepe the matter from privation, or appetition of any other forme, and thus hath so long continued them, without alteration or corruption; The same God can as well make the matter and forms of other Creatures immortall, sutable to their kinde.<sup>187</sup>

If immortality is a gift of God, there is no reason why God could not grant such a gift to more than just the heavens and the elements and humans.<sup>188</sup> He could grant it to all creatures. Waite even uses Bellarmine's beliefs about the elements—that the elements are not corrupted *quoad totum* though they are corrupted *quoad partes*—to support his own belief in the restoration of all creatures. To wit, if “the Elements are not corrupted,

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corruptible “*quoad totum*”. See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 205 [305], and 311. That is, parts of the elements are corruptible (those parts that belong to mixed bodies) even while the element in its totality is not corruptible. Celestial bodies are wholly incorruptible by nature whereas the elements and humans are partially incorruptible by nature.

<sup>185</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 207 [307]. Waite quotes favorably the position of Scaliger: “every being from another is corruptible by its self....”

<sup>186</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 311.

<sup>187</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 309-310.

<sup>188</sup> This argument is basically a repetition of an argument used in his response to one of Willet's reasons for rejecting the renewal of animals. There Waite had contended that God is immortal “by essence” while angels and men are immortal “by participation, or communication, as they have their nature sustained from a better Principle.” See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 291.

*quoad totum*, no more are the species of Brutes, Plants, or inferiour bodies.”<sup>189</sup>

Individual animals, plants and inferior bodies will perish, but the species of each one will continue just as the elements *quoad totum* will continue. What God can do for the elements he can do for any part of the world.<sup>190</sup>

### **Of What Use Is the Restored Creation?**

Another question that occupied the minds of those who reflected on Romans 8:19-22 concerned the reason why God would bother to restore the heavens and the earth in the age to come. This question would naturally arise in the mind of anyone who believed that the final location of the righteous angels and humans would be in the third heaven in the presence of Christ—the most common view of the day. Since heaven was still thought of as the saints’ final home, the typical answer to this query largely took the following form: God will have a use for the renewed creation but he has not revealed that use in Scripture and thus the church should not speculate about it. Several examples from authors previously mentioned will demonstrate this common approach to the question.

Early in the century, Cowper pauses to ask what use the restored created order will serve if the sun will not be needed nor will creatures be needed to sustain human life? He answers the question but in the most general of terms: “...if the Lord will haue these works of his hands to continue and stand as euerlasting monuments of his

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<sup>189</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 311.

<sup>190</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 314.

goodnesse, and witnesses in their kinds of his glory; who is it that can contradict it?”<sup>191</sup> God will reveal to us on that day what their purpose might be. In the meantime, people ought to be more concerned with ensuring they are partakers of that glory to come than with “thorny, and vnprofitable questions concerning it.”<sup>192</sup> Likewise, Thomas Wilson advances biblical proofs for the restoring of creation but is not keen to theorize about any details: “...but what shall be the particular properties, works, and uses of all and every creature after the last judgement, let no man enquire, because it is not revealed in the word: here is place for that which *Tertullian* calleth a learned ignorance.”<sup>193</sup>

Edward Elton is also content to remain agnostic about the topic. He counsels his readers “not to be curious” about such a question.<sup>194</sup> Elton speculates that God might restore created things so that they might serve “as monuments of his former power, wisdom and goodnesse towards man” but Christians don’t know this for certain, nor should they care to know a matter where Scripture is silent.<sup>195</sup> Finally, Thomas Horton thinks the question about the use of the new world is unanswerable since God has not revealed it; hence we ought not to “curiously to inquire into it.”<sup>196</sup> But Horton is confident that the Creator will have a reason. In words strikingly similar to Elton’s,

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<sup>191</sup> Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises*, 262.

<sup>192</sup> Cowper, *Three Heauenly Treatises*, 262. There is a strand of writers who use this approach—for some questions, we just do not know the answers and so we should not speculate much about them.

<sup>193</sup> Wilson, *A Commentary on the Most Divine Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans*, 291.

<sup>194</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 497.

<sup>195</sup> Elton, *The Triumph of a True Christian*, 497.

<sup>196</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 369.



Horton conjectures that the purpose for restoring creation will be to serve “as *Monuments of his former Power, and Wisdom, and Goodness.*”<sup>197</sup> If so, that purpose is sufficient.

Waite’s treatment of the use of a renovated creation appears in two separate sections of his commentary on Romans 8:19-21. It first shows up when he interacts with Willet at length about what creatures will be restored. Willet had argued that the heavens and the earth would be renewed but the animal and plant kingdoms would not because there would be no use for them. Waite’s response focuses on Willet’s meaning of the word ‘use.’ If Willet is using the term to mean “the common use of necessitie” then Waite has no truck with Willet. Humans will not need, for example, animals to “carry burthens for his use, to draw, to runne at his service, &c. to nourish him, to cloath his body, &c. for after this life we shall not stand in need of any such supplies.”<sup>198</sup> But if Willet means by *use* “an use of ineffable excellency,” then Waite disagrees with Willet’s position. The present function of creatures does not determine what their future function might be. According to Waite, Willet himself grants this notion when Willet allows that after the renovation of creation, the sun and moon will not be necessary for light upon the earth.<sup>199</sup> This will be true even though Isaiah prophesied that in the consummation of all things the moon shall shine like the sun and the sun shall be seven times brighter than it is now (Isaiah 30:26). When the sun shines seven times brighter

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<sup>197</sup> Horton, *Forty six sermons*, 369.

<sup>198</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 272.

<sup>199</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 272-273.

than it now shines, then the sun will shine “not by way of common necessitie, but for some other use.”<sup>200</sup>

Waite returns to the topic of the use of a restored creation when he takes up the question directly. Having established to his satisfaction that all creatures will be restored, he proceeds to articulate two main purposes of their restoration—variety and display. The renewed creation will give the saints some variety in what they see from heaven and it will put God’s wisdom on display. Repeating an earlier theme, he again states that the creatures will not serve the purpose they once served, one of “common necessitie”; however, they will serve “for an use of ineffable excellency, wherein the multifarious wisdom of God, in regard of the Objects upon which its shown, may appear, and remain, as upon record, in the severall and great variety of the species for ever.”<sup>201</sup> Waite approvingly cites Augustine as teaching that the heavens and the restored creatures will

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<sup>200</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 274. Waite continues by arguing that not only will the sun not need to shine to light the earth, but it just might be that the sun will cease its movement. He reviews two arguments that had been offered in support of this conjecture and responds to each. As to the first argument, according to Waite, some expositors held that it would cease its motion in the heavens based on the text in Revelation 10:6—time shall be no more.<sup>200</sup> The second argument was not based on a biblical text but on the ideas of philosophers who said that the motion of the heavens is the “cause efficient of generation and corruption, which is continually amongst these inferior and naturall bodies.” Since in the restoration of all things generation and corruption will come to an end, then creatures will reach a state of homeostasis. If creatures are stable, then it would seem that the motion of the heavens would cease also. Waite’s responses, in brief, are as follows. 1) To the idea that motion will cease because time ceases, Waite affirms the latter but denies the former; time will cease but that does not mean motion will cease. It just may be that the light of Christ, the saints, the sun and the moon will make it impossible to detect the motion of the heavens. Time is not just motion, but motion *observed*. In addition, if all motion ceases, then the saints will not be able to follow the Lamb (Revelation 14:4). Any motion the saints do experience will not, however, disrupt their heavenly rest. 2) To the idea that that since motion is the efficient cause of generation and corruption, then it must cease when generation and corruption cease so too will motion, Waite agrees that this would be true if motion’s only end was generation and corruption. It may be that motion serves some other end than just generation and corruption. See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 274-281.

<sup>201</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 332.

serve as a source of enjoyment to the eye and as a reminder of God's wisdom and power.<sup>202</sup>

Waite also notes a number of objections to his position. For one, Peter Martyr stated that Scripture nowhere expressly says what use the renewed creatures will have. Waite asserts that although Scripture does not tell us definitively what purpose the renewed creatures will serve, one ought not to conclude that God will not have a use for them. Of course it is true that in comparison to the vision of God, the glorified Christ and His church, the sight of the restored heavens and earth will be considerably less delightful.<sup>203</sup> But being less delightful is not the same as not being delightful at all. It just may be that the saints will find some measure of joy in seeing creatures, formerly subject to bondage, now freed from such. This conclusion Waite finds "rationall, and probable."<sup>204</sup>

To a second objection, that the saints will have little interest in the heavens and the earth because of the overwhelming bliss of the third heaven, Waite provides three analogies to blunt its force—the first contemporary, the second historical and the third heavenly. For the first analogy Waite writes,

Yet as when a man would shew his friend some stately fabric, the manner of the contriving of it, and his severall rooms, he doth not onely show him his treasure of Plate, his lodging chambers curiously adorned with all variety, his bedding, hangings, stools, chaires, or such like furniture, his severall Cubberds of richly wrought plate, seilings, playsteings of his Chambers, stately Windowed hewne, &c. but for varieties sake, he shewed him such as with which he cannot so much be taken, as his Hall, Buttery, Kitchin and such like places; even so likewise from

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<sup>202</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 333. See Augustine *in libro de videndo Deo*. Waite doesn't give the specific reference.

<sup>203</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 334.

<sup>204</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 335.

Heaven God may show the Sonnes of glory, sometimes for varieties sake, the Creature renewed, the severall species of them, the wonderfull order amongst them, &c. wherein the great variety of Gods Wisdom may appear.<sup>205</sup>

Again, Waite considers his conclusion probable and not against reason. He refuses to be dogmatic on the point, recognizing that Scripture is not clear on the topic. Instead he leaves the rationality of his conclusion to the judgment of the “judicious, and considerate reader.”<sup>206</sup>

Waite’s historical analogy comes from the Old Testament. When the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon, she was astonished at the glory of Solomon’s kingdom. But no doubt there were parts of his kingdom that impressed her more than other parts. The Temple of Solomon was surely more glorious than seeing the abundance of food at his table; of all that she saw, “the objects were not equally delectable” to her.<sup>207</sup> So too, God may permit the saints glimpses of the “objects of inferiour delight” on earth for the sake of variety and reflection on God’s wisdom.<sup>208</sup>

Not content with these two analogies, Waite provides a heavenly one “which seems to quadrate more to our purpose.”<sup>209</sup> The angels even now enjoy the presence of God, a presence that someday will be the privilege of the elect. Yet in spite of already being in the place of greatest delight and joy, they still desire to “peepe into, or to looke into the manifold wisdom of God showne here upon Earth, in calling the great varieties

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<sup>205</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 336-337.

<sup>206</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 337.

<sup>207</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 339.

<sup>208</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 339.

<sup>209</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 340.

of Gentiles to make up one Church of Saints with the Jewes.”<sup>210</sup> If the angels, who already experience the bliss of heaven, like to “peepe into” things of earth once in a while, then it is likely that the saints will wish to do the same.

The third objection to the belief in a renovated world because such a world would serve no purpose is that the human eye will be unable to see the earth from heaven. Waite quickly disposes of this potential problem. If Stephen in a mortal body could see Christ in heaven while on earth (Acts 7:56), then the saints in immortal bodies will be able to see the earth while in heaven.<sup>211</sup> Waite cites Calvin as saying that Stephen was given an extraordinary ability to see into heaven;<sup>212</sup> so too God can and will enhance the vision of the glorified saints.<sup>213</sup>

One particular use of the renovated world that Waite examines is whether the new earth would ever be the abode of the saved in the eternal state. What prompts Waite to consider this possibility is Peter’s comment that righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:12). After considering the positions of various authors, particularly Andrew Willet who posited that the saints would have access to both the new heavens and new earth, Waite concludes that the weight of the evidence is against such a notion.<sup>214</sup> He is willing to concede that if the redeemed are permitted access to the earth,

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<sup>210</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 344-345. Waite grounds his claim that the angels take notice of things on earth from 1 Peter 1:12: *Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*

<sup>211</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 345.

<sup>212</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 346.

<sup>213</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 347.

<sup>214</sup> See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 367-389, for his extended comments. These comments include his interaction with several authors—Willet, Musculus, Bullinger, Origen, Aretius, Calvin, Bellarmine, Dionysius Carthusianus, Beza and Aquinas. His prefatory remarks to the topic reveals that he

then creatures on the earth would be put to some use, to wit, they would become objects of contemplation for the Elect.<sup>215</sup> Equally, the difficulty of explaining how righteousness would dwell in the new heavens and earth disappears. Yet in the end Waite does not find the future movements of the saints a convincing reason to adopt Willet's interpretation since those movements are "great mysteries, not revealed."<sup>216</sup>

What Waite does find convincing are the words of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and Peter in 1 Peter 1:4. He believes the former text establishes that the saints will meet Christ in the air to be taken to heaven.<sup>217</sup> The latter text explicitly identifies heaven as the place of the saints' inheritance and "we shall never be weary of the joyes of Heaven, though they indure for eternity, but they shall be as fresh and new."<sup>218</sup> Shortly after this comment, Waite returns to 1 Peter 1:4 again calling it "very considerable" in his decision to place the saints in the third heaven and not in the new heavens and earth. He thinks in that text "the inheritance is set out by many excellent Epithites, and the place of it

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places interpreters of 2 Peter 3:13 in one of three positions: those who say nothing or not enough, those who say something but in some way speak amiss, and those who say too much. He writes, "Some interpreters do with such places as travelers do with deeps, or boggs in high-wayes, when they come at them, they wisely passe by them, or say little to the openings of them, to give the reader satisfaction. Others that note some-what, yet come not home to the mark. Others perceiving this, have taken up more resolution, and I much doubt if they have not over shott the marke." See Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 367-368.

<sup>215</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 377.

<sup>216</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 378.

<sup>217</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 385-386. He enlists Hemingius, Aquinas, Theophylact and Estius as those who adopt a similar interpretation.

<sup>218</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 387.

described to be Heaven, and not any part or portion of it mentioned to be upon the Earth.<sup>219</sup>

Not only is the inheritance of the saints in heaven, but Paul also states that the saints are seated with Christ in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6, 1:3). Currently, they are seated with Christ in heaven, not in their own persons, but in the person of Christ who is their head. But after the resurrection, they will dwell bodily with Christ in heaven. If the saints' inheritance happens to include more than the third heaven, it is likely that the earth will be excluded from that inheritance. In Waite's estimation the earth will be "the *terminus*, or boundary of their liberty, than the subject, upon which they shall trample a live."<sup>220</sup>

### Summary

In the seventeenth century, a significant number of English divines interpreted the biblical prophecies of a new heavens and earth in a literal fashion. At the end of this age, God would transform the present created order. For the majority of these divines, restoration, rather than annihilation, was creation's future. Opinions were more evenly divided on other matters. Some, perhaps influenced by Aristotelianism, exempted the ethereal heavens from needing any refurbishing at all, while others believed they too needed renewal. As for terrestrial objects, debate existed concerning the meaning of in Romans 8:19. Some wanted to include plants and animals within its denotation while others wished to exclude them.

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<sup>219</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 389.

<sup>220</sup> Waite, *Of the creatures liberation*, 389.

The question about the future existence of plants and animals frequently arose within discussions of God's purpose in restoring the creation. In the main, scholars were content to leave the question unanswered except to say that creation would glorify God and stand as a monument to his wisdom and power. However, not all were content with such vagaries. Some believed there was ample scriptural material from which to decipher the use of a renewed world. Rather than an empty monument to God's glory, the earth would be the actual home of Christ and the saints. Advocates for this position will occupy the remaining two chapters.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### ETERNAL HOME (1611-1647)

As was noted in the last chapter, the majority of the divines and biblical commentators during the seventeenth century embraced the idea that the heavens and the earth were destined for a future renovation even though they did not always agree on the details of that renovation or what would occur following that event. The issue of the use of a renovated creation was raised by scholars but there was great reluctance to be dogmatic about any proposed answers. The majority of divines contented themselves with two basic approaches; 1) the use of the restored earth and heavens was a mystery God had not revealed and speculation about the matter would be foolish, and 2) the new heavens and earth would somehow serve as an eternal monument to God's glory. Whatever purpose the new heavens and earth might serve, the saints of God would not inhabit them. The third heaven would be their final home.

This stance did not go unchallenged in the seventeenth century. Several works offered extensive biblical arguments to prove that the new heavens and earth would serve as the eternal habitation of the righteous. This view, if not entirely new within church history, was certainly a rarity since at least medieval times and it remained so in seventeenth-century Great Britain. The rarity of the position may help explain the extensive argumentation on the part of some authors to provide an exegetical foundation for it.

This chapter, as well as the following one, will explore this foundation, uncovering a trajectory of eschatological thinking that has been largely missed or ignored by historians. The trajectory surfaces early and continues through to the last decade of

the seventeenth century. In that final decade, the idea that Christ and his people would eternally dwell in a restored earth would even attain confessional status for at least one group of churches. The current chapter will survey works from the first half of the seventeenth century that argue that the new heavens and earth—particularly the earth—would be the final home of the righteous; the next chapter will continue this survey using works from the second half of the century.

### **Andrew Willet and Thomas Adams**

Andrew Willet (1562-1621) and John Adams (1583?-1562) are among the first of the English divines to adopt the notion that the new heavens and earth will serve as the eternal dwelling place of the redeemed. Willet's ideas appeared first in his commentary on the book of Romans amidst his discussion of the use of a new creation that has been delivered from corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (cf. Romans 8:19-21).<sup>1</sup> He devotes his initial comments to what the restored creation will *not* be used for. The sun and moon will continue to exist, but not be needed for light because God and the Lamb will be the light of the new creation. Neither will they be needed for the marking of time nor seasons, for both will cease. Land will not grow crops since humans will not need food and the animal kingdom will not exist. The entire renewed creation, experiencing a great Jubilee, will be at rest rather than in service to humankind.<sup>2</sup> Later, Willet adds that the sun, because it will not move or provide heat, will not assist in the

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<sup>1</sup> Andrew Willet, *Hexapla, That Is, a Six-Fold Commentarie Vpon the Most Diuine Epistle of the Holy Apostle S. Paul to the Romanes Wherein According to the Authors Former Method, Sixe Things Are Obserued in Euery Chapter ... : Wherein Are Handled the Greatest Points of Christian Religion ... : Diuided into Two Bookes*, ([S.l.] : Printed by Cantrell Legge, printer to the Universitie of Cambridge, 1611), *Early English Books Online*, Harvard University Library.

<sup>2</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 369.

generation of living things, though its brightness will exceed its current levels seven fold.<sup>3</sup> Clouds will need not provide any rain and the heavens will not instruct the righteous regarding the glory of God for they shall know as they are known. The new earth also will not be a place where the inhabitants will spend their time in the hedonistic indulgences of “eating and drinking, and sporting themselves with terrene delights...”<sup>4</sup> So taught the heretic Cerinthus and Mohammed.

Having dealt with what the purpose of a refurbished world will not be, Willet turns his attention to its principle objective. With respect to the heavens, they will serve as a place of habitation for the righteous.<sup>5</sup> Unlike many of his contemporaries, Willet does not ever employ the device of dividing the heavens into the first, second and third heaven, with the third heaven being the dwelling place of Christ, angels and the souls of the righteous dead, and the first and second heavens being the sublunar region (first heaven) and the realm beyond the moon (second heaven). He writes of the redeemed inhabiting both heaven and the *heavens*. He uses the term heavens while discussing the sun and moon and affirms that these heavens are “an habitation and seate of the blessed.”<sup>6</sup> After all, Paul did say that at the resurrection, the church would be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The majesty of these

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<sup>3</sup> It was commonly thought that the motion and heat of the sun was one of necessary causes for the generation of life. With regard to the increased brightness of the sun, Willet cites Isaiah 30:28: *Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the day that the LORD bindeth up the breach of his people, and healeth the stroke of their wound.*

<sup>4</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 369.

<sup>5</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 372.

<sup>6</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 372.

heavens will prompt the saints to worship God.<sup>7</sup> Yet he equally affirms that “...the heaven and earth shall both be the seate of the blessed...”<sup>8</sup> The heaven of the latter quote is not the location of stars and planets but is identified by Willet as the place from which angels came to earth at various times and the same place from which Moses and Elijah came in order to converse with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration—a place typically associated with the third heaven. Whether Willet in reality maintained a conceptual distinction between the abode of Christ and the abode of the heavenly bodies is unclear from this section of his commentary. What is clear is that he believed the saints would have access to the dwelling place of Christ and the dwelling place of the sun and moon in the eternal state.

As for earth, Willet thinks the saints will have access to it as well. He claims Peter puts forth both heaven and earth as the habitation of the righteous in the eternal state when he writes that righteousness will dwell in the new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13). Righteousness will inhabit the restored world because righteous people will dwell there.<sup>9</sup> Willet further maintains that Origen’s interpretation of Matthew 5:5—“Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth”—is accurate in that it affirms the existence

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<sup>7</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 372.

<sup>8</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 370.

<sup>9</sup> Willet cites William Bucanus as adhering to the same position. Bucanus was a Calvinist theologian whose *Institutions of Christian Religion* appeared in translation in England as early as 1606 and later reprinted in 1659. Like Willet, Bucanus thinks both the new heavens and earth will be the abode of elect in the eternal state. See Guillaume Bucanus, *Institutions of Christian Religion Framed out of Gods Word, and the Writings of the Best Diuines, Methodically Handled by Questions and Answers, Fit for All Such as Desire to Know, or Practise the Will of God. Written in Latin by William Bucanus Professor of Diuinitie in the Vniuersitie of Lausanna. And Published in English by Robert Hill, Bachelor in Diuinitie, and Fellow of Saint Iohns Colledge in Cambridge, for the Benefit of Our English Nation, to Which Is Added in the End the Practise of Papists against Protestant Princes* (Printed at London : By George Snowdon, and Leonell Snowdon [, and R. Field], 1606), 492, *Early English Books Online*, Folger Shakespeare Library and Cambridge University Library.

of an earth characterized by meekness, an earth which no one has yet seen but is one for which saints should hope. He adds that Jesus' pronouncement of blessedness upon the meek is not currently a correct description of the saints on the present earth but it will be correct on the renewed earth that the meek will inherit.

Willet appeals not only to Origen but also to the brief comments of Augustine on the new heavens and earth in the *City of God*, 20.16.<sup>10</sup> Augustine teaches that the elements will lose their corruptible qualities even as the saints will lose their corruptible qualities. The point Willet draws from this teaching is that there would be no need for the elements to be purified of their corruptible qualities unless the saints will share the same location with the elements. Finally, Willet rounds out his defense of a heavenly and earthly dwelling by arguing that it is fitting that God should be praised by his people on earth where formerly he was dishonored and his people persecuted.

For all of the above reasons, Willet thinks both the heavens and earth will be the eternal home of the redeemed; "...there shall be intercourse between heaven and earth."<sup>11</sup> This intercourse will not be without precedent; Scripture offers historical examples of it—angels appeared in human form on various occasions, Moses and Elijah appeared on the mountain with Jesus, and Jesus interacted with his disciples for forty days after his resurrection. These examples provide "good probabilities, that the Saints shall passe to and fro from heaven to earth: and shall follow the lambe, whether soever he

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<sup>10</sup> *City of God*, 20.16. "And by this universal conflagration the qualities of the corruptible elements which suited our corruptible bodies shall utterly perish, and our substance shall receive such qualities as shall, by a wonderful transmutation, harmonize with our immortal bodies, so that, as the world itself is renewed to some better thing, it is fitly accommodated to men, themselves renewed in their flesh to some better thing."

<sup>11</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 370.

goeth, as it is, Revel. 14.4.”<sup>12</sup> To be sure, the details of the saints’ movements are inscrutable and certainty about the matter cannot be achieved. Hence Willet advises restraint:

But herein we must not be too bold to wade without ground: how the Saints shall be disposed of, whether some to heaven, some to the earth, whether the same shall be sometime in heaven, sometime in earth, or how else as it pleaseth God, we leave these as great misteries not revealed: but that the Saints shall then be upon the earth, we are certaine out of Scripture, as hath bin shewed.<sup>13</sup>

Willet is thus confident that God’s people will inhabit the heavens and earth at the consummation of all things while remaining content to be agnostic about many particulars.

Willet’s line of reasoning is reproduced in large part by Thomas Adams (1583?-1562) in his massive commentary on 2 Peter in 1633.<sup>14</sup> The coincidence between Adams’ and Willet’s comments is quite remarkable, both in the structure of the discussion and in the arguments employed. In fact, the coincidence extends even to words and phrases, making it likely that Adams borrowed heavily from Willet. Rather than covering Adams’ work in detail, it will be sufficient to briefly note a few points where Adams mimics Willet’s exposition.

Like Willet, Adams first takes up what use the new heavens and earth will not serve before proceeding to the use they will serve. The sun and moon will no longer be

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<sup>12</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 370.

<sup>13</sup> Willet, *Hexapla*, 372. .

<sup>14</sup> Thomas Adams, *A Commentary or, Exposition Vpon the Diuine Second Epistle Generall, Written by the Blessed Apostle St. Peter. By Thomas Adams* (London : Printed by Richard Badger [and Felix Kyngston] for Iacob Bloome, MDCXXXIII. [1633]), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. This volume was reprinted in 1990 by Soli Deo Gloria Publications. All citations are taken from the reprint edition. See Thomas Adams, *An Exposition Upon the Second Epistle General of St. Peter* (Ligonier, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1990; reprint, *A Commentary or, Exposition Upon the Divine Second Epistle Generall, Written by the Blessed Apostle St. Peter*).

for the marking of times and seasons since time will have ceased. They also will not be used for “a fructifying power in the earth” since there will be no creatures who will need the earth’s produce for the sustenance of their lives.<sup>15</sup> The sun will remain motionless in the heavens as in the day of Joshua (Joshua 10:12), possessing a seven-fold greater luminescence yet producing no heat on the earth. In a word, “The ministry and service of all things, such as it is now, shall cease; it shall be a time of rest, the great year of universal jubilee to all creatures.”<sup>16</sup> The new world also will not be for the redeemed to indulge in sensual pleasures of any kind.<sup>17</sup> These former functions of the world brought forth by Adams are each specifically mentioned by Willet.

Adams again follows Willet in declaring that the new heavens and earth will be “the seat of the blessed.”<sup>18</sup> That heaven is a place for the blessed Adams finds indisputable and he offers no arguments to defend the idea. Heaven is the principal seat of the righteous. However, “All that we stick at is the earth: how should the earth be the habitation of the righteous?”<sup>19</sup> He answers the question by providing five lines of evidence that mirror Willet’s reasoning as well: 1) righteousness will dwell in the new

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<sup>15</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 735. It will be remembered from the last chapter that Willet also denied the renewal of the animal kingdom in the restoration of creation.

<sup>16</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 735.

<sup>17</sup> Adams identifies this belief with Cerinthus and “that juggling prophet Mahomet.” Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736.

<sup>18</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736. Willet also used the phrase “the seate of the blessed” to describe the new heavens and earth (see page x above). Adams does not differentiate between “heavens” and “heaven” in his commentary and hence does not deal with the distinction between the first, second and third heavens that is frequently found in other authors of the seventeenth century—another similarity to Willet.

<sup>19</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736.

world because righteous people will be there;<sup>20</sup> 2) Jesus asserted that the meek would inherit the earth (Matthew 5:5); 3) Augustine, in the *City of God*, affirms that the elements will be transformed to a state of incorruption in order to be a fit location for glorified saints;<sup>21</sup> 4) the blessed will be wherever Christ will be and Christ will not be confined to heaven;<sup>22</sup> and 5) it is fitting that the earth, so long a place of rebellion against God and a place of persecution of his people, should become a place of praise to God and blessing to his people.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, Adams reflects Willet's reticence about these speculations. He begins and ends the section with notes of caution. He prefaces his five arguments by stating that "I speak nothing definitively, but by way of probability"<sup>24</sup> and concludes by admitting that "...it is not safe wading without a bottom; this is one of those secrets, which shall be revealed when this old world is dissolved."<sup>25</sup> The location of the saints in the eternal

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<sup>20</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736.

<sup>21</sup> Adams surmises that such a transformation would be necessary only if glorified human bodies would "converse where this new earth and elements are." See Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736.

<sup>22</sup> Like Willet, Adams cites 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and Revelation 14:4 as proof that the saints will be with and follow Christ wherever he might go.

<sup>23</sup> Adams expounds at some length. "Lastly, it is but reason, that God should be there glorified where he was dishonoured. The earth was witness of the offences done against him; let this new earth bear witness of the praises given unto him. Besides this, all the combats and conflicts of the saints were upon the earth; therefore even there also let them wear their crowns. On earth they were persecuted; give them leave in the same place to triumph. Here they suffered; here also let them be solaced; that the memory of their past sorrows may be an accidental variation of their infinite and essential joys. When they shall thus revolve with themselves; Here we were derided, there oppressed; in this place wounded, in that martyred. Now those old monuments of our pains shall turn to trophies of joy; and that earth, which was the land of the dead, is become the land of the living. How spacious shall be the kingdom of the saints, when heaven and earth is within their dition!" See Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736-737.

<sup>24</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736.

<sup>25</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 737. Willet had written, "But herein we must not be too bold to wade without ground."



state “is a great mystery not yet opened unto us.”<sup>26</sup> But Adams believes a credible case can be made that the saints will have access to the new earth.<sup>27</sup>

The case made by Willet and Adams for an eternally inhabited heavens and earth relied on specific texts from a variety of biblical and non-biblical authors. A somewhat different approach appeared in the publication of two anonymous works that employed singular themes of Scripture to undergird their claims. Those themes were the Abrahamic covenant and God’s rest.

### *The Land of Promise and the Covenant Thereof*

In 1641, an author identified simply as “I.E.” published a short work defending the notion that an eternally inhabited earth is nothing less than a fulfillment of the covenant made to Abraham.<sup>28</sup> According to the title page, the work is addressed to two specific groups; first, it is addressed to those who believe in a future conversion of the Jews to Christianity and in their geographical gathering to the land of Canaan for a

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<sup>26</sup> Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 737. Willet: “... we leave these as great misteries not revealed.”

<sup>27</sup> Adams also mentions that the use of a renewed creation will be for the glory of God. God’s glory is the end of all things and if that were the only reason for God to restore creation, that reason would be sufficient. Adams does not defend this belief, no doubt finding it uncontroversial. See Adams, *An Exposition Upon...of St. Peter*, 736.

<sup>28</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof Explained by Certain Questions and Propositions Propounded, to Those That Teach a Deliverance of the Iewes out of All Countries to the Land of Canaan; and from Their Long Continued Blindnesse to the Faith of Christ; and a Glorious Estate in the Land, for a Thousand Yereas. [sic] and Also, to Those That Teach a Personall Comming of Christ, and a Resurrection of the Just, to Live and Raigne with Christ a Thousand Yeares before the Resurrection of the Uniust and End of the World. Of Which There Bee Severall Sorts, Who Are Commonly Called Millinaries. By Which Doctrine of Each of These, the True Intent of Sundry Places of Scripture of Great Importance to the Church and People of Godm [sic] Is Uch [sic] Obscured, Which Being Rightly Understood and Taught, According to Their True and Playne Meaning, Would Be Greatly to the Edification and Comfort of Gods Chosen, Especially, Now in These Last Dayes, Wherein the Accomplishment of All Things, Which God Hath Spoken, Draweth So Nigh. And to the End It May Be So, I Thought Good to Publish That, Which Hereafter Followeth* (London : Printed by F. L. for I. W. the younger and are to be sold at his shop at the upper end of the old Baylie, 1641) *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

thousand years and, second, it is addressed to the “severall sorts, who are commonly called Millinaries” who held to Christ’s return, and the resurrection of the righteous followed by one thousand years of reigning with Christ on earth.<sup>29</sup> The burden of the author is to show that God’s promise of land to Abraham and his seed was not restricted to Abraham’s physical offspring nor was it restricted to the present age but rather it concerned Abraham’s spiritual offspring and their inheritance in the eternal age to come.

As a ground for his exposition, the author begins the work quoting the six texts from Genesis where God promises land to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their seed.<sup>30</sup> From this basis, the author commences defending five theses.<sup>31</sup> The first three propositions appear at the very beginning of the document and concern the issue of the identity of the recipients of the promise of land. Proposition one claims the land promise was given explicitly to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, “their owne persons” as well as to their seed.<sup>32</sup> The second proposition declares that the land promise was given to the entirety of Abraham’s seed.<sup>33</sup> The third proposition argues that all who have the faith of Abraham, Jews and Gentiles alike, are Abraham’s seed and therefore recipients of the

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<sup>29</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, A1.

<sup>30</sup> The texts are Genesis 13:14-15, 13:17, 15:7-8, 17:7-8, 26:1-3 and 28:10-13

<sup>31</sup> The work begins with the following heading: “The first Question or Proposition”; the fifth section has a similar title—“The fift [sic] Question or Proposition.” The intervening sections are entitled “The second Question”, “The third Question” etc. But the actual form of the question is not an interrogative but a statement or thesis—proposition—to be defended. For example, the second question reads as follows: “Secondly I aske, if the promise bee not to all the Seed, as well as to a part or any one of them.” The author is not really asking but asserting. For ease of explanation, this chapter will treat them as propositions/theses.

<sup>32</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 5. This proposition and the one to follow receive no individual treatment; apparently they are seen by the author to be self-evident.

<sup>33</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 5.

promise.<sup>34</sup> With respect to the latter proposition, the author defends it by appealing to the words of God himself and Paul the Apostle. God told Abraham that he would be the father of many nations (Genesis 17:5-6), a point Paul expounds at length in Romans and Galatians.<sup>35</sup> The author then deduces the following conclusion from the combination of the first three propositions:

Now if these things bee so, that the promise of the land of *Canaan*, which Saint *Paul* expresseth by the name of the world, be as plainely made to *Abraham*, *Isaack*, and *Iacob*, their owne persons, as it is unto their seed, and to all the seed, as well as to a part, or any one of them, and that they of the many nations, the faithfull Gentiles are of the same seed, as well as the faithfull *Iewes*, and heires of the promise together with them, according as all the forementioned Scriptures do plainely declare, so plainely as I suppose no man will denie: Then I aske, wherefore or for what cause they should not all receive the same, and not any one or part be excluded, seeing God is faithfull that promiseth.<sup>36</sup>

God promised to be the God of Abraham and the God of his seed at the same time as he promised the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed. This promise cannot be said to be fulfilled unless it is fulfilled in its entirety. Since God has not failed to be God for both Abraham and his seed, “neither will he faile to give them the land of *Canaan*, and all the world besides, for an everlasting possession.”<sup>37</sup>

The fourth proposition affirms that the promise of land initially made to Abraham was, in reality, primarily about the eternal state after the resurrection of the dead and not the conquest of Canaan under Joshua. I.E. argues that although Canaan will be the “Throne and City of the great King” in the age to come, all the earth will be possessed by

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<sup>34</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 6. [Note: the original pagination is labeled “2” but the pages labeled 2 and 3 are really pages 6 and 7.]

<sup>35</sup> See Romans 4:11-18 and Galatians 3:28.

<sup>36</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 8.

God's people.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the meek will inherit the earth. The Israelite patriarchs were meek men but they “dyed and inherited not a foote.”<sup>39</sup> If God is not to be found a liar, then they, along with all other meek individuals, must someday inherit the entire world. The author points out that it is not the current world that will be inherited since it is corrupt. The world to be inherited by the meek is the world to come “when all things should be new, holy, and heavenly, and so did the Fathers understand and expect it.”<sup>40</sup> According to I.E., the understanding of the Jewish forefathers is revealed by the author of Hebrews.<sup>41</sup> Abraham understood that when God called him from Ur, God was calling him to a place that was “inncorruptable, unmooveable, eternall, in a better world.”<sup>42</sup> God was calling him to a country and city founded and built by God. Abraham and Isaac and Jacob all grasped the true import of the promise of land and thus considered themselves as strangers and pilgrims as they awaited a better country—a heavenly one.<sup>43</sup>

The covenant with Abraham formed the basis for Jesus' argument for the resurrection when he was confronted by the Sadducees. Since Moses declared that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob long after they had died, then they must surely rise again so as to be able to receive what was promised to them. The covenant also formed the ground of David's exhortation to Israel to remember the covenant God made

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<sup>38</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 8.

<sup>39</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 8.

<sup>40</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 9. By “Fathers” I.E. means the Hebrew patriarchs and not the early church fathers.

<sup>41</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 9. The author quotes Hebrews 11:13-16.

<sup>42</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Of course, given the argument of the entire book, the author does not mean a country located in heaven but one marked by heavenly qualities—incorruptible, unmovable, and eternal.

with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. There would be no need to remember the covenant unless it was an everlasting and heavenly one. Like Abraham, David “did well understand” that the promise of the land of Canaan pertained to a future age and not chiefly the conquest under Joshua.<sup>44</sup> In Psalm 95, written by David, God swears that the unbelieving Israelites would not enter into God’s rest. This rest is “the heavenly estate of inheritance in the world to come, wherein holynesse and righteousnesse, rest, and peace should habit and abide, and God himself would dwell with all the holy Fathers and their Seed....”<sup>45</sup> This rest of God is none other than the eternal, earthly kingdom of Christ which will be established at the Second Coming. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and their seed must receive what was promised else God’s veracity is undermined.

Of course, God is not untrue but is faithful to keep his covenant. God is also a clear communicator. God has not “spoken in obscurity, in darke places, or corners of the Earth, as if he would not have his mind knowen; nay, he speaketh plainly, and openly, to the eares of the people: and inhabitants of the world. So as the simplest soule; through his grace may understand his meaning.”<sup>46</sup> Such a statement reveals I.E.’s confidence in the clarity of Scripture regarding the Abrahamic covenant. That the covenant is a clear promise of a restored earth as the everlasting inheritance of the righteous is not, in his mind, a veiled truth but a transparent one.

The author’s fifth and final proposition receives the greatest attention, two-thirds of the work being devoted to it and its ramifications. In this proposition, I. E. claims that

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<sup>44</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 11.

<sup>45</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 12.

<sup>46</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 14.

the Exodus from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan under Joshua were a “Typicall signe, or token of that to come.”<sup>47</sup> When promised the land of Canaan by God, Abraham desired to know how he could be sure that he himself would inherit it (Genesis 15:7-8). Abraham was not asking God for assurance that his *descendants* would inherit Canaan but that *he* himself would come into his inheritance. God’s response was clear; Abraham would die and four hundred years would pass before his seed would possess the land, albeit they would possess it only “Typically”.<sup>48</sup> That is, the conquest under Joshua was not to be the true fulfillment of the promise to Abraham and Abraham was cognizant of that fact.

For *Abraham* now understood, that God had so appointed, that neither he, nor any of the Patriarches, Prophets, Apostles, or Saints whatsoever, should be made perfect in the promises, before, or without other, nor till all the seed were accomplished, and brought in according as the Apostle declared in *Rom.4*.<sup>49</sup>

I. E. points out that the writer of Hebrews mirrors Abraham’s understanding when he affirmed that the patriarchs had not received the promises though persuaded they were true (Hebrews 11:13). Indeed, all of the people of faith mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven did not receive the promises either (Hebrews 11:39-40).<sup>50</sup> The promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will not be fulfilled until all of God’s elect—Jews and Gentiles—are gathered together in the kingdom to come. Christ himself predicted that

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<sup>47</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 14.

<sup>48</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 15.

<sup>50</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 15. Although the author does not mention it, it strengthens his argument to note that most of the individuals mentioned in Hebrews eleven lived after Israel had taken possession of the land; hence, possession of the land was not seen as a fulfillment of the promise to Abraham.

people from all over the world would one day sit with the patriarchs; this body will constitute one fold led by one Shepherd.<sup>51</sup>

At this juncture, the author anticipates a query; if the above explanation of the promise to Abraham is true, then what is to be made of the prophetic oracles predicting a regathering of Israel from the entire world to the land of Canaan?<sup>52</sup> His response is that these oracles are nothing but a repetition of what God promised the patriarchs and are “the substance, and perfection of that, which was performed by *Moses*, and *Ioshuah*; being the Tipe of this, which is to be performed, be [sic] *Iesus Christ*, the true deliverer....”<sup>53</sup> The seed of Abraham that is regathered is not to be restricted to Abraham’s physical descendants—to the Jews only—but is to include all of God’s sheep whether Jew or Gentile. The unification of God’s people will be accomplished by none other than Jesus Christ.

This work of Christ was anticipated by Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist. I.E., citing the song of Zechariah as evidence, believes that Zechariah knew the one to be born soon after John would fulfill the covenant made with Abraham so that God’s people could serve him without fear (Luke 1:72-74 ).<sup>54</sup> After Christ’s ascension, Peter also preached to the Jews that through Christ the times of refreshing would come when Christ returns to restore all things (Acts 3:20-21). At the second coming of Christ, he will send the angels to gather the elect from all the earth. This event is what “all the faithfull

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<sup>51</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 15-16.

<sup>52</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 16. The author cites Jeremiah 16:14-15, 23:8, Ezekiel 37:11-14, 39:26-28, “And other places.”

<sup>53</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 16.

<sup>54</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 17.

looked for, even that deliverance of the whole house and Seede of Israel, out of all Countries, whereof the Prohets [sic] had spoken.”<sup>55</sup> The righteous and the wicked will be separated and Christ, rather than coming to judge and then “to depart away as some thinke”, will reign on his earthly throne forever.<sup>56</sup> This eternal earthly kingdom was announced by Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:30-33), was revealed to Daniel in a vision (Daniel 7:13-14) and prophesied by Micah (Micah 4:7).<sup>57</sup> Indeed, “[m]uch more” scriptural evidence exists “to shew the perpetuity of this Kingdome of Christ, and of his Saints, on the earth, under the whole heaven....”<sup>58</sup>

The author’s emphasis on the eternal nature of Christ’s earthly kingdom is due to his desire to confound those who taught a regathering of Abraham’s physical descendants to the land of Canaan for a thousand years. Given the multiple biblical statements that the kingdom of Christ would last forever, the author proposes that

except men were besotted with willfulnesse, and blindnesse, that having once conceived an opinion, and taken it up, will wrest all Scriptures even from their plaine intention, to make them serve for their purposes, rather then let their opinion fall, or harken to any thing that may bee said against it.<sup>59</sup>

I.E. admits that, in a certain sense, Christ’s kingdom is already established; Christ reigns now in heaven at God’s right hand. In this capacity, Christ is, in a certain respect, “not

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<sup>55</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 18.

<sup>56</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 21. Certain millenarians of the age believed Christ would come to earth to set up his millennial kingdom but would then return to heaven for the duration of it and then returning at the millennium’s end.

<sup>57</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 22.

<sup>58</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 22-23.

<sup>59</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 23.



subject unto God the father now” since he shares the throne with God the Father.<sup>60</sup> But Christ will “resigne” this kingdom, giving it over to the Father, in order to receive his eternal earthly kingdom in fulfillment of God’s promise to David of an eternal dynasty.<sup>61</sup> As Psalm two declares, God will settle his anointed king on the holy hill of Zion in order that he might receive the inheritance of the whole earth.

Not only will Christ come to judge and reign over the earth, he will also cleanse and purify it. In its present state it is not fit to be the dwelling place of the holy city, the new Jerusalem, nor of the Lamb. But Christ will purge it from its corruption and create a new heavens and earth as promised.<sup>62</sup> This restored earth will now be prepared for the holy city, a city which will not be barren but be filled with God’s elect.<sup>63</sup>

Although I.E. affirms that the land of promise is the whole earth, he also affirms that Canaan will possess a unique status. The land of Canaan is “the glory of all the rest.”<sup>64</sup> For it was in Canaan that the patriarchs lived and were buried in expectation of their resurrection; there that Israel settled as a type of the ultimate fulfillment; there that God spoke by his prophets; there that David established his throne; there that Christ was born and suffered and ascended; there that he will return and set up his throne.

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<sup>60</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 24.

<sup>61</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 23.

<sup>62</sup> The author cites II Peter 3:10, Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1.

<sup>63</sup> I. E. expounds at length on the various metaphors employed by the scriptural writers to describe the new Jerusalem; it is the tabernacle of Ezekiel (Ezekiel 37), the country and city anticipated by the patriarchs (Hebrews 11), the purchased possession (Ephesians 1:13-14), the tabernacle built by God (Hebrews 8:2 and 9:11) and the place Christ is preparing (John 14:1-3). It is God’s building in the heavens (2 Corinthians 5:1), the incorruptible inheritance reserved in heaven (I Peter 1:3-6), the unshakable kingdom (Hebrews 12:27-28), the redeemed’s glory (Romans 8:17-23) and the rest that awaits the people of God (Hebrews 4). See I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 31-33.

<sup>64</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 34.

I.E. believes that if his understanding of the Abrahamic covenant and its fulfillment is sound, then no room is left for a limited reign of Christ for one thousand years over a church comprised of Jews nor is there room for a resurrection prior to the consummation of all things.<sup>65</sup> And if some wish to criticize him for not writing of the saints going to live in heaven with Christ eternally, then so be it. He has not written of a heavenly existence “because I find not a word in all the holy Scriptures that saith it, and what they speake not, I am no bound, in this case, to believe.”<sup>66</sup> God may grant to some, like He did to Paul, a view of heaven but He has not promised it. Yet the idea that the righteous will live forever on the earth is an idea for which “there are a hundred words in the Scriptures of God...”<sup>67</sup> The author is so sure of his position that the only possible way his interpretation is false is if it were possible for God to break his covenant with the day and night and for the heavenly bodies to be removed—both scenarios being obviously not possible.<sup>68</sup>

As for the millenarian position, I.E. simply finds it inconceivable that all of the texts of Scripture he has brought forth speak of a proscribed period of time lasting one or two thousand years. To hold to such an interpretation would yield “many absurdities...too many to relate.” But this does not stop I.E. from naming some.<sup>69</sup> That the promise of God so anticipated by the patriarchs, prophets and apostles for thousands

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<sup>65</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 35.

<sup>66</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 35.

<sup>67</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 36.

<sup>68</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 36. The author cites Jeremiah 31:35-37 and 33:20-21, the sources for his comparison.

<sup>69</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 36.

of years would be realized for a mere one or two thousand years and experienced only by the descendants “of the most viperous generation of them, that ever were...is beyond all sound apprehension, and besides all Scriptures of truth.”<sup>70</sup> Further, a mass conversion of the Jews flies in the face of God’s method of calling and saving an elected remnant. Christ taught that few find the gate to life, and the small number of believers in relation to unbelievers is a reality that will continue until the end of all things.

Anticipating that some would summon Paul’s words in Romans eleven,<sup>71</sup> the author asserts that Paul has been misread by those who support a Jewish restoration. Paul had in mind “a remnant of elect Iewes, and chiefly of those in his owne time.”<sup>72</sup> The author argues that in Paul’s day, the Christians of Rome were surprised that so few Jews, given their religious heritage, had converted to Christ. However, Paul writes to teach them that it has always been a minority of the Jewish people who truly had faith. “And so, all his [Paul’s] arguments are to prove, that God did never cast away his elect people of *Israel*.”<sup>73</sup> But not all of Israel are of the elect. In fact, most are not; hence they reject Christ and experience spiritual blindness. In the first century, the majority of Israel refused to believe in Christ, “fill[ing] up their measure, as they did the measure of their fathers, according as they said, his blood bee upon us and upon our children.”<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 37.

<sup>71</sup> The author does not specify any verses but probably has in mind verse 26 where Paul says that all Israel will be saved.

<sup>72</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 39.

<sup>74</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 38. Note: in the original document, the printed page numbers on pages 38 and 39 have been switched. The page labeled ‘39’ appears before the page labeled ‘38’. The body of the text has not been transposed, just the page numbers.

Consequently, the gospel was proclaimed to the Gentiles in order to bring God's elect from the Gentiles into His fold.

*The Land of Promise* ends with the author giving some advice to his readers. In what may be a subtle defense for choosing to publish this work anonymously, he warns his readers not to worry about *who* puts forth an idea “as if the knowledge of the person, place, and repute of the Authour would make the matter much better, or worse.”<sup>75</sup> The esteem in which a writer is held by the world is of no account in assessing the soundness of his teaching. If what is heard or read is “confirmed to his soule and conscience by the word & spirit of God,” then it matters not who said it.<sup>76</sup>

To sum up, I.E. makes the case that the promise of the land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed was nothing less than the promise that they would someday possess the whole earth—an earth restored and cleansed from its present pollution. The promise extended to all people, Jew or Gentile, who responded to God in faith. That the conquest of Canaan under Joshua was not the fulfillment of the land promise was understood by all the patriarchs, prophets and apostles. They all understood that in the age to come the saints would dwell forever on the earth. Those who looked for a great conversion of Jews and a one thousand year millennial reign employ scriptural texts that actually describe the eternal state and not a penultimate one.

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<sup>75</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 43.

<sup>76</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 43.

### *The Holy Rest of God*

In the same year that I.E. published *The Land of Promise*, another anonymous treatise was published proposing the earth as the final habitation of God's people—*The Holy Rest of God*.<sup>77</sup> Although incorporating some of the line of reasoning used in *The Land of Promise*, *The Holy Rest of God* adopts the theme of God's rest as the controlling principle for understanding the grand narrative of the Bible and the work expands on elements only briefly mentioned in *The Land of Promise*. The document's exposition of the rest of God traverses the entire corpus of Scripture, utilizing a vast array of biblical texts to advance its thesis. In spite of no numbering or labeling of individual arguments within the document, four major lines of defense for the author's thesis can be discerned.

First, the eternal purpose of God was for creation to fulfill the end for which it was created—to bring pleasure and glory to God by entering into God's rest. Second, the rest promised to Israel is not to be equated with the settling of Canaan but to a rest that will be realized in the eternal state. Third—and here the work mirrors *The Land of Promise*—the promises of the Abrahamic covenant are eternal promises and belong to Abraham's spiritual seed, comprised of both Jewish and Gentile believers. Fourth, The Davidic covenant promised David an eternal, earthly dynasty. Christ will fulfill that promise by reigning forever on the earth following the cleansing of creation. The author's treatment of these four topics is explored below.

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<sup>77</sup> *The Holy Rest of God the Throne, Kingdome, Glory of Christ, and the Brightnesse of His Spouse, the Church, as She Shall Appeare in the Day of Her Marriage, as Is Fore-Shewed in the Scriptures of Truth* (London : Printed by E.P. for Iohn Wright the younger ..., 1641), *Early English Books Online*, Union Theological Seminary Library. Being an anonymous work, and lacking the typical front matter of a preface, dedication or an epistle to the reader, knowledge of specific inducements for its publication can only be imagined.

### God's Rest: The Goal of Creation

First, *The Holy Rest of God* grounds the future restoration of creation in the eternal purpose and plan of God. The author begins his treatise by noting that the purpose of creation was to bring praise and pleasure to God. Observing that the first mention of the rest of God is after God finished creation (Genesis 2:2-3), the author quickly points out that God's rest was not "from paine of labour";<sup>78</sup> on the contrary, God delighted in his creative activity. Having finished creating, God

Was so pleased and delighted with all things that he had made, and took such pleasure and felicity in them, as in the most excellent thing that he could make, to set forth his Glory and his Wisedome, and his Goodnesse, and his God-head, and to be for His continuall rejoicing, solace and repose, having respect chiefly to the end, whereunto they should serve, and be for evermore, which was in his sight propounded in himself from the beginning, and before He began to create any thing.<sup>79</sup>

The author extols the fitness of creation to reflect the glory of God and to serve as a fitting object for God's enjoyment forevermore. He rested knowing that "nothing could prevent him of his purpose and ends" even the entrance of sin into this creation.<sup>80</sup> God's design for creation would not fail; creation would, like God himself, experience the rest of God, "the end for which he made the World."<sup>81</sup>

Therefore, the entrance of sin did not interrupt *God's* personal rest for he had already planned for sin's removal from his creation even before creating. However, sin brought an end to the rest of God in the experience of mankind and the created order. Had God not planned to "deliver man, and to restore all things againe" then his creative

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<sup>78</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 1.

<sup>79</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 2.

<sup>80</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 2.

<sup>81</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 2.

work would have been in vain.<sup>82</sup> However, because God loved the world and humanity—a distinction the author makes—he promised Adam a seed who would crush the serpent’s head, a seed who was none other than the Son of God. Through the Son, not only would humanity be able to enter into God’s rest, but creation itself would be “restored to his liberty.”<sup>83</sup> In all ages of human history, individuals have entered into the rest of God by faith in Christ and repentance from sin. Yet this entrance is only that—an entrance. This entrance is “only the first fruits of the Spirit, and earnest of that full Redemption, and perfection to come.”<sup>84</sup> In a coming age, the entrance would give way to a full experience of that everlasting rest of God. To sum up, the rest that God entered into subsequent to creating will one day be experienced by the creation itself because that has been God’s purpose from the very beginning.

#### God’s Rest: Not Canaan’s Conquest

A second strategy to defend the author’s understanding of God’s rest is the argument that the rest promised to Israel following the exodus from Egypt is not to be identified with the land of Canaan but rather with the age to come. Like I.E. of *The Land of Promise*, the author attributes significant insight to the Jewish patriarchs and David with respect to their knowledge of God’s purposes. When God swore in his wrath to

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<sup>82</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 2.

<sup>83</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 4. The reference to creation’s liberty is no doubt an allusion to Romans 8:19-21.

<sup>84</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 5.

forbid the Exodus generation from entering into his rest,<sup>85</sup> David understood that God did not have Canaan in mind but rather an eternal rest. The import of God's promises to Adam (Genesis 3:15) and Abraham (Genesis 22:16-18) regarding a seed was "understood well" by David;<sup>86</sup> equally David and Israel's forefathers grasped the significance of God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their descendants about the land of Canaan as an eternal possession (Genesis 13:15, 17:7-8, 26:3, 28:13). They understood that the land of Canaan was "the everlasting rest and possession which they, by Christ the seed promised, should all, both the Fathers and their children receive together in the world to come...."<sup>87</sup> Thus David, already living in the land of Canaan, could warn his contemporaries about missing out on the rest of God. The rest "promised the Fathers, was a rest yet to come, a rest everlasting, to be entered into here only by faith in the Spirit, spiritually, hereafter perfectly, both in spirit and body, and that the then present possession of the Land was not it."<sup>88</sup> If possession of Canaan was indeed the rest God had promised to Israel, then David's warning that that rest could be missed would make no sense given the fact that Israel had in fact previously conquered Canaan.

To further buttress his argument, the author maintains that the epistle of Hebrews confirms his own understanding of God's rest. The writer of Hebrews equates God's creation rest (Genesis 2:2-3) with the rest of God that was withheld from the unbelieving

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<sup>85</sup> The author quotes Psalm 90:7-8 where God speaks these words: "For we are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret [sins] in the light of thy countenance."

<sup>86</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 6.

<sup>87</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 6.

<sup>88</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 7. The author cites Micah 2:10 as further proof that the possession of the land of Canaan during Micah's day was not that promised by God to the patriarchs: "Arise ye, and depart; for this [is] not [your] rest: because it is polluted, it shall destroy [you], even with a sore destruction."



Israelites.<sup>89</sup> This withholding of rest proves that the settlement of Canaan was not the primary rest God had in mind when He swore to withhold it from those who sinned in the desert. The rest God had in mind was the eternal rest to come. In other words, the Israelites who rejected God's promise of victory over the Canaanites not only missed out on ever living in Canaan itself, but they also forfeited the chance to experience the true rest of God in the world to come. Both David and the writer of Hebrews understood this fact and hence the author of Hebrews could say that there was still a rest awaiting the people of God (Hebrews 4:9).

#### God's Rest: The Promise of the Abrahamic Covenant

A third line of argument employed by the author echoes the thoughts of I. E. in *The Land of Promise and the Covenant Thereof*. It centers on the identity of those who are included in the Abrahamic covenant as well as the contents of its promises. The recipients of the covenant are Abraham's seed. The identity of Abraham's seed is not to be restricted to direct physical descendants of Abraham. Rather, the seed includes "all them of the many nations which God made *Abraham* a father of, as in *Gen. 17.4,5*."<sup>90</sup> Paul's comments in Romans 4:11-7 demonstrate that Abraham's seed includes people of any nation who embrace the righteousness of God by faith. Those justified by faith are

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<sup>89</sup> The author draws on Hebrews 4:2-4 in particular to make this point: "For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard [it]. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh [day] on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."

<sup>90</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 9.

the recipients of the Abrahamic covenant and its promise that Abraham's seed would inherit the world.

Having shown that Abraham's seed includes people of faith from all nations, the author highlights two provisions of the Abrahamic covenant that together advance his argument. First, the covenant was an *eternal* covenant. On the day David brought up the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (I Chronicles 16), he admonishes Israel to remember the covenant because God had determined its perpetuity. Since this covenant is everlasting, it must refer to "the eternal rest and possession in the world to come" after the resurrection of the patriarchs and not merely to the "present estate".<sup>91</sup> David was not alone in his assessment that the covenant was to endure forever. The author declares that the patriarchs understood the covenant to refer to God's everlasting rest in a future age upon the earth. Drawing on Hebrews 11:8ff, he concludes that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob sought their inheritance—the land of promise—by faith, proving that "it was not in this life and present world to be inherited, according to the true and full intent of the promise, but hereafter in the resurrection."<sup>92</sup> That is, the patriarchs clearly understood the promise of the covenant to refer to the time of the resurrection "when all things should be heavenly, stable, and unmoveable."<sup>93</sup> Likewise, the saints mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven and Jesus himself embraced the idea that the Abrahamic covenant was everlasting.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 10.

<sup>92</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 11.

<sup>93</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 12. The author does not understand 'heavenly' to refer to locality but to quality.

<sup>94</sup> The author argues that the saints mentioned in Hebrews eleven endured their trials because they too looked for the fulfillment of God's promises to Abraham in the resurrection; Jesus himself depended

The second provision of the covenant was the land of Canaan. In the author's vision, the land of Canaan should not be restricted to the area roughly equivalent to ancient Palestine. Instead, Canaan was a synecdoche for the entire globe. Given the author's belief that the Abrahamic covenant is an everlasting covenant, that Abraham's seed comprises any and all who respond to God in faith and that the land promised to Abraham encompassed the entire earth, then

“it appeareth plainely, that the covenant which God made with *Abraham, Isaac,* and *Jacob,* and their seed, of the Land of *Canaan,* (which the Apostle here calleth the World) was, that they should all of them (no one exempted) inherit not the Land of *Canaan* only, though principally, as the seat and city of the great King, the Lord of Hosts, but all the earth, even to the utmost ends and bounds thereof; and meaning by the world, not this, as it is now, corrupt, but that to come, wherein dwelleth Righteousnesse, and which shall be stable and without end.”<sup>95</sup>

True, the earth to be possessed will be a changed world, a world with no corruption, but it will not a brand new world. If Abraham and his seed do not receive the world as their inheritance, then God's words are untrue; Isaiah proclaimed that the LORD did not make the world in vain but formed it to be inhabited (Isaiah. 45:18).

At this juncture, the author marshals a series of texts to support his contention that the earth will be eternally inhabited in the new heavens and earth. 1) Isaiah 49:8-13 is, according to the author, a prophecy of Christ, who would establish the earth and bless his people in numerous ways. When God's people are led and guided and fed by Him, then “the heavens and the earth, and all the creatures shall rejoice, and breake forth into singing, as it were, because they shall also now flourish in their perfect beauty and

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upon the eternity of the covenant to argue for the resurrection of the dead against the Sadducees (Luke 20:37-38).

<sup>95</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 10.

liberty, to the everlasting praise of God, the end to which he made them.”<sup>96</sup> 2) Jesus’ mother Mary sang of this day in her song of praise: God’s promises to Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, were about to be realized in the child she carried. The angel had declared to her that the child to be born would reign over the house of Jacob forever and his kingdom would have no end (Luke 1:33). 3) Zacharias too sang of the fulfillment of God’s promises for he “wel understood...that the Covenant which God made with *Abraham, Isaac, and Iacob*, and their seed of the Land of *Canaan*, was of an eternall inheritance in the world to come, which should be brought to passe by Christ.”<sup>97</sup> 4) When God promised Abraham that in him the nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:18, 26:3-4), the blessing of which He spoke was the blessing of future happiness in the eternal state, the blessing of the rest of God.

5) Peter spoke of this rest to the Jews when he spoke of the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21-21). Later, Peter appealed not only to his own glimpse of Christ in his future glory on the mount of Transfiguration, but also to the prophets’ testimonies of “the great Redemption of Israel, and restitution of all things....”<sup>98</sup> The day that dawns and the day star that arises (2 Peter 1:19-21) are none other than the presence of Christ and the Spirit and “the perfection of all things promised.”<sup>99</sup> 6) John records that at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the ‘mystery of God,’ a mystery foretold by the prophets, will be fulfilled (Revelation 10:7). That mystery is the coming of Christ, the salvation of Israel and the restoration of creation.

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<sup>96</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 19.

<sup>97</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 21.

<sup>98</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 24.

<sup>99</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 24.

For the author of *The Holy Rest of God*, the day of salvation and restitution of all things has been foretold by the patriarchs and the prophets from the very beginning. They all anticipated the redemption of all things by the seed of the woman who would “undo all the works of the Divell, and destroy him, and restore all things that God had determined.”<sup>100</sup> Central to God’s determination is the renovation of the earth as the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham that his seed would inherit the world and enter into God’s rest.

#### God’s Rest: The Fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant

A fourth distinct argument for an eternal earth inhabited by the elect and Christ is the covenant God made with David. In the Davidic Covenant, David was promised an unending throne and kingdom.<sup>101</sup> This kingdom is none other than the kingdom of the Son of man seen in a vision by the prophet Daniel (Daniel 7:13-14) and the Davidic throne spoken of by the angel to Mary (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus himself spoke of his eternal kingdom in parable form (Luke 19:12-27), and Paul admonished Timothy to preach the word in light of Christ’s coming in his kingdom (2 Timothy 4:1). At the establishment of the kingdom, Christ will sit as judge of all. The author’s conclusion is that all of these texts “being considered and compared together” prove that the kingdom that Christ will establish at his second coming is none other than the eternal kingdom promised to David.<sup>102</sup> It may take only one actual day for Christ to judge the world, but “hee

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<sup>100</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 25.

<sup>101</sup> The author cites I Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 89:34-37, Psalm 45:6, Jeremiah 33:20-21, texts which all mention God’s promise of an eternal kingdom to David.

<sup>102</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 30.

commeth not to sit and passe sentence of judgement onely, and so to depart away as some imagine.”<sup>103</sup> Rather, Christ will remain on earth on his Davidic throne forever.<sup>104</sup>

The author pauses in his exposition to make a distinction between two kinds of kingdoms, a distinction also mentioned by *The Land of Promise*. He claims that no man, excepting Christ, has ever or will ever sit on the throne of God the Father. Christ sits there now, reigning with the Father, until his enemies are subjected to him. Once his enemies are subjected to him, he will come to sit upon his *own* throne and rule over his *own* kingdom, the Davidic kingdom, on earth. Hence Christ’s personal future kingdom and the Father’s kingdom are distinct kingdoms. When Christ receives his own kingdom, He will deliver the kingdom of the Father back to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-25). As the king of the earth, Christ will then be subject to the Father so God might be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28). Though subject to the Father in his role as the Davidic king, the Son will “lose no honour; for as he is God, hee is the same for ever, as before when he was on earth, and prayed and gave thanks, suffered, and was obedient unto God.”<sup>105</sup> As his relationship to the Father was one of submission during the time of his first earthly

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<sup>103</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 30. It will be noticed that the author of *The Holy Rest of God* and the author of *The Land of Promise and the Covenant Thereof* both take note of the view of those millenarians who posited a return of Christ to establish his kingdom but not to remain on the earth throughout the millennium.

<sup>104</sup> The author points out that the magnitude of what God promised David was not unrecognized by David himself. Indeed, he understood the eternal nature of this kingdom and hence was awestruck at God’s promise to him (1 Chronicles 17:16-17). He understood that his words in Psalm eight were prophetic of Christ who would be made a little lower than the angels in order to suffer death before having all things put in subjection under him in the world to come (Psalm 8:4-6). David comprehended that the Lord who was to sit on the right hand of the Lord until his enemies became his footstool was none other than Christ. Christ promised those who would overcome would be able to sit with him on His throne (Revelation 3:21). See *The Holy Rest of God*, 31-32.

<sup>105</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 33.

appearance, so too shall it be one of submission when he returns to earth to receive his kingdom.<sup>106</sup>

This kingdom will not be established in the present heavens and earth; this present world will be replaced by a new heavens and earth. Christ's inheritance, for which he was bidden to ask (Psalm 2:6-9), will be from sea to sea, from the river to the ends of the earth (Psalm 72:8); Christ will be exalted by the Father above all other kings (Psalm 89:27), reigning over his people. Then the elect of Israel and the Gentiles will be united as one people and will dwell in the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This land is not just the land of Canaan even if the promise of land to the patriarchs "principally" refers to Canaan because it is the "chiefe place where the Throne and City of the great King shall be...but it doth extend to the whole earth, even to the utmost ends and bounds thereof."<sup>107</sup>

The chief city of the Promised Land is Zion.<sup>108</sup> The author collates numerous biblical texts proving that though Zion is forsaken now in this world, in the world to come, she will be restored and her children will be so numerous that Canaan will be too

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<sup>106</sup> The idea of an eternal earthly kingdom belonging to Christ as distinct from the Father's kingdom and the idea of the eternal submission of Christ resurfaces in other works to be discussed later.

<sup>107</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 39-40.

<sup>108</sup> The author traverses Scripture in order to show that Zion is known by many names in biblical literature. It is the land of the living of which David spoke, it is the tabernacle and holy hill of Psalm 15, it is the building of which Christ is the cornerstone and the saints are the living stones (Isaiah 66:1-2, I Peter 2:5, Hebrews 3:6, Matthew 16:18). It is also the mountain of the Lord's house (Isaiah 2:xx), the hill where God dwells (Psalm 68:15-16), the true tabernacle that God built (Hebrews 8:2), the city that the patriarchs looked for (Hebrews 11:9, 10), the kingdom which cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28), the inheritance reserved in heaven (I Peter 1:4-5), the new Jerusalem (Revelation 21), the tabernacle and sanctuary (Ezekiel 37:26-28), the blessing given to Abraham (Genesis 22:16-18) and repeated to Isaac and Jacob and his sons. It is the high places of the earth (Isaiah 58), the rest of God prophesied by David (1 Chronicles 16:27ff, 17:9) and Moses (Deuteronomy 32:7ff), and the rest of God after He created the world (Genesis 2:1-2). It is the house Solomon was to build (1 Chronicles 17:12) and the house greater than Solomon's (Haggai 2:9), it is the temple the Branch will build (Zechariah 6:12-13). See *The Holy Rest of God*, 53-57.

small to contain them all so they will fill the lands of the Gentiles. God will make the city “*an eternall excellency*”<sup>109</sup> and “she shall be fully possess of the everlasting rest of God promised.”<sup>110</sup> When the day of Zion’s glory is finally made manifest, all unbelievers who have mocked and scorned the promises of land to Abraham, of an everlasting dynasty to David, of restoration and peace to Israel and Zion will one day be silenced. Some Christians will be silenced as well including

those *Millenaries*, old and new, and *Jewes-restorers for a thousand yeeres*, and *Familists*, and such like, who take and turne the promises of God away from their true and plaine intention, to other cleane contrary purposes and ends, according to each of their fantasies and conceipts, and spirits of error and delusion.<sup>111</sup>

Whether Christian or unchristian, all those who doubted the veracity of these promises will see their fulfillment and recognize that they “were all utterly deceived in their imaginations.”<sup>112</sup>

Having discoursed at length on the manifold scriptural witness to the rest of God awaiting all of creation and stating that “nothing is more plentifully spoken of in al the scriptures, then this great redemption and restitution of all things”, the author elucidates something of the nature of that new creation.<sup>113</sup> First, just as God’s covenant with Noah was also made with all the animals on the ark after the first renovation of the world (i.e., the Flood), so the new covenant, the Gospel, is proclaimed to every creature (Colossians

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<sup>109</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 49.

<sup>110</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 51.

<sup>111</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 53.

<sup>112</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 51. The author mentions specific groups of doubters: “heathen Kings and ungodly powers & people of the world”, “obstinate blinded Jewes to whom God never gave eyes to see”, “those Christians also which begin to mock”, “And all those *Antichristians*, and those *Millenaries*, old and new, and *Jewes-restorers for a thousand yeeres*, and *Familists*, and such like”.

<sup>113</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 58.



1:23) “because that by Christ they were to be restored.”<sup>114</sup> As witnessed by David (1 Chronicles 16:29-33) and the Apostle John (Revelation 5:11-13), the restoration of creation will bring unparalleled blessing to all of the created order.<sup>115</sup> All creation will rejoice when Christ comes to judge and to reign.

In the restoration of all things, the end for which God made the world will finally be realized. God will be worshipped and the earth will be established forever. Satan will be destroyed, his works reversed and every knee will bow to Christ. This state of affairs is that “which God foresaw (and had determined before the world was) should be the end of his worke of creation, and whereunto all things that hee made should serve, to the everlasting praise and glory of his holy name.”<sup>116</sup> All of creation will enter in to God’s eternal rest.

Having thus asserted God’s purpose in creating, the author proceeds to dismiss other views. 1) God did not create the earth for humankind to continually populate ad infinitum, lest the earth become over-populated. 2) Neither did he make the earth for generations to live and die perpetually without a resurrection. The author attributes such a view to the Familists who looked for a mystical fulfillment of the material promises found in scripture. 3) God also did not create the earth to exist a few thousand years until the elect are saved and then destroy it. 4) He did not create the world to experience a

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<sup>114</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 59. Here the author cites a portion of Romans chapter eight about the creature’s liberation from bondage to corruption. As was seen in the previous chapter, differences of opinion existed about whether God would restore the animal kingdom in the renovation of the earth.

<sup>115</sup> The text quotes I Chronicles 16:29-33 and Revelation 5:11-13. These two biblical texts mention the joy and happiness of the following entities when Christ’s earthly reign commences: the earth, the world, the heavens, men, the sea and what is in it, the fields and their inhabitants, the trees, and every creature in heaven, in the earth, under the earth and in the seas.

<sup>116</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 61.

Sabbath of one thousand years—either for the Jews or for all of the Elect—after which the saints would be translated to heaven and “the world to pass cleane away, as some thinke, or else to remaine as an empty monument, as others thinke.”<sup>117</sup> These views are “nothing but mere conceits and fantasies of mans braine,” lacking any scriptural support.<sup>118</sup>

Like Willet and Adams, the author also discusses the function of the sun and moon. He quotes Isaiah 60:18-22 within which the prophet states that “the sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory” (60:19). These words could imply the absence of the sun and moon in the new creation but the author rejects such an interpretation. Rather, the author claims that “these creatures shall keepe their course, and give their true and naturall course, and give their true and natural force and light...and that all the saved of God shall have the true use and benefit thereof.”<sup>119</sup> The sun and moon will continue to rise and set and give light to the earth.<sup>120</sup> However, their light will be exceeded by the light of the glory of God and of the Lamb which will never dim day or night.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 62. Unfortunately, the author does not name any individuals who espoused these views.

<sup>118</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 62.

<sup>119</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 49-50. The author does not specify the uses and benefits of the sun and moon aside from providing light.

<sup>120</sup> The author refers to Jeremiah 31:35-36 as proof of the sun’s motion in the world to come.

<sup>121</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 50. His comparison of the light of the sun/moon and the light of God’s glory is stated as follows: “...and that all the saved of God shall have the true use and benefit thereof, yet notwithstanding and moreover and above, they shall have in the holy city, *new Jerusalem*, another light farre exceeding it, and of another nature, which shall neither set, nor withdraw it selfe, day nor night, as the light of the Sunne and Moone doth, nor as in the time of this world, the light and comfott [sic] of the Spirit of God doth seeme to doe, when temptations and afflictions assault them, *The glory of God and of the*

Anyone who reads *The Land of Promise* and *The Holy Rest of God* cannot help but notice remarkable similarities in thought. Both works defend an eternally inhabited earth with Christ reigning over it; both oppose a mass conversion of the Jews and both are anti-millenarian; both comment on a distinction between Christ's current reign in heaven with the Father and his coming reign on earth in subjection to the Father; both contain a section where a litany of biblical texts are collated that describe the eternal state under a variety of metaphors. More specific similarities can also be found. Both authors claim that the Hebrew patriarchs, prophets and apostles all possessed the knowledge that the Abrahamic promise of land was a promise of the whole earth to Abraham's seed. Both make the point that if Abraham and his seed do not inherit the earth then God's words are untrue; both mention that Zion will not be barren but fruitful in the age to come and both repeatedly mention the abundance of scriptural testimony to an earthly everlasting kingdom of Christ.

However, the similarities are not merely conceptual but linguistic as well. In defending the idea that the land promised to Abraham was really the whole earth, the author of *The Holy Rest of God* writes that Abraham and his seed will "Inherit not the Land of *Canaan* only, though principally, as the seat and city of the great King, the Lord of Hosts, but all the earth, even to the utmost ends and bounds thereof."<sup>122</sup> *The Land of Promise* states that "Abraham, Isaak, and Iacob and all their seed, shall then inherit, (I say) not the land of *Canaan* only, although principally as the Throne and City of the great

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*Lambe Iesus Christ, who will be always present with them, shall be their everlasting light, and all their temptations, sorrowes, and afflictions shall be ended, as it is also testified in Re. 21. 22, 23, 24. and Rev. 22.3, 4, 5."*

<sup>122</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 10.

King, but all the earth even to the utmost ends and bounds thereof: according to *Psal.37* and *Mat.5.*<sup>123</sup> The following two quotes provide another striking verbal parallel.

And small reason had *David* to perswade the children of *Israel*, Gods chosen ones, to be always mindful of this covenant, if God had not confirmed it sure unto them all, even to the thousand Generations, as he saith, *For an everlasting covenant, ever to endure.*<sup>124</sup>

But small reason had *David*, and as little reasons had they, either the Fathers or the children, to be always mindfull of this covenant, if God had not confirmed it sure unto them all, even to the thousand generations, for an everlasting Covenant ever to endure.<sup>125</sup>

A final example confirms that the similarity between some of the two documents' assertions is not mere coincidence.

So that if *Abraham, Isaac* and *Iacob* and their Seed should not live and inherite the earth, If God that made it had not established it so, as they should inhabit the same and dwell therein for ever, according also to Psalme 37 and to the words of Christ in *Math.5.* If the whole house of *Israel* should not be delivered from the heathen, and saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation in that world, which shall have no end, then had God created all in vaine, then had hee said unto the Seed of *Iacob*, all this while, seeke ye me in vaine; But *the Lord speaketh righteousness, hee declareth things that are right*, and such as shall surely come to passé in their due time and season.<sup>126</sup>

So that is *Abraham, Isaack*, and *Iacob*, and their seed should not live and inherit the earth, If God that made it had not established it so, as they should inhabit the same, and dwell therein for ever, according to his word; Then had he created it in vaine, then had he said unto the seed of *Iacob*, (all this while) seeke yee mee in vaine. But the Lord speaketh righteousness, he declareth things that are right, and such as shall surely come to passé in their due time, and season.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 8.

<sup>124</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 10.

<sup>125</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 11.

<sup>126</sup> *The Holy Rest of God*, 18.

<sup>127</sup> I. E., *The Land of Promise, and the Covenant Thereof*, 14.

Similar to the Willet/Adams documents, these examples suggest some type of literary dependency.

If mere coincidence is ruled out as an explanation, then three options remain to explain the linguistic parallels. First, the same author is responsible for both documents. Though certainly possible, one wonders why an author would publish in the same year two different works that argued the same thesis. There would seem to be little to be gained from such a duplication of effort. A second option is that one of the works had access to the other and freely borrowed from it. Given that both works were printed in 1641, chronological priority is difficult to establish for either work. A third option is that both works are drawing from another unknown document. If such were the case, then an additional writer from the seventeenth century (or earlier) could be added to the ranks of those who embraced the earth as the final home of God's people.

### *The Two Olive Trees*

Four years after the publication of *The Land of Promise* and *The Holy Rest of God*, a third anonymous work appeared advocating an inhabited earth in the final estate of all things. Entitled *The Two Olive Trees*, the work expounds the eleventh chapter of Revelation and the author is identified once again as "I.E."<sup>128</sup> Whether the author is the

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<sup>128</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees: Or, the Lords Two Anointed Ones, Which Always Stand before Him, the Ruler of the Whole Earth, Zach. 4. Described Also Rev. 11. By the Names of [Brace] Two Witnesses, Two Olive Trees, Two Candlesticks, Two Prophets. [Brace] and Shewing What They Are in Their Own True Nature, Differing from All the New Fancied Ones, and in What Manner They Always Prophesie. How They Are Said to Finish Their Testimony. How They Were to Be Killed by the Beast, and When. How Long Their Corps Should Lie in the Streets of the Beasts Great Citie, Dead and Unburied. And When the Spirit of Life from God Should Enter into Them, and They Stand Upon Their Feet Again. And What Great Things Should Follow after the Same to the End, and Thence for Ever. Published According to Order* (London, : Printed by Matthew Simmons., 1645), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. Noteworthy is that the imprimatur is listed as "Iohn Downam". John Downame was appointed in 1643 as

same I.E. who wrote *The Land of Promise* discussed above cannot be determined definitively because there is evidence that those initials do not necessarily represent the actual name of an author but is some type of cipher. For example, a work bearing the same initials appeared in 1647 that interprets the new heavens and earth as a description of the church prior to the translation of all saints to heaven.<sup>129</sup> Such an interpretation is directly opposed to the interpretation of the new heavens and earth by the I.E. of 1641 and 1645. Consequently, caution is to be observed before concluding that the “I.E.” of *The Land of Promise* and the “I.E.” of *The Two Olive Trees* are the same individual even if the works share a similar point of view. In any case, *The Two Olive Trees* employs a different textual basis for its conclusions—Revelation chapter 11—than did *The Land of Promise* or *The Rest of God*.

Revelation 11 gives the account of two witnesses for God—also identified as two olive trees and two lampstands (see 11:4)—who are given great power over the earth. At the end of their ministry, it is prophesied that the beast will kill the two witnesses bringing great rejoicing to earth’s inhabitants. However, after three and one-half days, God will raise the witnesses from the dead and they will ascend into heaven. An earthquake follows their ascension, followed by the sounding of the seventh trumpet. A heavenly voice proclaims that the kingdoms of the world now belong to the Lord and his Anointed One who will reign forever.

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imprimatur for theological works when censorship resumed. He also played a significant role in the publication of *The Westminster Annotations*.

<sup>129</sup> I. E., *The Propheticall Intelligencer, Shewing the Causes Why All Corrupt Churches of Christendome Shall Passe Away, or Depart; and All Their Sees of Corrupt Doctrine and Discipline Shall Be Abolished, and That the Holy City of the Church of New Jerusalem Is Now Comming Down from My God out of Heaven* (London, : Printed by M. Simmons, and are to be sold by John Hancocke in Popes-head Alley, 1647), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

In a verse-by-verse format, I.E. steadily works through the text of Revelation 11. He is keen to identify the two witnesses, or olive trees, as the Old and New Testaments.<sup>130</sup> The Roman Catholic Church is identified as the beast which killed the witnesses because the witnesses tormented them with the truth.<sup>131</sup> In other words, the Roman church obscured the truth of the Scriptures by means of various superstitions and inventions. However, the truth of Scripture was resurrected at the time of the Reformation as it once again was understood and expounded aright by faithful preachers and ministers.<sup>132</sup> This resurrection of the truth “made a great disturbance in the Christian world (where the Beast should reign) concerning matters of religion.”<sup>133</sup> This disturbance, by degrees, will increase as the testimony of the two witnesses grows in its influence. The church will experience a short time of “renewed beauty” prior to the Dragon’s “last mischief against her.”<sup>134</sup> This mischief will produce martyrdom and apostasy—signs of the approaching Day of the Lord. On that day, the seventh trumpet will sound signaling the final events of the present age.<sup>135</sup>

Those events entail the return of Christ to earth, the resurrection of all humankind and the judgment of both the righteous and the wicked. The “great mystery of God shall

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<sup>130</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 5. He dismisses other proposed interpretations—Enoch and Elijah, Zerubbabel and Joshua, Jewish and Gentile churches, civil authorities and clergy.

<sup>131</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 15.

<sup>132</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 19.

<sup>133</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 21.

<sup>134</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 28.

<sup>135</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 29. I. E. collates several other passages of scripture that he believes describe events surrounding the seventh trumpet: I Thessalonians 4:14-17, I Corinthians 15:51-53, Matthew 24:30-31, Revelation 10:5-7 and Isaiah 27:13.

be finished,” the mystery of God which saves his elect from all nations of the earth.<sup>136</sup> The events also culminate in the handing over of all earthly kingdoms to Christ as he commences his eternal reign. The kingdoms of the world, “in respect of the creation and works of God” always belonged to Christ but Satan and wicked people had usurped his (Christ’s) authority; however, they will be removed “and the earth and heaven cleansed; all things shall be new”.<sup>137</sup> Just as the bodies of the saints will be made incorruptible, so will the world be made likewise. Because the incorruptible world is different from the world that now is, the Scriptures speak of it as another world—a world to come. So the author concludes, “So the world to come, though it shall bee another world farre differing from this world in state and condition, yet in those respects of creation, it will be the same.”<sup>138</sup> Like so many of his day, the author does not believe in a brand new creation *ex nihilo*, but a restoration or renovation of the existing world.

This world and its kingdoms belong to Christ “by right of inheritance”<sup>139</sup> and I.

E. is emphatic in his insistence that the kingdom that Christ will set up is eternal:

This Kingdom of Christ and his Saints is to be after the foure Monarchs are ended, as the Prophet doth plainly declare: and that it being once set up, shall continue much more time then they all, it shall not passé away, nor be destroyed, but remain for ever, even for ever and ever: It is to have no end.....<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 30.

<sup>137</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 30. The author cites the four “new heavens and earth” passages in Scripture—Isaiah 65:27, 60:22, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1,5—for confirmation.

<sup>138</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 31.

<sup>139</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 31. Psalm 2:7-9, Psalm 72:7-9, Daniel 7:13-14, 18, 27-28 all testify that earth is Christ’s inheritance.

<sup>140</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 32.



The enduring nature of Christ's kingdom is frequently mentioned in Scripture. It was the message of Gabriel to Mary (Luke 1:30-33) and of Nathan to David (I Chronicles 17:11-14). In Psalm 89 God proclaims four things that shall endure: His mercy to David, His covenant with David, David's seed and David's throne (Psalm 89:27-29, 34-37). In Hebrews 1:8-9—which is a quotation of Psalm 45:6—God says to the Son that his throne is forever and ever. Indeed “[m]any more great and excellent things are spoken of this glorious kingdome of Christ, and his Saints, which (as plainly appeareth by all these Scriptures) is to have no end, but is to endure for ever, even for ever and ever world without end.”<sup>141</sup> The author insists that this kingdom will not be established in this world but in the next one.<sup>142</sup> Christ has not inherited the kingdom yet because all enemies have not yet been put under his feet.

Like the authors of *The Land of Promise* and *The Holy Rest of God*, the author of *The Two Olive Trees* makes a distinction between “God the Fathers throne and kingdome, and the Sonnes kingdome and throne.”<sup>143</sup> The Father's kingdom is the “supreme Kingdome” and it is in this kingdom that Christ is currently reigning with the Father at the Father's right hand. Christ will reign there until it is time to receive his own kingdom on earth in the world to come in fulfillment of God's promise to David of an eternal throne. Christ's earthly kingdom will be shared with the saints as Jesus himself also taught in Luke 22:29-30: “And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on

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<sup>141</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 33.

<sup>142</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 33.

<sup>143</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 34.

thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” No human or angel ever sat on the throne of God excepting Christ, but humans will sit with Christ in his throne. They will rule the nations with a rod of iron “even for ever and ever world and kingdom without end, as he promised.”<sup>144</sup> The Son shares the throne of the Father’s kingdom, but the saints share the throne of the Son’s kingdom. The Son will resign the supreme kingdom and give it wholly to God the Father when he takes up the rulership of his earthly kingdom. Then the Son will be subject to the Father and God will be all in all (I Corinthians 15:27-28).<sup>145</sup> Though subject to the Father as the Son, yet he is still God in Himself and thus shall “lose no honor.”<sup>146</sup>

At this point in his exposition, the author stops his exegesis of Revelation eleven and poses some questions for millenarians to answer.<sup>147</sup> Believing his questions create

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<sup>144</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 35.

<sup>145</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 35.

<sup>146</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 35. *The Land of Promise*, *The Holy Rest of God* and *The Two Olive Trees* all mention that Christ is currently sharing the throne of God the Father until the time of his return to earth to receive his own throne and kingdom. All three works also comment that Christ will be subject to the Father after receiving the kingdoms of the world. This subjection does not mean loss of equality; all three works contain the following exact line with the only differences consisting of spelling variations: “And herein shall the Sonne lose no honor, for as he is God hee is the same forever.” Given that *The Two Olive Trees* was published after *The Land of Promise* and *The Holy Rest of God*, it is likely drawing from one of the two former works or even an unknown source, or all three works stem from the same hand.

<sup>147</sup> The author raises five questions. First, if the coming of Christ, his delivering the kingdom to God the Father, the resurrection of the dead and the end of the world all occur at the same time as Paul teaches in I Corinthians 15 “in plain words”, then how can there be a thousand year monarchy between the second coming and the end of the world? Second, if the dead in Christ are raised and the living saints are changed at the second coming (I Thessalonians 4:15-17), then why do the millenarians teach there will be a resurrection of saints at the end of the millennium? Where would these saints come from? Third, since the writer of Hebrews says that Christ will appear a *second* time to save those who look for him (Hebrews 9:28), then why is it that some millenarians propose a *third* coming for the same purpose? Fourth, if the judgment of all humanity is to take place at his second coming when he sets up his kingdom (Matthew 25:31ff, 2 Timothy 4:1), how is it that millenarians put this judgment off a thousand years or make it stretch over the thousand year period? Fifth, since in the world to come the saints do not marry or die but are like the angels of heaven (Luke 20:34-36), on what grounds do the millenarians propose the idea that the saints will marry and die during the millennium?

Aside from these questions, I. E. also attempts to refute the millenarian interpretation of the ‘first resurrection’ of Revelation 20:5. He interprets the first resurrection as “a resurrection spirituall of the

insurmountable obstacles for millenarians, I. E. concludes that those who teach that the kingdom of Christ will take place in a millennium prior to the last day teach a doctrine contrary to Christ.<sup>148</sup> It is enough that the Roman Church has attempted to establish its own monarchy on the earth for one thousand years. To those Englishmen who were pursuing analogous monarchial goals, the author directs this warning: “But let no true Christian Ministers, state or people, bee of such a mind to teach such doctrine, or looke for such a thing here againe; But rather flie [flee] the glory and shadow of this world, and look for the eternall Kingdome in the world to come....”<sup>149</sup> The millenarians are right to posit a coming earthly kingdom of Christ on earth; they are wrong as to when it should be established and how long it would last. The Davidic Covenant promised an eternal kingdom; hence it should not be confined to a mere one thousand years.

When that eternal kingdom arrives, the old world will pass away and the world to come will begin with Christ reigning with his saints (Matthew 25:31-33, 2 Timothy 4:1). On that day will be the restitution of all things, a new heavens and a new earth. The condition of this future world will be in stark contrast to the present one. The author mentions just two main differences between the two worlds—who is reigning and the moral condition of the earth. In the world to come Christ will reign whereas in the

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soule” rather than a physical resurrection. In the vision of Revelation chapter twenty, John sees the *souls* of those beheaded for their faithfulness to Christ (v. 4) and these are they who participated in the first resurrection (v. 5). The author argues that the “soule cannot with any truth or sense of reasonable understanding, bee named for the body, nor for both in those cases”, a position he thinks the millenarians take. To hold such an opinion would require that one prove that the soul is mortal and dies when the body dies and rises again with the body at the resurrection. He thinks this is obviously false and comments, “For one corrupt opinion, or point of false doctrine, brings always more of the like nature with it.” See *The Two Olive Trees*, 35-39. That *The Two Olive Trees* is anti-millenarian reveals yet another affinity with the authors of *The Land of Promise* and *The Holy Rest of God*.

<sup>148</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 42.

<sup>149</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 42-43.

present world “the heathen and pagan Monarchs and Antichrists reigne.”<sup>150</sup> Secondly, in the world to come, righteousness will “dwell for ever world without end” while in the present world “iniquity beareth rule, and dwelleth.”<sup>151</sup> This world to come is something the author believes many of his contemporaries will live to see. Based on Christ’s words in Matthew 24:36, the author holds that the year of Christ’s return may be known, but not the day or hour.<sup>152</sup> In spite of this admission, I. E. does not suggest a year for Christ’s Second Advent.

Even a casual reading of *The Land of Promise*, *The Holy Rest of God* and *The Two Olive Trees* reveals comparable lines of argumentation and modes of expression, and, in the case of *The Land of Promise* and *The Holy Rest of God*, sometimes even exact wording. In itself, this phenomenon is unremarkable given the extensive seventeenth-century practice of authors borrowing freely from other works without naming sources. However, in this instance the anonymity of all three works, when combined with their parallelisms of thought and verbiage, and the fact that two of the documents identify the author as “I. E.” raises the possibility that the three documents come from the same hand. This is of interest when attempting to determine the extent or distribution of a particular viewpoint at a particular time period. In the attempt to reconstruct thought patterns of the early 1640s, it would be helpful to know if the belief in an everlasting earthly kingdom was the subject of choice for one particular author or whether it was a topic embraced by

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<sup>150</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 42.

<sup>151</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 42.

<sup>152</sup> I. E., *The Two Olive Trees*, 42.

several authors. The current state of the evidence makes it impossible to be dogmatic about which of these two options is correct.

### John Alcock

If the literary relationship among the three previous works is clouded, the same cannot be said for a fourth work from the 1640s that touches on the subject of the new heavens and earth. Not long after the appearance of *The Two Olive Trees*, a certain John Alcock published a catechism he had written twenty-five years earlier.<sup>153</sup> He explicitly names the three works surveyed above as helpful resources for the reader to consult. Whether those works simply strengthened Alcock's own independently derived theological conclusions or whether they were instrumental in shaping them is unknown. What is clear is that many of the arguments contained in those works figure strongly in Alcock's catechism.

In addition to revealing some of his literary sources, Alcock also reveals that the contents of the catechism contain some truths that were rarely taught. This feature appears right away on the title page, where Alcock indicates that he will draw attention to "many excellent things which are not commonly published [sic]."<sup>154</sup> He then mentions three of these excellent yet apparently uncommon beliefs: "the destruction of Antichrist,

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<sup>153</sup> John Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]. Collected out of the Sacred Scriptures, & Set Forth by Way of Question and Answer the Best Way Conceived for the Information of the Judgement of the Christian Reader. Wherein Is Set Forth Many Excellent Things Which Are Not Commonly Published [sic]. Especially the Destruction of Antichrist, and the Yeare When It Shall Be: The Coming of the Lord Christ to Judgement, and His Reigning with His Saints for Ever Upon This Earth, at the Restitution of All Things* (London: Printed for J.K. and are to be sold at the signe of the white horse in Pauls Church-yard, 1647), *Early English Books Online*, [Library not recorded]. Alcock informs his readers that he originally wrote the catechism for himself and his family.

<sup>154</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, title page.

and the yeare when it shall be: The coming of the Lord Christ to judgement, and his reigning with his Saints for ever upon this earth, at the restitution of all things.”<sup>155</sup> The theme of novelty reappears again in the dedicatory letter to a Lady Margaret. In the final paragraph of that letter, Alcock states that Lady Margaret “may find in the reading of it some things you never heard of before, both profitable and comfortable...”<sup>156</sup> Alcock returns again to the topic of the singularity of content in the epistle to the reader. He writes that the publication of the work was due to the urging of friends because they believed it contained “some things in it necessary to be made publique, which are not in other mens works, nor commonly taught.”<sup>157</sup> One sentence later Alcock addresses the reader directly with the following:

It may be thou mayest find some truths in it which thou hast not formerly taken notice, of which [m]ay be profitable unto thee, And some Scriptures cleared from the false expositions of some men which it may be they have led the[e] into some error & hindred from some comfort, that otherwise thou mightest have had in the knowledge of the truth.<sup>158</sup>

The claim of novelty on a title page was not that unusual in Alcock’s day; such a claim was, and continues to be, a method for selling copy. But the fact that Alcock makes the claim multiple times in the opening pages, and, as will become evident later, makes it again within the catechism itself, suggests that the claim of novelty was not merely for

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<sup>155</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, title page.

<sup>156</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, n. p.

<sup>157</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, n.p.

<sup>158</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, n.p.

the purpose of selling books; Alcock firmly believed some things he had written were uncommon eschatological teaching.<sup>159</sup>

The catechism itself consists of dozens of questions covering standard theological topics.<sup>160</sup> The final twenty pages cover questions related to eschatology—the topic expressly highlighted by Alcock on the title page of the work. Of specific concern are the fall of antichrist and its aftermath, whether a mass conversion of Jews will precede the Second Coming, the final apostasy and the effects of the Second Coming of Christ. Alcock predicts with some confidence that the Antichrist—identified as the Church of Rome—will fall in the year 1666 after which the true church will experience a reprieve from Rome’s oppressions.<sup>161</sup> As for the Jews, individual Jews will be saved until the Second Advent, but Scripture gives no justification for the belief in a national conversion of the Jewish people.<sup>162</sup> The tranquility of the Church following the destruction of the

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<sup>159</sup> Alcock indicates that the catechism had been enlarged since he first wrote it. He does not indicate what portions he added so it cannot be determined if his section defending the view that the saints’ final abode will be on earth is something he added or something he included in the original version.

<sup>160</sup> In the dedicatory epistle, Alcock summarizes the contents as follows: “...I have labored herein to set forth, how and after what manner a poor sinner comes to be justified, and how he walk being justified, both towards God and man, as also something concerning the destruction of antichrist, and the felicity of the Church for ever, with other things necessary to be known of us in these times.”

<sup>161</sup> Alcock locates the scriptural ground for the time of Antichrist’s destruction in Revelation 11:13. In chapter eleven, the Antichrist’s reign is limited 42 months “which is moneths of yeares, which amounteth to 1260 yeares.” This interpretation agrees with the exposition propounded by the author of *The Two Olive Trees*. In chapter thirteen, the number of the beast is said to be 666. Alcock, without explaining his reasoning, grounds his prediction of 1666 as the final year of Antichrist’s reign on Revelation 13:18 “where the very period and final determination of Antichrist is layd down, in which yeare the destruction denounced against him shall fall on him.” The instrumental means leading to Antichrist’s destruction is “the light of the truth maintained by the Saints.” The truth will increasingly expose the error and deception wrought by the Antichrist. See Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 87-88. Alcock was not alone amongst English divines in thinking that 1666 would be an important year in the divine calendar.

<sup>162</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 89. Alcock particularly argues that Paul’s comment in Romans 11:26—that all Israel shall be saved—does not refer to ethnic Israel but to spiritual Israel and hence is a reference to both Jews and Gentiles. In fact, all prophecies that speak of a return or restoration of Israel are not to be limited to ethnic Israel but rather as prophecies encompassing all the elect of God.

Antichrist will not be prolonged; the Turks—Gog and Magog—“shall envy the prosperity of the Church” and seek to destroy it.<sup>163</sup> However, Christ will return and with fire from heaven destroy his enemies. He will divide the elect from the reprobate and “regain his own Kingdom”.<sup>164</sup>

Although Alcock provides no discussion of the final abode of the reprobate, he does provide considerable discussion of the location of the saints in eternity, namely, a restored earth. Alcock claims that nowhere in Scripture does it say that Christ, once having come to earth the second time, ever returns to heaven. Citing Revelation 3:21, Alcock maintains that Christ will come to earth to possess the throne of David forever.<sup>165</sup> The saints will dwell on earth forever with Christ. However, the corruption of the earth due to human sin will first be removed. Everything that resulted from the curse must be removed from the kingdom of Christ.

Alcock anticipates an interlocutor’s objection—what about Peter’s words claiming that the earth and its contents will be consumed and dissolved by fire (2 Peter 3:10)? Alcock’s answer reflects a standard seventeenth-century opinion--the fire will consume only what resulted from the curse; what is preserved is that which existed before the curse. It does not appear, however, that Alcock thinks the earth will simply return to a pre-fall state but that it will actually be restored to an even better condition, for he writes that “all things shall be made new, as in the first creation of them, and far more

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<sup>163</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divinity [sic]*, 95.

<sup>164</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divinity [sic]*, 97.

<sup>165</sup> Revelation 3:21: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.”



excellent and durable....”<sup>166</sup> This new creation is promised in Isaiah sixty-five “in plaine words.”<sup>167</sup> Aware that Isaiah sixty-five mentions the new creation as a place of building, planting, eating and drinking—activities he has his interlocutor claim “cannot be after this life”<sup>168</sup>—Alcock responds:

We know not what is intended by such like things, nor what shall be at that day, nor what these things may adde to our happinesse; And therefore being ignorant of these things, let not us wrest the Scripture out of the way, to frame a meaning which the Lord never intended, because we imagine that these things cannot be after this life.<sup>169</sup>

Besides, Alcock continues, the prophets also describe the restoration as a time when sorrow, mourning, death and uncleanness will all be done away—a circumstance manifestly not true of life in the current age.

Alcock anticipates another objection; do not both Peter (1 Peter 1:4) and Paul (2 Corinthians 5:1) claim that our inheritance is in heaven?<sup>170</sup> Yes, the saints’ inheritance is *reserved* in heaven, but it shall not remain there for Christ will bring it with him to the earth. The inheritance is none other than the new Jerusalem, described in all its glory in Revelation twenty-one. The new Jerusalem is also the heavenly house that Paul desired (2 Corinthians 5:2).<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 99.

<sup>167</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 99. Alcock does not quote or cite any verses here but he no doubt has in mind Isaiah 65:17.

<sup>168</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 94.

<sup>169</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 94.

<sup>170</sup> I Peter 1:4—“To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” II Corinthians 5:1—“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

<sup>171</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 100.

The rest of the catechism is devoted to providing scriptural evidence to prove that the earth is the eternal home of the righteous. Alcock believes there are “many places of Scripture to this purpose”.<sup>172</sup> It is unnecessary to delve into all of Alcock’s musings since he repeats several of the arguments utilized in *The Land of Promise*, *The Holy Rest of God* and *The Two Olive Trees*, works that he recommends to any of his readers who might want further elaboration.

Yet Alcock provides additional biblical material to argue his position. Two texts from Revelation provide two scriptural proofs for an eternal earthly kingdom—Revelation 5:10 and 11:15. The former records the twenty four elders singing that the Lamb had made them kings and priests and that they would reign on the earth. Since the present life is a time of suffering and not reigning, then this expectation must be fulfilled in the life to come. Revelation 11:15 reports what happens after the sounding of the seventh trumpet—a voice proclaims that the world’s kingdoms have become the possession of Christ and he will reign forever. Alcock also cites Daniel 7:14, 27 as texts expressing a parallel teaching.<sup>173</sup> Alcock’s conclusion is succinct: “So that then Christ shall reigne as King upon this earth, and all powers shall serve and obey him for evermore.”<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>172</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 100.

<sup>173</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 102. Daniel 7:14—“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Daniel 7:27—“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

<sup>174</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 102.

In the very next catechetical question, Alcock expresses the concern that if the earth is the eternal home of the saints, then their existence will not be as felicitous as Scripture and “the most part of our preachers” make it out to be.<sup>175</sup> Alcock counters this concern by arguing that because Christ will be present on the earth, joy and happiness inexpressible will belong to the saints. It is his presence that is the source of all bliss; since he will be reigning on earth, earth will “be very full of joy, comfort, blessednesse, and happinesse. . . .”<sup>176</sup> Preachers who claim heaven is the place of eternal happiness would cease such pronouncements if they paid more careful attention to the Scriptures.<sup>177</sup> Unfortunately, these preachers err in that they tend to apply texts which speak of eternity to a period prior to the coming of Christ, a period when Jews will be converted *en masse* and will return to their ancient homeland. Such a teaching

turnes them from the truth, and hereby the Saints are deprived of many sweet promises that are made unto them for their comfort here in this life, in the expectation of that glory and happinesse therein set forth, and promised unto them then which a greater wrong cannot be done to the people of God.<sup>178</sup>

Alcock cannot think of any Scripture that suggests that heaven is the location of the saints’ future happiness.<sup>179</sup>

The catechism’s final question asks for a listing of the supposed ample selection of texts which teach that the earth is our final home. Alcock states that it is not possible

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<sup>175</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 102. The conclusion of the question reads “. . .and for the most part of our preachers they do tell us that it shall be in the highest heavens.”

<sup>176</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 103.

<sup>177</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 103.

<sup>178</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 104. It will be remembered that Alcock mentioned in his epistle to the reader that the reader might have been “hindred from some comfort, that otherwise thou mightest have had in the knowledge of the truth” due to the false interpretation of certain passages of Scripture. Clearly, the passages he had in mind were these passages regarding the restitution of all things.

<sup>179</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 103.

for him to present them all, but that he will give as many as he can remember at the present, hoping that the reader will “take comfort in them, and live by faith in the hope and expectation of them....”<sup>180</sup> He prefaces his list with two important reminders. First, in Acts 3:19-21 Peter made it very clear that the restitution of all things spoken of by the prophets does not occur until the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>181</sup> Alcock reasons that if the texts he will list do not refer to this restitution at the second coming of Christ but to a mass conversion of Jews in the latter day, then where in Scripture is this restitution mentioned by Peter revealed? Alcock has no doubt that his list of texts is descriptive of the Second Coming and the idea of a mass conversion of the Jews is “a doctrine never intended or meant by the Holy Ghost.”<sup>182</sup>

Alcock’s second reminder is that the promises made by the prophets do not pertain to ethnic Jews only, but to the Jews and Gentiles who make up Abraham’s spiritual seed. All of God’s elect can draw spiritual sustenance from these promises. Employing this type of hermeneutic allows Alcock to indeed find a plethora of texts to defend an eternal earth, peopled by the righteous and ruled by Christ.

The following chart contains all the texts mentioned by Alcock.<sup>183</sup> The order and grouping of these texts in the chart reflect Alcock’s own organization and comments.

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<sup>180</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 104.

<sup>181</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 105.

<sup>182</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 105.

<sup>183</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 106-107.

Paragraph #1	Genesis 13:14-16, 15:8, 17:8, 26:3-4, 28:4, 13-14
Paragraph #2	I Chronicles <sup>184</sup> 16:30-33, 17:9, 11-14, 27
Paragraph #3	Psalms 8, to be compared to Hebrews 2
Paragraph #4	Psalms, 14:7; 15:1; 37:9-11, 29; 45:6, 16
Paragraph #5	Psalms, 48; 87:3; 89:3-4, 15-17; 96:9-11; 98; 132:11-12 Isaiah 11 in combination with Romans 8:19-20 and Isaiah 25:6-9
Paragraph #6	Isaiah 27:13, 55:12-13, 60:14-15, 61:5-7, 62:1-5, 7-8, 65:9-10, 14-15, 66:5-8 and to the chapter's end
Paragraph #7	Jeremiah 3:16-18, 23:5-8, 30:9-10, 31:35-36, 33:15-17 to chapter's end, 46:27-28, Ezekiel 28:24-26, 34:11-16, 23-24 to chapter's end
Paragraph #8	Ezekiel 36 and 37, Ezekiel 39:25 to chapter's end
Paragraph #9	Daniel 2:44-45, 7:14 and 27, 12:1-3, 13
Paragraph #10	Hosea 2:14 to chapter's end
Paragraph #11	Joel 3:1-2, 12, 16-18, 20-21
Paragraph #12	Amos 9:11 to chapter's end
Paragraph #13	Haggai 2:7-9 <sup>185</sup>
Paragraph #14	Zechariah 6:12-13, 12:8, 13:4 to chapter's end
Paragraph #15	Matthew 5:5, Acts 3:19-21, Romans 8:9, 20 <sup>186</sup> , I Corinthians 2:9, 2

<sup>184</sup> The original text of Alcock's catechism actually says "2 Chron." but it is obvious from the content and versification of 2 Chronicles 16 and 17 that 1 Chronicles is what Alcock had in mind. There are only fourteen verses in 2 Chronicles 16, and 2 Chronicles 17 contains no twenty-seventh verse. 2 Chronicles 17:9, 11-14 deal with the successful reign of Jehoshaphat. Conversely, the versification of 1 Chronicles 16 and 17 aligns perfectly with the verses Alcock lists and the content of those verse corresponds to his topic.

<sup>185</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divinity [sic]*, 107. The citation from Haggai actually begins prior to verse seven but the numeral is unreadable.

	Thessalonians 1:7-8, 2 Peter 3:13, Hebrews 4:9 (with the instruction to read the whole chapter), Revelation 3:12, 21, 5:10, 7:15-17, 11:15-18, and chapters 21 and 22
Paragraph #16 <sup>187</sup>	Isaiah 32:15-19, 33:15-17, 20-24, chapter 35, 45:17-19, 49:9-13

Alcock does not provide exposition of these texts but by reading these texts through the hermeneutical lens Alcock provides,<sup>188</sup> it is possible to summarize his vision of the end of the world as follows.

In the distant past, God made a covenant with Abraham and his seed that they would receive a land as an eternal inheritance. This promise was supplemented with another promise made to David; one of his descendants would be king over this land and this kingdom would have no end. Neither of these promises was fulfilled within the lifetimes of Abraham or David. On the contrary, both the kingdom and the land were lost due to Israel's unfaithfulness. Yet a day is coming when a whole chain of events will be unleashed which will reverse the fortunes of Israel. That day is the day when Yahweh will come to judge the earth and to reign over it. He will come to his tabernacle and holy hill, even Zion—Jerusalem—the city of the great king. The seed of Abraham—Jew and Gentile—will be re-gathered to the land, having been released from captivity.

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<sup>186</sup> This seems to be a printing error and the citation was likely verses 19-20 and not 9 and 20.

<sup>187</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divinity [sic]*, 107. As an afterthought, Alcock appends several other texts from Isaiah, considering him “wonderfull excellent in expressing the happinesse of the Saints for ever....”

<sup>188</sup> That lens being that the restoration spoken of by the prophets cannot occur until the Second Coming and that Abraham's seed includes all of God's elect, not just Jews.

The return of the Lord will issue forth in a transformation within both the natural and moral spheres. A new heavens and earth will emerge from a cleansing fire. The earth will become abundantly fruitful and predation will cease among the animal kingdom. Creation's bondage to corruption and futility will vanish. The hearts of the righteous will be completely renewed as God's law will be fully internalized by his people. God's people, the meek, will inherit the earth. They shall be appointed as princes to rule and reign over the earth albeit in joyous submission to the Son of Man, whose kingdom will exceed Israel's borders and fill the whole earth. All things will be put under his feet as he renews all of creation and causes the elect to enter into an eternal rest. This narrative reflects the amalgamation of texts Alcock lists and is consistent with the general trajectory of Alcock's thought.

Having come to the end of his list of texts that he believes supports the notion that the earth is to be the final abode of the saints, Alcock closes his catechism with a letter to the reader in which he expresses concern that in spite of the many texts he has brought forth to demonstrate that the church will dwell with Christ on the new earth for eternity, the reader may still believe the idea requires more evidence. To this end Alcock refers the reader to the three works considered earlier in the chapter. Alcock mentions first the "land of promise and covenant thereof".<sup>189</sup> He claims that in this work

this thing is fully manifested, it being the subject matter of the whole book, and proved by many places of Scripture, for indeed the Scriptures are very plentiful in this thing, it being that which God chiefly intended from all eternity, it being the rest of God, wherein he always took delight and pleasure, the setting up of the Kingdome of his Sonne Christ, and his dwelling with the Sons of men his Saints for evermore, even the full perfection of all his works which he intended from everlasting.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 108.

<sup>190</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 108.

Then he refers the reader to two additional works—“the holy rest of God” and “the two olive trees.”<sup>191</sup> Alcock thinks these two books demonstrate his point while arguing against “the millenaries of these times.”<sup>192</sup> Unfortunately, Alcock gives no information that would help determine the number of authors these works represent. Given Alcock’s statement that most preachers did not teach the doctrine of an eternal state on earth, it is likely that such a doctrine was one of the “many excellent things . . . not commonly published [sic]” that Alcock wished to make known to the Countess of Carlisle and his readers.<sup>193</sup>

### Summary

The above review of the first half of the seventeenth century brings to light the fact that a humanly occupied earth in the eternal state was espoused as early as 1611 in Andrew Willet’s commentary on Romans. Thomas Adams aped Willet’s thought in 1633 in his commentary on 2 Peter. Each of them accepted the notion that the saints would have access to both heaven and earth. Both men also used a limited amount of scripture to defend their position, sticking in the main to Peter’s statement that in the new heavens and earth righteousness would dwell and Jesus’ assertion that the meek would inherit the earth.

Conversely, John Alcock’s catechism, *The Land of Promise, The Holy Rest of God* and *The Two Olive Trees* never mention the saints having access to heaven at all.

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<sup>191</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 109.

<sup>192</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, 109.

<sup>193</sup> Alcock, *Plain Truths of Divivinity [sic]*, title page.



Each of the works defends at great length the earthly abode of Christ and the saints in eternity. Each of them also draws from a vast array of biblical texts to support their position. The creation story where God commences his eternal rest, the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, the prophetic utterances of a restored Israel, Jesus' promise to the meek and the apostolic witness of Peter and Paul are all utilized to make their case about the ultimate location of Christ and his people. As will be seen in the next chapter, that case received additional backing from a handful of writers in the second half of the seventeenth century.

The works advancing the idea that the new heavens and earth would be the eternal abode of the righteous follow a similar publishing trajectory as the works espousing that the new heavens and earth was the millennium. Both views appeared in print early on in the seventeenth century, but a noticeable increase in works devoted to one position or the other emerges in the 1640s. As noted in Chapter Three, the ending of Archbishop Laud's rule and the demise of censorship contributed to the proliferation of works teaching a coming millennium. Similarly, this chapter reveals that same growth spurt in the 1640s in publications advancing an eternal earthly home. The latter were pointedly anti-millenarian, answering the millenarian advance by arguing that the terrestrial golden age longed for by the millenarians would not last a mere one thousand years, but would last forever.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### ETERNAL HOME (1650-1692)

The trajectory of thought regarding the new heavens and earth iterated by Willet, Adams, Alcock and some anonymous authors during the first half of the seventeenth century continued into the latter half of the century as well. This trajectory consisted of several strands of thought consistent between the two periods. For example, the belief that the saints would likely have access to both heaven and earth appears in David Dickson's commentary on several New Testament epistles.<sup>1</sup> Rhetoric against millenarianism remained a constant. Proclaiming that Christ will rule over an eternal earthly kingdom is still understood as not being part of the eschatological mainstream. That this earthly kingdom is the true fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants reappears as well.

Yet the authors from the latter half of the century do more than simply repeat their predecessors. They add further reasons for believing the earth will be home to the saints and they discuss issues left untouched by the former writers. Three authors in particular provide extensive material on the new heavens and earth and they will occupy the lion's share of the discussion to follow. The chapter will conclude with the first known

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<sup>1</sup> David Dickson and William Retchford, *An Expositon of All St. Pauls Epistles Together with an Explanation of Those Other Epistles of the Apostles St. James, Peter, John & Jude : Wherein the Sense of Every Chapter and Verse Is Analytically Unfolded and the Text Enlightened.* / David Dickson, (London : Printed by R.I. for Francis Eglesfield ..., 1659), *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library. In the dedicatory epistle, Dickson reveals that his work is part of a larger project sanctioned by the National Synods Delegates of Scotland. University professors had been "injoynd...to open of the scope of difficult places of *Scripture* to younger students" in a new biblical commentary. See Dickson, *An Exposition*, n.p. In his commentary on 2 Peter 3:13, Dickson asserts that the just will live in both the heavens and earth in eternity: "He calls both the Heavens and the Earth the habitation of the just, because the world shall be the Possession, Palace, and Kingdome of the Elect, who shall accompany Christ wheresoever hee shall go." See Dickson, *An Exposition*, 303.

example of a group of English churches who affirmed in confessional form the eternal earthly reign of Christ and his church.

### John Seager

Appearing exactly at the half-way point in the century, one of the clearest and meticulously argued works to propound the idea that the new heavens and earth would be the eternal dwelling of Christ and his people was written by John Seager, a minister in the county of Devon.<sup>2</sup> Rather than utilizing the frameworks of the Abrahamic covenant or God's rest to organize the biblical material concerning the eternal estate, Seager chooses the biblical motif of *the world to come* to present his case.<sup>3</sup> In the brief introduction to the work, Seager points out to his parishioners the paucity of material on the topic of the world to come:

*And seeing I have not as yet so much as heard or read of any writer that hath professedly made a Discovery of the World to come (though many have written of the Heaven that now is) it may not be expected that I should observe so exact a Method in this discourse, as doubtless some after Writers may.”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> J. Seager, *A Discoverie of the Vvorld to Come According to the Scriptures the First Part Thereof Being Didactical, or Such as Contains a Form of Positive Doctrine : Wherein 1. The Doctrine of the World to Come Is Propounded, Explicated, Confirmed, and Applied in a More Familiar Method Than Formerly Hath Been Observed, 2. The Doctrine of Millenaries, Touching a New Reformed Church in the Latter Times, Which They Call a New World, Is Confuted, 3. Sundry Passages of Holy Writ Are Interpreted in Reference to the World to Come, Which Have Been Formerly Wrested, and Forced in a Wrong Sense / Written by J. Seager*, (London : Printed by J. Macock for Luke Fawne, and are to be sold at his shop ..., 1650), *Early English Books Online*, Emanuel College Library, Cambridge University. Bryan Ball includes Seager's work as "another important contribution to the growing body of more sober second advent literature." See Ball, *A Great Expectation*, 29.

<sup>3</sup> The phrase "the world to come" is mentioned five times in the Bible, each occurrence appearing in the New Testament: Matthew 12:32, Mark 10:30, Luke 18:30, Hebrews 2:5, 6:5.

<sup>4</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 2. Seager expresses the hope that his efforts might inspire someone with greater ability than his to produce a better work on the subject.

That method results in a work divided into 21 sections with sections 2 through 8 containing his defense of an earthly existence for Christ and the church in the new heavens and earth.

After noting that the topic itself is most worthy of the Christian's study,<sup>5</sup> Seager oscillates between two projects: explaining what the world to come is not, and explaining what it actually is. He first discourses at length on disproving the notion that the world to come is the third heaven, God's dwelling place.<sup>6</sup> The two are disparate realities for there is "as much difference betwixt the world to come, and the third Heaven, as betwixt a created and an uncreated Substance."<sup>7</sup> That is, the world to come will be created by God, whereas the third heaven was never created but is coeternal with God. Seager is aware of the uniqueness of his view and his extended defense of the eternality of the third heaven is robust, offering not only biblical grounds for affirming it but also answers to several anticipated objections.<sup>8</sup> His main objective throughout is to establish that the world to come is not another name for the third heaven; the two regions are geographically distinct.

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<sup>5</sup> Seager goes so far as to say that he knows of "no doctrine in the whole Bible more profitable for instruction, reproof and comfort then this, if rightly understood and applied." See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 7.

<sup>7</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 8.

<sup>8</sup> Seager devotes about fifteen pages of text to ground this assertion in the biblical text and defend it against objections. Among his seven-fold arguments are 1) the third heaven was not made by hands and anything not made by hands (even Divine hands) must be eternal; 2) since God is everlasting, and it is inappropriate to say that God was *nowhere* from everlasting and equally false to say that God was *everywhere* from everlasting, then the place from which He was must be the third heaven; 3) the term 'heaven' is sometimes used as a synonym for God and thus "we may say without a trope or figure, this Heaven is God, and God is this Heaven;" 4) if the third heaven is created, then it must take part in the corruptibility of creation spoken of by Paul in Romans 8:21-22; yet the third heaven is generally believed to be incorruptible so it must not have not been created. For his full discussion see Seager, *A Discoverie*, 9-25.

The world to come is also not to be equated with a coming millennium that will precede the earth's dissolution by fire. Seager maintains that his exposition confutes those who think that the new heavens and earth "*speaks of anew reformed Church in this life, all the world over, before the end of it; and not of the World to come.*"<sup>9</sup> He admits that many had embraced this view in recent years and had even advocated for new forms of church polity as a necessary precursor to this ecclesiastical reformation that would supposedly sweep over the world.<sup>10</sup> These persons "justly deserved to be censured by the Church" because, amongst other hermeneutical errors, "they make use of a figurative or allegorical interpretation, when the proper and litteral sence is onely right and orthodox."<sup>11</sup> However, rather than offering specific rebuttals to millenarian arguments, Seager is content to stick to his primary aim of expounding on the nature of the world to come.<sup>12</sup>

That exposition reveals several defining characteristics of this future world. It comes as no surprise that Seager identifies the world to come as equivalent to the new

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<sup>9</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 72. Publishing this work in 1650, Seager is at the zenith of millenarian thought in seventeenth-century England.

<sup>10</sup> In another strike against some millenarian hopes, Seager sees the corruptible qualities of the world increasing rather than decreasing. Seager especially takes on those who argued for a national Jewish conversion to Christ on the basis of Romans 11:26. He claims their hermeneutic is flawed: "you are more swayed by the letter, then by the proper sence and scope of those Scriptures which you bring for the proof of that phantastical New-World, of which you speak." See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 72.

<sup>12</sup> Later, Seager mentions specific teachings of millenarians he rejects. 1) Christ's second coming will be to establish his kingdom in the hands of the saints before returning to heaven to await his third coming in the flesh; 2) Christ's second coming is at least a thousand years away; 3) the Jews will be converted *en masse* before Christ returns; 4) Christ will descend into a defiled world rather than to a new heaven and earth; 5) Following the second coming of Christ, he will ascend with his saints to the third heaven to reside there forever. Seager's opinion of these notions is succinct: "But I resent these opinions as so many wild fansies or foperies, such as have no footing at all in the Word of God." See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 99.

heavens and earth mentioned by Isaiah, Peter and John.<sup>13</sup> The new heavens include both “a new Starry Heaven, and a new Ayry Heaven, that shall compass the new earth.”<sup>14</sup> He assures the reader that he is not alone in his interpretation, although even if he was alone he would not abandon it since he believes his interpretation is justified by the occasion, scope and context of the four texts.<sup>15</sup> The new earth is equally part of the world to come and Seager offers a plethora of biblical evidence to prove it. The new earth is the one that will never be shaken or moved (Psalm 96:10) and the one that the meek and righteous will inherit (Matthew 5:5, Psalm 37:29). It is the place of the reign of Christ (Psalm 72:8) and the reign of the saints (Revelation 5:10) as well as the land promised to Abraham (Genesis 17:8). It is the place where God’s will be done on earth as it is done in the third heaven (Matthew 6:10)—“readily, willingly, chearfully, constantly, sincerely.”<sup>16</sup>

Regarding the formation of this new heavens and earth, Seager parts company with most of his contemporaries. He rejects the notion that the world’s substance will endure the dissolution of the world by fire. Instead, he asserts that the present heavens and the earth will undergo a fiery ordeal that will purge them from the accidental

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<sup>13</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 58-61. He comments on all the passages of scripture that mention the new heavens and earth—Isaiah 65:17, 66:22, 2 Peter 3:13 and Revelation 21:1.

<sup>14</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 61.

<sup>15</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 61. Still, Seager mentions Piscator, Dr. Dickson, Mr. Ellis and the Westminster annotations on the Bible as adopting similar interpretations. Although the works of Piscator, Dickson (likely David Dickson mentioned earlier in the chapter) and the Westminster Annotations are available to the modern reader, it is more difficult to ascertain the identity of “Mr. Ellis.” A marginal note by Seager gives the title of Ellis’ work: *The Deliverance of the whole House of Israel*. Googlebooks.com provides an extended title, but no text, revealing that the work was an exposition of Romans 11.

<sup>16</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 66. For Seager’s treatment of the nine supporting passages adumbrated above, see pages 62-67.

corruptible properties and it will reduce the substance of the world to dust.<sup>17</sup> This position puts Seager in the minority with respect to what will happen to the world's substance. As chapter 4 pointed out, the majority of the seventeenth-century divines believed the substance of the world would not be destroyed in the final conflagration. Seager overtly disavows that opinion of those who claim that "[t]his present world shall be purged by fire from its corruptions and evil qualities, but the substance of Heaven and Earth shall remain as an everlasting Monument of Gods Wisdom and Power, Goodness and Mercy."<sup>18</sup> Peter plainly states that the heavens and earth will be burnt up (2 Peter 3:11-12). Anything that is burnt up is not merely cleansed, but its very substance is reduced to ashes.

From these ashes, God may create the world to come. Even though the present world was created out of nothing, the world to come is likely to be created out of something, perhaps the dust and ashes that remain from the burning of the present world.<sup>19</sup> Yet even if God were to use the dust of the old world to create the new one, the new world will possess different qualities as well as a different substance from the old one. He reasons that if the substance is not changed, then the qualities will not change either and he offers the flood narrative in Genesis as supporting this position. The judgment of the flood did not change the earth's substance and hence its qualities did not

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<sup>17</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 36-37.

<sup>18</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 44-45. Later Seager returns to this topic: "For as the dust of a mans body, after it is burnt to ashes, cannot properly be called the substance of his body; so neither can the dust of this present world, after it shall be burnt to ashes, be properly called the substance of this world." See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Seager does not elevate this probability to "a matter of Faith." He is content to affirm that the new heavens and earth will be created. See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 68.

change either, “though the *superficies* of it was much altered for a while.”<sup>20</sup> Rather than argue that the new heavens and earth will be of the same *substance*, Seager instead claims that the world to come will be of the same *essence* as the old one. This shared essence consists of four elements: having been created by God, being comprised of a heavens and earth, being “round” and being of a considerable size.<sup>21</sup> It was the world’s essence and not its substance and accidents that God had established immovable.

Another characteristic of the world to come is that Christ will exercise an eternal reign over it. Although this idea was clearly stated in the works surveyed in the previous chapter, Seager presents it with a unique twist. He distinguishes three modes of Christ’s kingdom; there is “1. *His Essential Kingdom*. 2. *His Personal-Divine Kingdom*. 3. *His Personal-Humane Kingdom*.”<sup>22</sup> Christ’s essential kingdom “is that Kingdom which belongs to him as he is God equal with the Father and the Holy Ghost.”<sup>23</sup> This kingdom has always been and always will be and it encompasses the entire created order along with the actions of all creatures. As God has essential attributes that belong equally to all three persons of the Godhead, so God has a kingdom that belongs equally to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Christ’s personal-divine kingdom is his reign over the church in the present world. Christ exercises this reign as one person yet in his divine nature “[f]or it is commonly acknowledged by Divines, That Christ now reigneth over his Militant Church

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<sup>20</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 70.

<sup>21</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 71. By “round” Seager likely means spherical.

<sup>22</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 132.

<sup>23</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 132.



in his Divine Nature” via the word and Spirit and via established church order.<sup>24</sup> To this personal-divine kingdom will be added the personal-human kingdom of Christ in the world to come. Of course, as God, Christ will never leave the third heaven for it is the “essential place of the Godhead.”<sup>25</sup> Yet the third heaven will not remain the eternal abode of Christ in his human nature because it was promised to him but a short while until his enemies are made his footstool (1 Corinthians 15:25), because it was intended to be a temporary abode until the appointed time of restoration (Acts 3:21) and because Christ will deliver the kingdom to the Father at his second coming (1 Corinthians 15:24).<sup>26</sup> Having done so, he will become subject to the Father while yet occupying a throne of his own, reigning over his own kingdom on earth forever.<sup>27</sup>

Seager does provide grounds for his advancement of a personal-human kingdom of Christ. First, this terrestrial reign is the scene of various states of affairs delineated in Scripture that are simply not possible in the present spiritual kingdom—the living and dead are judged, saints will be seated on his left and right hands, and saints will eat food “after a new manner, yet unknown.”<sup>28</sup> These activities require the bodily presence of

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<sup>24</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 133.

<sup>25</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 89.

<sup>26</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 90-91. Seager distinguishes among several kingdoms—Christ’s “Mediatory Kingdom,” “Church-Kingdom,” “Representative Kingdom” and the “Kingdom of Heaven.” The latter is the kingdom belonging especially to the Father which the Father handed over to the Son for a time. It is this kingdom that Christ will return to the Father, while retaining his mediatorial and church kingdoms. The representative kingdom, “consisting of outward Ordinances and Administrations now in use,” will cease on its own at Christ’s coming. See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 91.

<sup>27</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 92. Seager believes that Christ’s current position at the right hand of the Father makes him “after a sort equal with his Father” since the Father has given him all power and authority. Thus Christ is not now subject to the Father as he will be when he returns to reign over his own earthly kingdom. See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 92.

<sup>28</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 135.

Christ on earth for their realization. In addition, since Christ executed his prophetic and priestly offices in his divine and human natures, it is yet necessary that he fulfill his kingly office in the same manner. Since he has never exercised his kingly office in his human nature, then an earthly reign is yet in store for Christ in which he rules over all.<sup>29</sup>

A second reason for affirming a personal-human kingdom of Christ is that the personal-human kingdom of Christ ought not to be considered as a kingdom of the present world, for Jesus himself said that his kingdom—and Seager thinks Christ had his personal-human kingdom in mind and not the other two kingdoms—was not of this world (John 18:36). Seager maintains that Christ's essential kingdom and personal-divine kingdom have always been a part of the present world and will be a part of the world to come as well. But Christ's personal-human kingdom has never existed in the present world. That kingdom will appear in the world to come after the creation of the new heavens and earth.<sup>30</sup>

Third, the personal-human kingdom of Christ will be visible to all people on earth. Did not Jesus say to Nathaniel that one day he would see angels ascending and descending upon the Son of man (John 1:51)? Such an event is not currently seen in the present heavens or earth, and angels cannot descend upon the Son of man unless the Son was on earth. But the Son will be on earth and hence human beings will be able to see this great event. They also will be able to see Christ sitting on his throne (Revelation 1:7, Matthew 25:31) and some will even try to hide from his face (Revelation 6:16). This visible kingdom is not the kingdom which Christ will hand over to the Father (1

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<sup>29</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 136-137.

Corinthians 15:24). Christ will hand over to the Father the Father's kingdom, a kingdom temporarily given to Christ by the Father until Christ returns it "that his Father may be all in all in it, as he was before Christ came thither in his Humane Nature."<sup>31</sup>

Seager's fourth ground for maintaining an eternal, bodily reign of Christ over the new heavens and earth is that both the Old and New Testaments provide ample evidence for such a belief. Psalm 2:8-9 promises the earth as Christ's inheritance; 1 Chronicles 16:31 and 33 indicate Christ will rule over the nations; Psalm 8 indicates that all of creation will be subject to Christ; Isaiah 9:7 promises Christ the throne of David and a universal government; Ezekiel 37:24-25 asserts that Yahweh's servant David will be a king forever over Israel.<sup>32</sup> Seager's re-occurring refrain for each of these texts is largely the same: "And where shall this be fully made good unto him? Not in this world, but in the World to come, and in his Humane Kingdom."<sup>33</sup> To these Old Testament texts, Seager adds several New Testament ones as well.

A few other characteristics of the world to come envisioned by Seager can be quickly summarized. Animals will be present in the new heavens and earth, not by way of resurrection—resurrection is for humans only—but by way of creation. Fishes, birds and beasts "dyed not in the first *Adam*" and thus will not be raised by Christ.<sup>34</sup> Non-rational creatures lack a reasonable soul and their spirits return to dust upon their death

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<sup>31</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 139.

<sup>32</sup> A few sentences later, Seager claims that David's reign "was not a Type of Christs Spiritual Kingdom, but of his Humane Kingdom in the World to come." See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 141.

<sup>33</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 141.

<sup>34</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 105.

(Ecclesiastes 3:21).<sup>35</sup> Consequently, any creatures that will be present in the world to come will be there because God will create them anew.<sup>36</sup> The future world also will be the scene of the last judgment during which Christ will judge all rational creatures, both angelic and human ones.<sup>37</sup> Finally, the future personal-human kingdom of Christ will embrace all of the created order—nations, countries, inanimate and non-rational beings, friends and enemies of God.<sup>38</sup> This kingdom not only will be marked by peace, righteousness and plenty but it will endure for eternity as well.<sup>39</sup> Those who teach that this earthly kingdom will cease (Seager writes the initials “M. H. A.” and “M. G. H.” in the margins, the former most likely referring to the millenarian Henry Archer while the latter could be George Hakewill) argue that “some things are said in Scripture to continue for ever, which were to continue but onely for a long time.”<sup>40</sup> Although Seager acknowledges such a tropical usage of ‘forever’ or ‘for ever and ever’ in the Bible, he

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<sup>35</sup> Seager seems to use the terms “soul” and “spirit” interchangeably in this paragraph.

<sup>36</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 106.

<sup>37</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 118-119. Seager thinks the day of judgment can be understood in two ways; it can refer to “the day of Sentence” and “the day of Execution.”<sup>37</sup> The day of sentence will coincide with the day of Christ’s return while the day of execution will continue on after Christ’s return.<sup>37</sup> Seager appeals to the “Article of our Creed” to support his position regarding the earth being the site of the last judgment rather than heaven. He apparently has in mind the Apostles’ Creed since the Thirty-nine Articles do not contain such a phrase. See Seager, *A Discoverie*, 124. Later he allows the possibility that the judgment will take place in the valley of Jehoshaphat on the basis of Joel 3:2.

<sup>38</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 143. Seager does not provide the basis for distinguishing between nations and countries. However, the Scripture mustered in support of each imply that by the former he has in mind a people with its governmental structure and by the latter he has in mind the breadth of the geographical borders of the kingdom. It is also unclear how Christ’s enemies will be part of the world to come. Seager does not explain how they will be ruled over and yet be judged as well in an instant.

<sup>39</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 144-145.

<sup>40</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 145.

argues for a literal understanding of the words, given that that Isaiah 9:7 and Luke 1:33 make it clear that Christ's kingdom will *have no end* [emphasis added].<sup>41</sup>

John Seager's *A Discoverie of the World to Come* represents the sober work of a minister within the Church of England. The works of Thomas Collier to be considered next may be sober but they clearly do not come from a person who was welcomed within the established church.<sup>42</sup> Seager and Collier would have disagreed on many issues, but on the issue of the new heavens and earth, they adopted similar stances.

### Thomas Collier

Although apparently arising from humble beginnings and possessing no formal education in divinity, Thomas Collier (1615?- c. 1691) published a significant number of theological works and exercised considerable influence among English Baptists in the latter half of the seventeenth century.<sup>43</sup> Of those who addressed the topic of the new

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<sup>41</sup> Seager, *A Discoverie*, 146. Seager goes so far as to call a limited earthly reign of Christ "blasphemy".

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Hall, a contemporary of Collier, wrote a scathing response to one of Collier's many pamphlets. He accuses him, among other things, of being anti-Trinitarian, Socinian, Familist, Enthusiast, Arian and anti-Sabbatarian. In one of his briefer descriptions of Collier, Hall writes, "A man may rake Hell, and find better Saints then this man there." For Hall's entire response, see *The Font Guarded with Xx Arguments. Containing a Compendium of That Great Controversie of Infant-Baptism, Proving the Lawfulness Thereof; as Being Grounded on the Word of God, Agreeable to the Practice of All Reformed Churches; Together with the Concurrent Consent of a Whole Jury of Judicious and Pious Divines. Occasioned Partly by a Dispute at Bely in Worcestershire, Aug. 13. 1651. Against Joseph Paget, Dyer. Walter Rose, and John Rose. Butchers of Bromesgrove. John Evans a Scribe, yet Antiscripturist. Francis Loxly, Sho-Maker. Here You Have the Question Fully Stated, ... With a Word to One Collier, and Another to Mr. Tombs in the End of the Book* (London: Printed by R.W. for Thomas Simmons book-seller at the sign of the Bible in Birmingham in Warwickshire, and are to be sold in London by George Calvert at the sign of the half Moon in Pauls Church-Yard, 1652), 121-132, *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>43</sup> See Thompson Cooper, "Collier, Thomas." in *The Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973, 810-811. According to *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, Collier espoused a form of Arianism along with John Knowles and Paul Hobson. See Ward & Trent, et al., *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1907-21, New York: Bartleby.com, 2000, [www.bartleby.com/cambridge/](http://www.bartleby.com/cambridge/)), accessed 10/7/2013.

heavens and earth in the second half of the century, Collier is one of the few that pays it detailed attention. His mature ideas are set forth in a systematic work on theology in 1674.<sup>44</sup> However, Collier addressed the subject on at least two occasions prior to 1674, allowing the historian to trace the evolution of his thought. That evolution reveals Collier moving from a metaphorical interpretation of the new heavens and earth to a very literal one.

Within Collier's corpus of extant writings, the topic first appears in 1647 when he preached a sermon at Cromwell's headquarters at Putney just about a week before the Putney debates.<sup>45</sup> His text was Isaiah 65:17—"Behold I create new heavens and a new earth." Collier paraphrases the brief sentence of Isaiah 65:17 to the following: "But the generall truth which I shall at present commend unto you, is this, That the great work which God hath to effect (in the world and in the Saints) in these latter days of the Gospel, is to set up a new Creation, viz. *New heavens and a new earth.*"<sup>46</sup> What Collier means by the new heavens and earth becomes evident as the sermon unfolds. The new

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Collier, *The Body of Divinity, or, a Confession of Faith Being the Substance of Christianity, Containing the Most Material Things Relating to Matters Both of Faith and Practice : Published for the Benefit and Profit of All, Especially Those Who Love the Lord Jesus ... / by Thomas Collier*, (London : Printed for Nath. Crouch, 1674), *Early English Books Online*, Cambridge University Library..

<sup>45</sup> The Putney debates focused on the future shape of England's government following the civil war. Cromwell probably heard the sermon delivered though it is impossible to be sure. Two of Cromwell's extant letters from 1647 are dated September 14 and October 13 and both were sent from Putney. Collier preached his sermon on September 29<sup>th</sup>. (See an index of Cromwell's letters at [http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters\\_and\\_speeches/letters/Letter\\_index.htm](http://www.olivercromwell.org/Letters_and_speeches/letters/Letter_index.htm), accessed 9/30/2013.) Near the end of the sermon, Collier appears to be addressing a single individual when he says, "First, Policy calls for it at your hands, Right Honourable, is it not time for you to do something for the Kingdome that may ingage their hearts unto you?" See Thomas Collier, *A Discovery of the New Creation. In a Sermon Preached at the Head-Quarters at Putney Sept. 29. 1647. By Thomas Collier*, (London : Printed for Giles Calvert, and are to be sold at the Black-sped-Eagle at the west-end of Pauls, 1647), 38, *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>46</sup> Collier, *A Discovery of the New Creation*, 6.

heavens is realized in the hearts of the saints as they enjoy greater fellowship and communion with God; the new earth is a world under the leadership of God's people. The new heavens and new earth are equally the work of the Spirit, resulting in increased unity and peace within the church which, in turn, will gradually lead to the saints ruling the world. Collier calls on the victors of England's civil war to rule in righteousness, end oppression and so begin the task of establishing the new heavens and earth. Collier firmly believes such a work will occur before the second coming of Christ. Absent from Collier's sermon is any mention of a specific one thousand year era of flourishing for the church or any mention of a renovation of creation.

The subject of the new heavens and earth reappears a few years later in 1655 when Collier addressed a tract to the Jews imploring them to embrace Jesus as their Messiah, teaching them that Christ would save and exalt the Jewish people when he returned to earth to reign.<sup>47</sup> The tract reveals a change in his thinking from what appeared in the earlier sermon at Putney. In the sermon from 1647, Collier envisioned the reign of Christ as a spiritual reign within the hearts of his people that would lead to an earthly reign of the saints. In the tract, Collier acknowledges his change of opinion and advances the notion that Christ must return bodily to establish his earthly reign; the

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<sup>47</sup> Thomas Collier, *The Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising to the Dispersed of Judah & Israel Wherein Is Briefly Handled Their Call and Christs Second Coming, Whose Day Is Neer at Hand / by Tho. Collier*, (London : Printed by H. Hills for T. Brewster at the Three Bibles near the West End of Pauls, 1655), *Early English Books Online*, Massachusetts Historical Society Library. The following year, Collier also published a plea to Cromwell and his advisors to allow the Jews to settle in England and show them compassion and protection since they had been God's special people in the past and, though for a time cut off from God, would one day be restored to a place of honor. See Thomas Collier, *A Brief Ansver to Some of the Objections and Demurs Made against the Coming in and Inhabiting of the Jevvs in This Common-Vvealth. With a Plea on Their Behalf, or Some Auguments to Prove It Not Only Lawful, but the Duty of Those Whom It Concerns to Give Them Their Liberty and Protection (They Living Peaceably) in This Nation*, (London, : Printed by Henry Hills, and are to be sold by Thomas Brewster, at the three Bibles at the West end of Pauls, 1656), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

church will never exercise any dominion over the nations of the earth.<sup>48</sup> It is not entirely clear if at this time Collier believed this terrestrial kingdom would last forever. He does affirm that this kingdom is “the restitution or restoration of the whole creation.”<sup>49</sup> That earthly kingdom is also the new heavens and earth.<sup>50</sup> But Collier also accepts the dissolution of the earth following the lengthy reign of Christ on it, at which time the kingdom will be given up to the Father and God will be all in all.<sup>51</sup> As to the location of the saints once the kingdom is given up, Collier is silent though one might surmise that the location might be heaven if the world is dissolved.

This supposition receives some support from a confession of faith written for an association of Baptist churches in Somerset County.<sup>52</sup> Collier wrote the dedication of the work, and is likely responsible for the content of the confession’s articles as well.<sup>53</sup> Article 39 affirms an earthly kingdom of Christ but that kingdom is evidently not eternal, for article 41 clearly states that the destiny of the righteous is heaven: “That there is a place into which the Lord will gather all his elect, to enjoy him forever, usually in

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<sup>48</sup> Collier, *The Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising*, 81. In contrast to the trajectory of his sermon at Putney, Collier writes “...that the saints shall never reign on earth till the Kingdom of Christ is come, till he is descended from heaven in power and great glory.”

<sup>49</sup> Collier, *The Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising*, 78. Among several texts cited in support of this assertion are portions of Isaiah 65 where the new heavens and earth are mentioned and Romans 8:20-22, the text concerning creation’s liberation from bondage.

<sup>50</sup> Collier, *The Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising*, 86-87.

<sup>51</sup> Collier, *The Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising*, 87.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Collier, *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ, in the County of Somerset, and of Some Churches in the Counties Neer Adjacent*, (London, : Printed by Henry Hills, and are to be sold by Thomas Brewster, at the three Bibles at the west end of Pauls, 1656), *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

<sup>53</sup> This is the opinion of Lumpkin in his *Baptist Confessions of Faith* (Philadelphia: The Judson Press, 1959), 201.



Scripture called heaven, 2 *Cor.* 5.1.”<sup>54</sup> However, Collier’s position keeps evolving over the next two decades and he articulates his mature opinion in his *The body of divinity*.

In two separate chapters of this work, Collier addresses the issue of the restoration of creation. Chapter 9 is entitled, *Of the design of God in general, in this his New Covenant, Restauration-Work, which was to make all things New*.<sup>55</sup> He begins the chapter claiming that original heavens and earth was created for humanity but when humans fell that first world came under God’s judgment.<sup>56</sup> As the title of the chapter reveals, God’s plan was to restore the heavens and earth, “not of new matter that was not before, but to make the Old New again; all *Old things must be made New*.”<sup>57</sup> Collier maintains that the new world to come is none other than the new heavens and earth mentioned in Isaiah, 2 Peter and Revelation. No longer a metaphor for individual and corporate renewal in the present age, the promise of a new heavens and earth

...is to be understood literally, and not mystically, or spiritually, that is a wrong to the Scripture; for it is the material visible Heavens and Earth that *Peter* treateth of, *vers.* 5,6,7. it’s the same that must be dissolved, and this is that which is frequently called in Scripture, the World, or Earth to come, *Mat.* 12.32. *Luk.* 2.35. *Heb.* 2.5....<sup>58</sup>

He states that the new heavens and earth is the world promised to Abraham and his heirs (Romans 4:13); it is the country which the patriarchs anticipated (Hebrews 11:13-14); it is the seat of the heavenly Jerusalem which will descend from heaven to the earth

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<sup>54</sup> Collier, *A Confession of the Faith of Several Churches of Christ, in the County of Somerset, and of Some Churches in the Counties Neer Adjacent*, 35.

<sup>55</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 122.

<sup>56</sup> It was widely accepted that the judgment on creation after the fall was a consequence of the fact that creation was made for humankind. The creational curse was viewed as a fitting punishment for humanity’s rebellion.

<sup>57</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 122.

<sup>58</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 126.

(Revelation 21:2).<sup>59</sup> Because Scripture asserts that the saints will have bodies like Christ and will also be like the angels, it is possible that the saints will not be restricted to the renewed earth but will have access to heaven as well “if it will add to their Glory”.<sup>60</sup> Yet it is the location of Christ’s feet that will be glorious (Isaiah 60:13) and Scripture indicates his feet will be on the earth (Isaiah 66:1, Matthew 10:35, Acts 7:49).<sup>61</sup>

At the end of chapter 9, Collier provides a glimpse into the status of this belief in his own day. It was a notion that was “so much by most condemned.”<sup>62</sup> However, he does not defend the idea further but informs the reader he will take the topic up again in chapter 31 where he offers an extended apology for it.<sup>63</sup> The chapter’s heading indicates three topics—*Of the Coming, Kingdom, and Reign of Christ on Earth*—but it is Christ’s kingdom and reign on the earth that occupies Collier’s attention.<sup>64</sup> His specific thesis is succinct and clear:

That Christ shall, at and after his second and glorious appearing, have a Kingdom, and reign on Earth, is the great thing that I shall from Scripture-light evince and prove in this place; it being a truth that none is more clearly stated in the Scripture, yet by many much opposed and contradicted.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 126-127.

<sup>60</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 132. Per the previous chapter, Willet and Adams posited a similar double access to heaven and earth.

<sup>61</sup> Isaiah 66:1 says the earth is the Lord’s footstool and Acts 7:49 is quoting Isaiah 66:1. Matthew 10:35 appears to be a printing error since that verse is unrelated to Collier’s point.

<sup>62</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 132. As indicated in the previous chapter, those who held to an eternal earthly kingdom of Christ recognized that they were espousing an eschatological novelty for their time.

<sup>63</sup> In fact, chapter 31 is the longest chapter by far in the work, encompassing 58 pages. The next closest chapter in length (47 pages) is the first one which deals with the doctrine of God.

<sup>64</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 548.

<sup>65</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 554.

Collier is equally clear about his strategy in defending his doctrine. He will set forth 1) “plain Scripture evidence,” 2) “Scripture reasons,” and 3) answers to objections and other questions that may have arisen in the minds of his readers.<sup>66</sup> This three-fold structure provides a simple path into his thought regarding the new heavens and earth.

### Plain Scripture Evidence

Collier relies on a variety of texts which proclaim that God will come to judge the earth and inaugurate his kingdom. For example, Psalm 72 is a psalm about Solomon’s kingdom “according to the letter” but its assertions were never fully realized during Solomon’s reign.<sup>67</sup> His kingdom did not endure like the moon (Psalm 72:7) and all nations did not call him blessed (Psalm 72:17). Solomon was merely a type of Christ, the one whose kingdom literally will endure like the moon and who literally will be called blessed by all nations. In a similar vein, Jeremiah prophesied about a righteous branch from David’s line who would reign over the earth with justice, bringing security to Israel and Judah (Jeremiah 23:5-6). Daniel foretold of an eternal kingdom that would be established by God on earth (Daniel 2:44). Collier thinks it is simply nonsense to interpret these, and many other Old Testament prophecies of the world-wide reign of Christ on earth, as allegories: “And what reason there is for us to turn plain Scriptures into Allegories, relating to the Reign of Christ on Earth, any more then for the Jews to Allegories the Scriptures that spake of his humiliation, and so lost the truth thereof, I do

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<sup>66</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 555.

<sup>67</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, page, 556.

not yet understand.”<sup>68</sup> Collier presses his argument by showing how the New Testament reiterates the same promise of an earthly kingdom of Christ. Although Christ is indeed reigning now in some sense, he is not reigning in glory as is promised by a “multitude of Scripture testimonies,” all of which are plain in their meaning.<sup>69</sup>

### Scripture Reasons

Having provided scriptural evidence for an eternal, earthly reign of Christ, Collier moves to his “Scripture reasons” for believing in it and he offers no less than ten of them. The first three reasons are in the main restatements of what he had said in chapter nine as well as being arguments frequently advanced by others who shared his viewpoint; 1) the whole world was promised to Abraham and his seed as an eternal inheritance, 2) God’s grand plan was to restore his world through Christ ever since the Fall of humanity, a truth repeatedly emphasized by the prophets and apostles, and 3) the patriarchs, strangers to the present condition of the world, looked for a world to come when the meek would inherit the earth.<sup>70</sup> The rest of Collier’s ten reasons, taken together, create the following narrative.<sup>71</sup>

God’s intention has always been that the earth should be the place in which humans would dwell and exercise dominion. The loss of dominion due to sin’s entrance

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<sup>68</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 557.

<sup>69</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 559.

<sup>70</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 560-561. Collier expresses exasperation with his contemporaries who had rejected what the patriarchs so eagerly anticipated: “O! why should the people of God now be so unbelieving as to this truth, and the Saints of old, so full of Faith therein.” See Collier, *Body of Divinity*, 562.

<sup>71</sup> To avoid what might be a tedious enumeration of reasons 4-10, the following paragraphs are an attempt to expose the inner logic of them.

did not alter God's design. The purpose of the renewed world will remain the same as it was at the beginning—to be a home for humanity.<sup>72</sup> Another purpose for creation is the display of God's glory. The heavens and the earth, created good and for his glory, cannot be allowed to fail in their purpose. Hence Collier comments that after the fall,

...if the World had been dissolved, God had losed the glory of so great a work in breaking it to pieces as soon as it was made; and if there were no more glory to God to be expected from his Creation of the wonderful Fabrick of the Heavens and the Earth...then hath been in the faln state, wherein he hath been so much dishonoured and abused, it had been but little differing from its being dissolved immediatly upon the Fall.<sup>73</sup>

But God's design was to be glorified by his creation, and once it is restored, it will "be more for his glory then if it had never faln."<sup>74</sup>

Of course, creation did suffer as a result of the Fall and so Christ came to provide for its restoration. Having done so, the Father has given the whole earth to the Son as an inheritance (Psalm 2:8) though that inheritance is not now fully realized; all things are not yet subjected to Christ (Hebrews 2:8). But all things were created by Christ and for him (Colossians 1:16) and the day is coming when he will come into full possession of his creation.<sup>75</sup> Since the earth was the place where Christ and his people experienced suffering, it is fitting that the earth also be the place where they are honored.<sup>76</sup>

The renewal of creation should not be thought a difficult task for God. Humanity itself was formed from the dust of the earth and when a human dies, the body returns to

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<sup>72</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 562-563.

<sup>73</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 564.

<sup>74</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 565.

<sup>75</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 568.

<sup>76</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 563. It will be recalled that this notion of fitness or appropriateness was utilized by Willet and Adams as well.

that state “and is as truly Earth again as any other part of the Earth is.”<sup>77</sup> Yet Christians maintain that at the resurrection God will raise all human beings from the earth. If God can renew human bodies from the earth to live eternally, there is no reason to reject the notion that the heavens and the earth will enjoy a restoration that will last forever as a home to Christ and his people.

It is the durability of creation by which God underscores the permanency of the new covenant with his people. After describing the nature of the new covenant that was to come (Jeremiah 31:31-34), God teaches Israel the everlasting nature of this covenant by calling attention to the created order: “Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever” (Jeremiah 31:35-36). These verses “intimat[e] in plain terms, that when the Creation of Heaven and Earth ceaseth to be, his Church must cease to be.”<sup>78</sup> Of course, creation will not cease—God has promised it will endure (Ecclesiastes 1:4, psalm 105:5)—and consequently its eternality becomes a surety to God’s people that they too will remain in eternal fellowship with God.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 567.

<sup>78</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 566.

<sup>79</sup> Collier makes the point that those who teach an annihilation of the world thus end up teaching that salvation and the church will also one day cease.

## Objections and Questions Answered

Not content with building a positive case for his eschatology, Collier also offers rebuttals to a series of questions he had encountered.<sup>80</sup> He groups them into two sections, the first being specifically labelled “objections” and the second “questions”. The difference seems to be that Collier believes the answers to the objections possess a level of certainty that his answers to the questions cannot attain.<sup>81</sup>

### *Objections*

Each objection is based on a scriptural citation that, understood in a certain way, undermines Collier’s position. The first, third and fourth objections argue from a similar premise—the present world, rather than a future one, is the referent for several biblical motifs. The present world is 1) the world to come that will be subjected to Christ; it is 2) the earthly kingdom of Christ and his saints; it is 3) the fifth kingdom mentioned in Daniel 2:44 rendering any future eternal earthly kingdom of Christ a sixth kingdom, an idea never expressed in Scripture. For each of these objections, Collier argues along the same lines: “Its frequent in Scripture to apply that which especially relates to the glory to come, to the present Ministration, and that truly too, because the present Gospel Ministration, is an Usher and Preparative to that glory.”<sup>82</sup> The glory to come in the

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<sup>80</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 568-600.

<sup>81</sup> This assessment is based on the following paragraph introducing his responses to the “questions”: “I shall answer some Questions that may arise about the whole matter, although we may not expect to answer all questions and doubts about it, by reason of ignorance; for *we know but in part*, and in a very little part too, comparatively to the heighth and depth of mystery, that is in this new Covenant Restauration, it behoves us to believe the truth of the matter, though there by many things in it and concerning it, that we cannot know till we come to know as we are known, till that which is perfect is come, yet something brokenly I may offer in the matter.” See Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 578.

<sup>82</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 569.

eternal kingdom is not to be severed from its inauguration in time because both are part of the one covenant. What is to come in the future is simply the finalizing of what began with Christ's first advent.

The second objection asserts that Peter spoke of the world's dissolution rather than its restoration (2 Peter 3:10). In rebuttal, Collier advances the common response of many of contemporaries—the heavens and earth will be cleansed from the effects of sin rather than being annihilated.<sup>83</sup> The fifth objection argues that Scripture indicates Christ's second coming, the resurrection of all humankind and the judgment to follow will be sudden and swift, implying that there will be no time for Christ to perform any restorative work on earth.<sup>84</sup> Collier's answer again appeals to a scriptural literary technique: "It's the Lords usual way in Scripture to speak much in few words."<sup>85</sup> It need not be assumed that a brevity of scriptural words requires a brevity of time to accomplish what those words teach. The restoration of creation and the setting up of the kingdom of Christ "may and must be done, at, and after the appearing of Christ in their time and order, *but not in so little time as is by some imagined. . . .*" [emphasis added].<sup>86</sup> On

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<sup>83</sup> The distinction between annihilation and purgation was not mentioned by Collier in 1655 in *The Day-Dawning and the Day-Star Arising*. He wrote only of the world's dissolution without qualification. If he held to the distinction in 1655, it is not apparent in that document.

<sup>84</sup> Collier cites 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 as a possible defeater of his position: "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed."

<sup>85</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 572.

<sup>86</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 573. On this point, Collier and Seager appear to differ as to the amount of time the events of the consummation will consume. Seager adopted a very literal interpretation of the day of judgment and incorporated Christ's return, the resurrection, the judgment and the recreation of the world into one literal day.



several occasions, Collier reminds his readers that the setting up of Christ's kingdom will not be in an instant, but will extend over a protracted period of time.

The sixth objection begins by observing that Christ remains at the Father's right hand until Christ's enemies are made his footstool. Consequently, there will be no need for Christ to subdue his enemies and establish his kingdom at his second coming for that will have been already accomplished. Collier's response is to argue that when Christ comes to earth in the clouds of heaven, he will still be at the Father's right hand (Matthew 26:64). From this position of authority he will subdue all his enemies over an extended period of time. Collier comments, "The Scripture fully presents us with this, that he is at the right hand of God the Father, till the Kingdom is given up, which will be during his Mediatory Office and Work, which will not be ended till long after his coming from Heaven to Reign on Earth..."<sup>87</sup> In other words, Collier views the right hand of God as a realm of authority rather than a physical location. Christ can exercise that authority from heaven or on earth. The latter location is where in the future Christ will manifest the authority of the Father.

The seventh objection states that Christ and the saints will experience a diminishment in glory if they should leave heaven and come to dwell on earth. Collier believes there will be no loss of glory. If Christ can come to earth to judge the world without loss of glory, there is no reason to suppose that his coming to reign on the earth would effect such a loss. Additionally, since Christ did not shrink back from coming to earth to *redeem* his people at his first advent, there is no reason to believe he would shy away from returning to earth to *reign* with his people at his second advent. Rather than

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<sup>87</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 574.

effecting a loss of glory, his return “is indeed the top of the glory designed as the fruit of his Sufferings and Mediatorial Office.”<sup>88</sup> In his own person, Christ’s glory has always been immutable; but with respect to his mediatorial work, there “will be the wonderful increase of his Government and Glory, which is the glory to be looked for by the Saints, *Tit. 2.13.*”<sup>89</sup>

### *Questions*

In the answering of a series of questions about the eternal earthly kingdom of Christ, Collier offers more detail about the eternal state albeit with a certain restraint. He begins with three questions that in one sort or another involve the relationship between the thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20 with his belief in an eternal terrestrial kingdom. As observed earlier, Collier affirms that the new covenant knows of only one kingdom, a kingdom that began with the ministry of Christ and will extend into eternity. This kingdom experiences several phases. The present phase of that kingdom is one of preparation. The next phase will commence with the second coming of Christ at which time he will conquer, rule and judge.<sup>90</sup> A third phase, the one thousand years mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6,

seems to import some particular time of entrance to, and period of some particular distinct exercise of his regal power, in some distinct manner from what it was before, or shall be after the period thereof, yet all but one Kingdom, though variously and distinctly exercised from its entrance or beginning.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 576.

<sup>89</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 576.

<sup>90</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 579.

<sup>91</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 579.

This distinct millennial period will commence after Christ brings all earthly monarchs into subjection to himself.<sup>92</sup> It is likely that this millennium is also the kingdom Paul had in mind when he writes that Christ will reign until all his enemies are put under his feet, death being the last of those enemies (1 Corinthians 15:24-26). Once death is destroyed at the end of the thousand years, Christ will hand over the kingdom to the Father and be subject to Him. Then there will be “another manner of Government, after the one thousand years Reign, and the final judgment is over, more immediately by the Father, the Mediatory Kingdom of the Son being over, and the Restauration work is finished.”<sup>93</sup> Even at this point, Christ will remain the head and king of the church forever. He will enable the saints to finally take in “the glorious sight of the Father” and enjoy “the immediate Kingdom of the Father”—this being part of the mediatorial work of the Son.<sup>94</sup> Hence Collier implies that in the eternal state, the elect will belong to both a kingdom of the Father and some sort of kingdom of the Son.

As for the new heavens and earth, they will begin slowly with the dawn of the thousand years because God’s normal mode of working is progressive rather than precipitous.<sup>95</sup> He cites Isaiah 65:17-25 as evidence that in the new heavens and earth

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<sup>92</sup> Collier does not assign a time frame to this period of subjugation. He does believe David and Solomon provide a type of Christ’s future activity. David conquered and prepared the kingdom; Solomon “comes in and sets up the peaceable Kingdom, and Reigns in glory, as if he had been the person to whom the promise was made.” See Collier, *Body of Divinity*, 580.

<sup>93</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, .581.

<sup>94</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 581.

<sup>95</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 582. He argues this was true of creation and redemption and will be true of the restoration of creation as well. Many of his contemporaries would have disagreed, preferring a sudden and cataclysmic renewal of the earth as a result of the final cleansing fire. Collier’s understanding that the new heavens and earth begins with the start of the thousand years is similar to the thought of the millenarians surveyed in chapter 3. They too believed the new heavens and earth was the millennial period. The difference is that Collier believes the new heavens and earth continues on even after the thousand years are over, whereas the millenarians confined the new heavens and earth to a thousand year duration.

there will be building, planting, and consuming of food resulting in a time of great abundance on earth. It is likely that this abundance will be the consequence of the work of restoration that begins during the thousand year reign.

Questions 4 and 5 five ask whether any unbelievers will dwell in the new heavens and earth, and if so, why would they not be converted to Christ after experiencing his glorious kingdom? That unbelievers will inhabit the new heavens and earth, at least during the one thousand year period, is a fact Collier believes is clearly taught in Scripture.<sup>96</sup> It is these individuals that Satan will rally to join him in his final rebellion against the church before being destroyed by fire from heaven (Revelation 20:7-15). Their willingness to join Satan, in spite of enjoying Christ's peaceable kingdom, must be believed if no other reason than the Bible asserts it. Yet their response is not surprising once biblical precedents are recalled. Pharaoh hardened his heart in the face of God's great display of power; the Jews turned against Christ even while witnessing his sign and wonders. Likewise, the unconverted who are alive when the new heavens and earth commences will quickly join Satan's cause because "Their nature not being changed,...they will be ready for the same work as other Persecutors hath been before them."<sup>97</sup>

Questions 6 through 9 all deal with the timing of particular events mentioned in scripture, particularly the day of judgment and the resurrection. The day of judgment will not be a literal day but "the whole time from Christs coming from Heaven, untill the

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<sup>96</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 583. He cites Isaiah 65:20 and Zechariah 14:16-19 as proof.

<sup>97</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 584.

work be finished....”<sup>98</sup> Therefore, judgment day is not a distinct event prior to Christ’s reign, but rather coincident with it. The resurrection of the righteous will most likely occur at the start of the one thousand years—which is also the start of the new heavens and earth—rather than at Christ’s second coming or at the end of the one thousand years.<sup>99</sup>

The final question which Collier addresses is whether or not a general conversion of the Jews is to be expected as part of the establishment of Christ’s earthly kingdom.<sup>100</sup> Collier answers this in the affirmative—and at considerable length—believing that the many biblical prophecies of Israel’s restoration do not refer only to Abraham’s spiritual seed, but to his physical seed as well. God “designed to do them [i.e., the Jews] good in the latter end” by saving a great number of them.<sup>101</sup> This great event will occur after the second coming of Christ but prior to the start of the thousand year kingdom of peace.<sup>102</sup>

Collier’s conception of the new heavens and earth places him within the camp of those who accepted the earth as the final dwelling place of the righteous, but he held singular views on several issues: a gradual restoration of creation rather than a swift one,

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<sup>98</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 584.

<sup>99</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 585. Collier gives two reasons for espousing this view. 1) He thinks it improbable there would be a resurrection before the new heavens and earth begins. Since he starts the new heavens and earth at the inception of the thousand years, the resurrection must take place then. 2) Scripture places the resurrection at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:52). He thinks the last trumpet is likely the last of the seven trumpets mentioned in Revelation. The preceding six trumpets, according to Collier, are all sounded after the second coming of Christ. Following his second advent, Christ “may ascend [to heaven] and descend [to earth] often” until the time of the last trumpet.<sup>99</sup> At the sounding of the seventh trumpet, Christ will come to earth to establish his peaceable kingdom on earth and the righteous will be raised.

<sup>100</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 595.

<sup>101</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 596. Collier cites Isaiah 6:13, Zechariah 13:8-9 and Revelation 7:4-8 as proof that many Jews will come to faith in Christ

<sup>102</sup> Collier, *The Body of Divinity*, 599-600.

retaining a millennial period as a phase of the new heavens and earth, and suggesting that the wicked and Satan will be part of that new heavens and earth until their destruction. However, Collier was not alone in espousing unique views. Six years after *The Body of Divinity* appeared, an unknown writer put forth some of his own while still retaining long-standing arguments for the earth being the saints' everlasting home.

### *A Treatise of the New Heavens and New Earth*

An anonymous author identified as "T. M." and a "Lover of Truth" published a brief essay on the new heavens and new earth.<sup>103</sup> In systematic fashion, the author offers no less than eleven proofs for belief in a restored heavens and earth that would be inhabited by Christ and the elect. He also touches briefly on the topic of the timing of the thousand years since many understood the new heavens and new earth to be descriptive of the thousand year period and not the eternal state.<sup>104</sup> Before advancing his proofs, T. M. makes several comments that provide the reader with some knowledge of T. M.'s motivation for writing.

In his opening remarks, T. M. informs the reader that "The Destruction of this Visible Heaven and Earth *by Fire*, is a Truth I was bred up in from a Child" though some

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<sup>103</sup> T. M., *A Treatise of the New Heavens and New Earth. Proved to Be Perpetual and Eternal, in That Visible State of Both, in the Restitution, after the Destruction of the World by Fire. Whereunto Is Added, a True State of the Thousand Years-Time; Proving It to Be before the Second Coming of Christ. As Also, the Succinct Order of Things from Christs First Appearing in the Clouds, Unto the Eternal State, after the Day of Judgment. By T.M. A Lover of Truth*, (London : [s.n.], printed in the year 1680), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. Though brief in comparison to some of the other works analyzed in this and preceding chapters, *A Treatise of the New Heavens and New Earth* is dense and somewhat cryptic. Rather than spell out in detail each argument, he assumes the reader will be able to fill in some of the details implied by his line of reasoning.

<sup>104</sup> This position was the subject of chapter 3.

had expressed reservations about it.<sup>105</sup> In spite of the claim that the subject had been covered in other works, T. M. claims that he “never yet saw one that Treated mainly, or purposely, or positively on it.”<sup>106</sup> He maintains that only one of his sources mentioned it at all and it was ambiguous about whether the heaven and earth would be restored or not. T. M. thinks it best not to recommend the book at all since it is “so erroneous” in other points.<sup>107</sup> Since T. M. believes no one else has propounded what he is about to write, he refers to it as “(my) Discovery”.<sup>108</sup>

The specific discovery the author wishes to defend is as follows: “That after the Destruction of the Heavens and Earth that now are, by fire: (and after the Day of Judgment) there will be a glorious Renewed State of both; which shall be the Inheritance of the Sons of God, and the glorious Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ for ever and ever.”<sup>109</sup> It will not be necessary to traverse all eleven of the arguments he offers to

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<sup>105</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 1. T.M. never mentions who had those reservations or for what reasons.

<sup>106</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 1. Obviously the works of Alcock and the three anonymous authors he refers to had not found their way into his hands.

<sup>107</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 1. T. M. claims someone had convincingly exposed those errors in that work, an effort that received the approbation of various ministers. However, the ministers found some fault with the Christology of that effort—specifically “the Sonship of Christ”. T. M. thinks the ministers had misunderstood the author. It is possible the ministers had Thomas Collier in mind. In *The body of divinity*, Collier, in his comments on the unity of God, maintains that “...in this one God there is a plurality of Titles, and varieties of discoveries, properties, and operations; yet I dare not say of persons, or distinct subsistings...” It may have been comments such as these that brought Collier’s Christology under suspicion, a point made by William Brackney. Brackney claims *The Body of Divinity* became the basis for Collier’s detractors to label him “as an Arian and Socinian.” See *Historical Dictionaries of Religions, Philosophies, and Movements*, s.v. “Historical Dictionary of the Baptists.” (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1999), 108.

<sup>108</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 1.

<sup>109</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 2. It becomes clear as one reads the document that it is the perpetuity of the heavens and earth that is T.M.’s central concern rather than the fact that the earth is the setting for the eternal kingdom of Christ. The truth of Christ’s everlasting kingdom on earth obviously necessitates the existence of an earth. This concern is consistent with T.M.’s introductory comments about his childhood training regarding the destruction of the earth.

establish this thesis since some of that territory has been well frequented already.<sup>110</sup>  
 Instead, consideration will be given to his distinctive contribution to the topic.

One such contribution is his argument grounded in one of the petitions of the Lord's Prayer. In that prayer, Jesus taught his disciples to pray for God's kingdom to come to earth and for God's will to be done on earth the way it is done in heaven (Matthew 6:10). In heaven, God's will is perfectly realized with no exceptions. If this prayer of Jesus is to be answered, then when will that occur since it is obvious that the doing of God's will perfectly does not characterize the present age?

T. M. posits that that a future millennium cannot be the answer to this petition. Those who hold to a millennium allow that "a seed of evil-Doers" will be part of the millennial kingdom since this seed will eventually develop into Gog and Magog who will war against the saints when the thousand years have expired.<sup>111</sup> This being the case, the will of God will not be done on earth during a future millennium the way it is done in heaven. In addition, the saints themselves will not be sinless during the millennium since it is prior to the resurrection. Only those who have been glorified can do the will of God completely. So it follows that the will of God will be done on earth when the saints have been glorified—that is, at the time of the resurrection of the body—and have inherited the earth. At that time "...the Earth shall be made glorious as Heaven is: And also abide for ever. . . ." <sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> For example, that Christ's eternal reign on the earth is necessary for the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants is mentioned by T. M. and virtually all others who endorsed such eschatology.

<sup>111</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 2.

<sup>112</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 2.



In another contribution to his project, T. M. relies on Hebrews 2:5-8 to ground several conclusions. That text speaks about a future world in which everything is subject to Christ:

For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing [that is] not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him.

Having concluded that in the Bible the term ‘world’ is never a referent for the third heaven but instead always embraces the earth, T. M. makes the following argument.<sup>113</sup> The “world to come” of Hebrews 2:5 is none other than “that world” spoken of in Luke 20:35. In the Lucan passage, Jesus, in answering a question about the resurrection, says that in “this world” people marry, but in “that world”—the world of the resurrected life—there will be no marriage. Jesus is not saying that on earth people marry but in heaven they do not; his point is that after the resurrection, the practice of marriage will cease on earth.

His second conclusion from Hebrews 2:5-8 is that Christ will have dominion over the world to come “by reason of his humane Nature; as recovering what was lost in the first Adam.”<sup>114</sup> The dominion Adam lost will be returned to humanity when the incarnate Christ is head over all things (Ephesians 1:21-22, Philippians 2:10). According to Hebrews 2, creation belonged to humanity in the beginning. It was only because of the Fall that humanity even became aware of “the heavenly Glory of Christ”—a realm

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<sup>113</sup> T. M. comments, “I never read that *Heaven* without the *Earth* is called the *World*.” See T. M., *A Treatise*, 3.

<sup>114</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 3.

separate from the earth and visible heaven. Christ left his heavenly glory, becoming lower than the angels, and was born from the seed of Abraham. Thus, he became not only an heir of the world because he was from the seed of Abraham, but he also “purchased the possession (that had been sold under the Curse)”.<sup>115</sup> Although everything in heaven has always been subject to Christ, the place where things are not yet subject to Christ is the earth. But by using the phrase “not yet, the author of Hebrews implies that a day will come when the earth too will be subject to Him.

In another argument for an eternally inhabited earth by the elect, T. M. offers a fuller explanation of John 1:51 than did John Seager. In John 1:51 Jesus responds to Nathanael’s amazement at Jesus’ knowledge of who Nathanael is: “And he [Jesus] saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” The key question for T. M. is when will it be the case that the angels of God will ascend from and descend to the earth? T. M. builds his answer by pointing out the following observations. First, the verb Jesus employed—‘open’—“notes a state of Continuance” in contrast with its use in Acts where Stephen (7:56) and Peter (10:11) saw heaven ‘opened.’<sup>116</sup> Heaven opened once for Stephen and then for Peter but then closed again. T. M. thinks the present tense of the verb in John 1:51 suggests that the opening of heaven will someday remain.

T. M.’s second observation is that Jesus’ words to Nathaniel refer to Jacob’s dream (Genesis 28:11-15) in which Jacob saw angels ascending and descending upon a

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<sup>115</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 3. T.M. at this point cites Ephesians 1:18 and Revelation 21:3. Ephesians 1:18 expresses Paul’s hope that the Ephesian believers would know “what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.” Revelation 21:3 records a heavenly voice proclaiming that God’s dwelling is now with men. The point of these two texts would be that the inheritance of the saints is what Jesus purchased for them—the inheritance being the world where God dwells with his people forever.

<sup>116</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 4.

ladder fixed between heaven and earth. The author maintains that the dream was prophetic of “a transcendant union to be between *Heaven* and *Earth*; through the riches of the Grace of Christ; and by the Reccurses [return] of Angels.”<sup>117</sup> This union between heaven and earth will occur in the new heaven and earth following Judgment Day. *Before* the Judgment there will be no time for angels to ascend and descend for the dead are raised in an instant (John 5:28) and the living saints are changed in a moment (I Corinthians 15:52). *During* the Judgment, the angels will be present with Christ as he separates the righteous from the wicked (Mark 8:38, Revelation 3:5); following the separation, the angels will be busy gathering the wicked and casting them into the fire (Matthew 13:30, 40-42). So if angelic movement between heaven and earth is not before the Judgment or during the Judgment, then it must be *after* the Judgment. The angelic movement between heaven and earth proves what Jesus claims is “the consummation of the Mystery of Divine Counsel at the end of time: and that the Design of God in particular lay upon this, to restore the Earth, &c; as being indeed *great things*, John 1.50.51.”<sup>118</sup> Jesus said that Nathanael would see “greater things” than what he had already seen because he would one day see the angels ascending and descending between heaven and earth, an event that will occur only in the new heavens and earth.<sup>119</sup>

T. M. does not want his readers to conceive of the restoration of the world as a “carnal” matter.<sup>120</sup> Christ himself did not despise the corporeal, taking on the nature of

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<sup>117</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 4.

<sup>118</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 4.

<sup>119</sup> As mentioned earlier, Willet, Adams and Dickson surmised that the saints would have access to both the earth and the third heaven. T. M’s opinion of the saints’ access to heaven is addressed below.

<sup>120</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 4.

man. In spite of Christ's possessing a body, T. M. reminds the reader that the "fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily in him."<sup>121</sup> Since the Lord himself did not despise the material in his own person, he will glorify the earth so that the earth "will be accommodate and adapt to humane bodies, though glorified, more than an immaterial visional glory can be (supposed to be.)"<sup>122</sup> Though he does not mention it at this point, it is fair to assume that T. M. believes the means by which the earth will adapt to glorified human bodies is the final conflagration, an event he alludes to later.

In one of the more unusual lines of reasoning T. M. provides to prove that the earth is eternal is based on the idea that the sea is the location of hell. Since hell is eternal and hell is located in the earth's seas, then the earth must be eternal or hell would disappear. But what biblical evidence is there to suggest that hell is located in the earth's seas? T. M. collates several texts to derive his position. First, to prove that hell will be located on earth, he employs Mark 9:43-44 where Jesus teaches that it is better to enter into life maimed than to enter hell complete. In this reference to hell, Jesus appropriates a part of Isaiah 66:24: "And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh." T. M. draws the conclusion that if the righteous go out and look upon the bodies of those in hell, "then they do not *come*

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<sup>121</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 4.

<sup>122</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 4-5. Citing John 5:25 and 5:28 as proof, T. M. even goes so far as to say that Christ elevated the resurrection of the body—spoken of in John 5:28—above the new birth—mentioned in John 5:25. The two verses read as follows: John 5:28—"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice;" John 5:25—"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live."

down from Heaven to do it. But being upon the Earth, *going forth* (so to do) is very proper.”<sup>123</sup>

Second, to show that hell might be the sea, T.M. recalls that several texts in Revelation refer to hell as a “lake” (20:10, 14, 15, 21:8). At least one sea in the Bible is sometimes called a lake; the Sea of Galilee is also named the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1). Presently, many seas and islands dot the globe but the burning of the earth could bring “great Transformations” upon the earth resulting in one continental land mass and one body of water where hell will be located.<sup>124</sup> This day of transformation is spoken of in Revelation 6:14: “And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places.” Other biblical texts use different expressions for this upheaval. Hebrews 12:26-7 call it a “shaking”, 2 Peter 3:10-11 refer to it as a “melting, dissolving and burning up,” and Hebrews 1:12 identifies it as a “folding up and changing”.<sup>125</sup> This cataclysm does not annihilate the earth but it does destroy “the form and surface, and the works of men on the Earth” and it prepares the earth for its new state.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 5. Although T.M. does not draw attention to it, Isaiah’s description of the righteous viewing the carcasses of the wicked occurs just two verses after the prophecy that God will make a new heaven and earth (see Isaiah 66:22).

<sup>124</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 5. To the objection that if the sea will be hell in eternity then there is no hell now, T. M. responds by calling into question whether a large physical location is actually needed for hell now. Only spirits are currently in hell so “It’s a question whether any spacious place be needful thereunto.” Those currently in hell may reside in the deep or in the air. See T. M., *A Treatise*, 5.

<sup>125</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 5.

<sup>126</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 5. T. M. is one of the few authors of the century to overtly connect the renovation of the world with work of Christ on the cross: “... the *Lord from Heaven*, that (was to) come down thence to help the sinking Earth, when it failed in its head, Man; in the manifold Wisdom of God did not only make peace for man by the blood of his Cross; but also (as Angels also had falne from Heaven:) Reconciled all things in one (in himself) both things in heaven and things in earth; Col. 1.20. Epef. 1.10 as hereafter will be manifest: Yea, the Creature it selfe (to wit the irrational) shall be delivered into the glorious liberty of the children of God, *Rom.* 8.21. So that I say, Man and the Creation of God have a

Another argument for the eternity of the world is based on Ephesians 1:14: “Which [i.e., the Holy Spirit] is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” T. M. ponders what this text could mean if the purchased possession were interpreted as heaven. For him, it would not make any sense. Heaven was never affected by the curse; hence to speak of its redemption or purchase would be foolish. However, the earth was cursed and its creatures subject to bondage until the time of their deliverance (Romans 8:19-21). “And therefore the *Redemption* of the Possession appears to be by way of Deliverance and Restoration; as the Resurrection of the Saints Bodies from the dust of Death, is called, *ver. 23. The Adoption, the Redemption of their Body.*”<sup>127</sup> In other words, since the redemption of the saints involves the restoration of their bodies, so the redemption of the earth—the purchased possession—will involve its restoration. The purchased possession is the eternal inheritance bought by Christ.

T. M.’s final two proofs for the earth’s everlasting existence appeal to an analogy and to hermeneutics respectively. His analogy asserts that even as no “Essential part” of the soul and body was lost as a result of the Fall, “so no essential powers of Heaven or Earth are lost by the Fall.”<sup>128</sup> T. M. proceeds to enumerate several of these essential powers that were not lost by the Fall, even though the Fall brought “evil qualities” to them: the vegetative process, the tracks of the sun, moon and stars, animal procreation, the limits of the seas and the tides. But with the removal of the curse on the earth, the

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Restorer *Colos.* 1.20, but ‘tis onely the Elect that shall come to this time; (the wicked being judged to hell before).”

<sup>127</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6.

<sup>128</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6.

evil qualities that infected the essential powers will be removed. For example, the vegetative process will no longer bring forth thorns and briars but fir and myrtle trees (Isaiah 55:13); its desert places will be well-watered (Isaiah 41:18-19). These prophecies of Isaiah are partially now fulfilled spiritually in the believer, but the ultimate fulfillment of them awaits “when the Creation it self (as a general good) shall be brought forth.”<sup>129</sup> T. M. ends his argument wondering “what is the meaning of *the Restitution of all things*” [Acts 3:21] if it does not include creation?<sup>130</sup>

As for his hermeneutical argument, T. M. thinks to interpret the new heavens and earth in any other sense but a literal one produces “utter inconsistency”.<sup>131</sup> Peter speaks of a literal fire that will destroy the present heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:10); then soon after he writes about new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:13). Hermeneutical consistency would require that the meaning of heavens and earth in both passages would be the same. What is more obvious “than that the *New* shall both be after the *Old*, and as visible as the *Old* had been, in the same way and sense?”<sup>132</sup> Further, a “mystical” fulfillment of this prophecy “in Church and State” cannot be the only fulfillment of it since there will be no Church or state once the old world is consumed.<sup>133</sup> Finally, T. M. believes hermeneutical consistency produces a similar result when comparing Revelation 20:11 with Revelation 21:1. In the latter text, John states that “the first heaven and the

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<sup>129</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6.

<sup>130</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6.

<sup>131</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6.

<sup>132</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6.

<sup>133</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 6. It is likely T. M. has in mind those authors who took the new heavens and earth as a metaphor for either the alterations brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem in the first century or the flourishing state of the church during the millennium. These views were discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

first earth were passed away.” In the former text, “the earth and the heaven fled away” from the face of the one who sat on the great white throne. These two texts describe the same physical and visible event. Consistency would demand that the new heavens and earth that replace the ones that “were passed away” or “fled away” would also be physical and visible.

In addition to his arguments in support of a renovated heavens and earth, T. M. also engages two objections to this teaching. The first objection argues that the activities that will take place—such as building and planting—in the new heavens and earth (Isaiah 65:21) are activities that fit with the present life “*while the Regenerate converse with the Unregenerate; that is, before the day of Judgment.*”<sup>134</sup> T. M. does not deny that Isaiah 65:21 may apply to life before Judgment Day. But even if it does, this in no wise prevents it from also describing the eternal state. He relies on the principle that “the same Scripture prophecys possibly, (nay commonly) have diverse times and ways of Fulfilling; and yet one ultimate fulfilling in a most eminent manner.”<sup>135</sup> For example, cedars growing in the wilderness (Isaiah 41:19) and fir trees replacing thorns (Isaiah 55:13) are promises of grace while Israel is still in captivity in Babylon; peace within the animal kingdom (Isaiah 11:6ff, Isaiah 65:25) refers to the grace given to the unregenerate so that they can live in harmony. Yet these texts have a further fulfillment, all other fulfillments falling short “of the litteral and principal fulfilling as the gleanings are of the Harvest.”<sup>136</sup> The principal fulfillment of these texts is when “the poor Earth shall spring

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<sup>134</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 7. Alcock expressed a similar objection; see page 240.

<sup>135</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 7. This principle was adopted by many interpreters in the seventeenth century.

<sup>136</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 7.



up in the Glory of blessing; and the Beasts... become Rays of their Creators Glory and Majesty.”<sup>137</sup> Similarly, T. M. accepts the notion that the new heavens and earth prophesied by Isaiah (65:17, 66:22) have a “civil and Ecclesiastical Sense” that is fulfilled in the present age; however, a literal fulfillment will be the ultimate one when God restores all of creation.<sup>138</sup> In sum, multiple fulfillments of a prophecy become the tool for answering the objection that the activities attributed to the new heavens and earth are consistent with the present age only.

The second objection T. M. counters states that the inheritance of the saints is in heaven.<sup>139</sup> T. M. agrees that the inheritance right now is being prepared in heaven (John 14:2-3), but he maintains that it will descend from heaven to the earth that has received its release from bondage (Revelation 21:2, 1 Peter 1:13, Romans 8:21-23). This does not mean that Christ or the saints will be restricted from heaven.<sup>140</sup> Although Lord of Heaven from the beginning, Christ has also granted access to the most holy place by his high priestly work. Thus the power that raised up believers to meet Christ at his coming “can also take them higher into the *third Heavens*”, a state of which the saints currently know nothing.<sup>141</sup> Hence, T. M., like Willet, Adams and Dickson, surmised that heaven,

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<sup>137</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 7.

<sup>138</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 7.

<sup>139</sup> He cites Colossians 1:5, Luke 12:33 and 2 Corinthians 5:1. Again, Alcock addresses the same objection. See page 240.

<sup>140</sup> Christ and his people “will be no Forreigners to *Heaven*” even though heaven is not presented in Scripture as the focus of the church’s hope. See T. M., *A Treatise*, 9.

<sup>141</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 9. T. M. quotes, without giving the reference, two brief phrases from 1 Corinthians 2:9--“Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, &c.” Contrary to T. M., Seager believed the dead in Christ now live in the third heaven with Christ, awaiting their return to a new heavens and earth. Later he comments, “Heaven will be more appropriate to Man by Christ, than it could have been by the first Man *Adam*, I Cor. 15.47.50. But as Heaven is superadded, so the Earth shall be Restored: and therefore the *New Heavens and New Earth* are very consistent.”<sup>141</sup> See T. M., *A Treatise*, 12.

i.e., the third heaven, will be accessible to the redeemed in eternity. However, T. M. maintains that Scripture does not present the third heaven as the object of hope for the church because Peter makes it evident that saints' hope is the new heavens and the new earth (2 Peter 3:13).

At the end of the document, to answer the question how it can be that the saints will be judged (Romans 14: 10, 12; 2 Corinthians 5:10) and that the saints will also judge the world ((Matthew 19:28, 2 Corinthians 6:2-3), T. M. lays out the sequence of events he believes will occur at the time of the Second Coming. 1) Christ will appear in the clouds. 2) The wicked will be confounded at seeing Christ. 3) The first resurrection will occur when Christ calls the saints out of their graves. 4) The angels go to gather the resurrected saints and the living and resurrected saints meet Christ in the air. 5) The world is burned and the remaining ungodly are destroyed. 6) Christ will judge the saints. 7) The ungodly are raised and judged; the apostles will judge the twelve tribes and the saints will judge their persecutors. 8) Christ divides the righteous from the unrighteous and pronounces the final verdict. 9) All being now subject to Christ, he delivers the kingdom up to God. 10) God now creates a new heaven and earth. Since God originally created the world to be inhabited (Isaiah 45:18), so with the new one. It will be made a "glorious City of *Habitations*; and the place of that *Kingdom* which is *not of this World*: (That is as to his Personal preference) in that absolute Glory of Perfection, that will be worthy [of] his Divine Majesty; Who now *dwells in that Light that is unapproachable*, I Tim. 6.16."<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11.

Like most of the writers encountered in the last two chapters, T. M. feels compelled to address Paul's instruction that Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, suggesting that Christ will not possess an eternal kingdom. Unlike some of the previous authors who posited a distinction between the throne of God and the throne of Christ to avoid this problem, T. M. takes a different approach, asserting he is declaring a "Mystery".<sup>143</sup> From the Fall of humanity to Christ's ascension into heaven, Christ ruled "invisibly over all the World" as Mediator.<sup>144</sup> However, the kingdom of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15:24 refers to the kingdom of "the present Dispensation" which is "a Subduing Kingdom."<sup>145</sup> This subduing kingdom, belonging to the Father, originated at the session of Christ and continues until his enemies are made his footstool. A time of triumph on the earth—"Only a 1000 years"—will be succeeded by the enemies of Christ reasserting themselves until their final, permanent defeat.<sup>146</sup> This defeat will mark the end of the subduing kingdom, for once all is subdued to Christ "there needs no further subduing power."<sup>147</sup> Since Christ himself stated that His Father was greater than He (John 14:28), and since Christ, although God, will also forever be a man as well, then Christ must continue "his inferiority to *the Father*, who is *the head of Christ*. I Cor. 11.3. by becoming *Subject*, that, *God may be all in all*; Which is very consistent with his

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<sup>143</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11.

<sup>144</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11. T. M. claims Christ was "with Moses and the Church of old, *Heb.* 11.26 I Cor. 10.4".

<sup>145</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11.

<sup>146</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11.

<sup>147</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11. The extent to which T. M. embraced any of the millenarian notions of his day is unclear since he does not provide any discussion of these thousand years.

retaining the Glory of *his Everlasting Kingdom* among *the Sanctified Sons of Men*.”<sup>148</sup>

In other words, the subduing kingdom will give way to an everlasting earthly kingdom of glory in which Christ will be subject to the Father. Israel’s original motivation for wanting a king was evil; nevertheless Israel received blessing at the hand of a few good kings who were all types of Christ who would one day rule over an everlasting kingdom. So T. M. concludes, “Thus God brings *Good out of Evil*.”<sup>149</sup> This scenario is, of course, in line with T. M.’s belief that Christ will rule over the entire world in fulfillment of the promise to David of an everlasting kingdom.

As if what he has written is still insufficient to make his case, T. M. closes the treatise by offering five brief reasons for adopting the perpetuity of the earth in the eternal state.<sup>150</sup> First, the human body, though made of dust, was made immortal; even so Christ can make the earth eternal for the benefit of humanity. Second, since Revelation 22:3 teaches that God will remove the curse from the earth, there is no reason to think God cannot maintain the earth without end in that renewed state. Third, since God made the earth out of nothing, God can even more easily continue its existence. Fourth, according to Scripture, the foundations of the earth are “unsearchable and Divine, *Job*. 38.6” and the earth is so positioned on those foundations so as “not to be removed forever, *Psal.* 104.5.”<sup>151</sup> T. M. wonders if the foundations spoken of in these two Old Testament texts are not also the foundations spoken of in Hebrews 11:10—“at least by way of Allusion, When all Humane works will turn over to the Foundations in the day of

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<sup>148</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11.

<sup>149</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 11.

<sup>150</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 13.

<sup>151</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 13.

the Lord, 2 *Pet.* 3.10”.<sup>152</sup> T. M.’s compacted prose suggests that since the foundations of the earth are of divine origin and intended by God to not be removed, they will remain even if all that rests upon them is destroyed by fire.

His final confirmation that the earth is eternal concerns the opinion held by others that the whole earth will be hell. T. M. doesn’t think this would fit the idea that hell is a lake.<sup>153</sup> But even if the earth did become hell, that alone would prove that the earth is eternal—his main aim in the tract. The same power that would sustain the earth as hell could “much more preserve it in its Verdure and Glory, as a place of Divine Presence, Happiness and Glory to the Heirs of Glory.”<sup>154</sup> With these five additional arguments for an eternal earth, T. M. ends his treatise.

Like three of the four works of the 1640s examined earlier, *A Treatise of the New Heavens and New Earth* is anonymous. Like all four of them, it also relies on the Abrahamic Covenant, the Davidic Covenant and Peter’s promise of a restitution of all things to build the case for a renovated heavens and earth. T. M. supplements these stable lines of argumentation with additional arguments that range from the necessity of God’s will someday being done on earth perfectly (Matthew 6:10) to the fulfillment of Jesus’ words that the angels will ascend and descend from earth to heaven in the age to come (John 1:50-51), to an appeal to hermeneutical consistency (the meaning of

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<sup>152</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 13. Hebrews 11:10—*For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.*

<sup>153</sup> Apparently, T.M. is assuming here a distinction between the earth and a lake that will be located on earth. It will be remembered that T.M. suggests hell is located in a sea that surrounds one general land mass. It might be the case that T. M. is using the Greek notion of the four elements. If so, then the earth is not the entire globe with its water and land, but refers to the land alone—the element of earth.

<sup>154</sup> T. M., *A Treatise*, 13.

“heavens” and “earth” in 2 Peter 3:10-13). Like Alcock, Seager, and Collier before him, T.M. also draws attention to the uncommonness of his position.

However, T. M. appears to hold a view at variance with all of these previous authors except Collier. Unlike the rest, he seems to be a millenarian of sorts, mentioning a thousand year period in which the church will flourish prior to the consummation of all things. Collier had also allowed for a thousand year period, although, unlike T. M., Collier believed that millennium was actually the initial period of the new heavens and earth. Both Collier and T.M. thus synthesize the views of two groups—millenarians and those who embraced the earth as the saints eternal abode. These two groups were largely opposed to each other’s interpretation of the new heavens and earth during the days of the civil war. Collier and T. M., though adopting different strategies, each found a way to incorporate a thousand year time frame within their larger eschatological vision of the saints living on earth eternally.

### **Two Remarkable Paradoxes**

One final anonymous work from the seventeenth century hints at the idea that the earth will be inhabited for eternity by Christ and the saints. In a short tract, *Two Remarkable Paradoxes* briefly considers two paradoxes: whether the earth was created in an instant or in six days and whether the earth will be annihilated or restored.<sup>155</sup> It is in the discussion of the second paradox that the author suggests, albeit somewhat obliquely,

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<sup>155</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes I. That the World Was Created in an Instant and Not in Six Days, II. That the World at the Last Day Shall Not Intirely Be Consumed by Fire*, (London : Printed for Richard Baldwin ..., 1681), *Early English Books Online*, Huntington Library. The author appears well-educated, being familiar with the writings of the church fathers and ancient classical writers and philosophers, all in their original languages.

in an inhabited earth. In the second paradox, the author wishes to prove that the world will “not be totally consum’d with Fire”<sup>156</sup> and the burden of his exposition is focused on that thesis and not on the location of the saints in eternity.<sup>157</sup> However, based on several statements the author makes, the saints’ location is implied as being somewhere in the created order.

First, the author believes humanity will be able to see the heavens with its sun and moon in order to prompt the praise of God:

For, if it be such a lovely Prospect, and so inciting to the Praises of God, to behold those great Wonders of the Great Creator at such a distance and with an imperfect Eye; What will it be to those renewed Creatures, when they shall behold those astonishing Miracles of their God and Redeemer with such a full, so near, and such a perfect View?<sup>158</sup>

The location from which the redeemed will be able to see creation is left unidentified but the existence of a created order is not questioned. Second, the author argues that if the world is to be destroyed, where will be the bodies of those who are resurrected and of those saints who will never die? They “certainly... must be in some certain place, *Place* being no other than the interior Surface of a Body that contains and environs another.”<sup>159</sup> A resurrected body needs a place in which to exist; if the world ceases to exist, then the author wonders where these bodies would reside. He does not suggest they will be in the third heaven where the angels dwell. Third, the world cannot be

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<sup>156</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 9.

<sup>157</sup> His overall approach is to interpret scriptural passages which seem to speak of the world’s perishing as passages that describe a change in the world’s “Figure and Accidents” and not its “Substance”. See *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 11.

<sup>158</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 15.

<sup>159</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 15.

annihilated else there would be no location for hell, or for “that Residence in the Heavens” vouchsafed to God’s people in Scripture.<sup>160</sup> It is ambiguous as to whether the author is suggesting scripture promises a residence in the heavens *as opposed to the earth* or if he is merely emphasizing that scripture speaks of a created space for the saints which must be located somewhere within the realm of the heavens *which would contain the earth*.<sup>161</sup> In any case, it does appear plain that the third heaven is not where the saints will live eternally.

If these three comments at the very least place the saints somewhere other than in the third heaven, two other comments by the author suggest a more terrestrial location for them. In refuting the idea that the world has utility only for the generation of mixed bodies and hence will become superfluous when generation ceases in the age to come, the author simply denies that generation is the only reason for the world. There simply is “no reason why the World should be unprofitable after the Day of Judgment, in regard that the New World is not made for *Generation* but for *Reception*.”<sup>162</sup> There is no telling “how far this World may be useful when refin’d” even if the nature of that usefulness is unknown.<sup>163</sup> The second comment is perhaps the strongest clue suggesting the saints’ final location might be the earth. John’s announcement that the tabernacle of God is now

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<sup>160</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 15. The author envisions hell as “Some vast Abyss as far distant from the Comfort of the Sun, as the Sun is below the incomprehensible Extent of Divine Glory: and yet within the Verge and Circumscription of the created Mass.” See *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 15-16.

<sup>161</sup> The ambiguity can be explained in part to terminology. He favors the term ‘world’ and rarely uses the term ‘earth’ except when quoting scriptural texts or in reference to the earth being one of the elements. ‘World,’ at times, seems to be by a synonym for earth while at other times seems to encompass the heavens as well.

<sup>162</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 13.

<sup>163</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 13. As was seen in chapter 4, seventeenth-century theologians frequently wondered about the use of the renewed earth.



with men (Revelation 21:3) “plainly denotes, that Men shall not change their Habitation, but that Christ will rather condescend to reside and dwell with them.”<sup>164</sup> A dwelling other than the earth would require a change of habitation for humanity; since the author claims this is not to happen, then the earth would seem to be the eternal home of Christ and his people. It is worth noting that nowhere in this document does the author appeal to the lines of reasoning so important to the previous authors surveyed. There is no mention of the rest of God, the promise of land to Abraham and his seed, the promise of an eternal kingship to David. Obviously, little can be drawn from such absence. The author may have been aware of these arguments and found them not compelling, or he may have believed he had sufficient arguments of his own and there was no need to augment further, or it could be he was unaware of these other lines of defense in support of his position. Regardless, *Two Remarkable Paradoxes* takes its place as another work espousing that the earth would not be annihilated, but that the church would live on a renewed earth at the consummation of all things.

### **Creeds**

Having looked at works that were especially concerned with demonstrating Christ’s eternal reign on a renovated earth, it is worth investigating if such a view ever reached confessional or creedal status in the seventeenth century. The answer to that query is clearly in the affirmative.

For the great majority of English confessions in the seventeenth century, the topic of the location of the saints in eternity is left untouched. For example, The Thirty-Nine Articles is completely silent on any eschatological matters whatsoever. The Westminster

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<sup>164</sup> *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*, 16.

Confession of Faith includes two articles touching on each person's ultimate destiny. Article 32 affirms that at physical death, a person's soul departs from the body and takes up residence either in heaven or in hell. At the resurrection, each person's soul will be united with his or her body. The just will be raised "unto honor", but the article does not describe in what this honor consists.<sup>165</sup> Article 33 comments briefly upon the last judgment. It states simply that on the day of judgment "shall the righteous go into everlasting life, and receive that fulness of joy and refreshing, which shall come from the presence of the Lord."<sup>166</sup> The location of the Lord's presence and of the saints is not addressed. Also absent is any statement regarding the renovation of the world.<sup>167</sup>

These omissions are repeated in the two key confessions from the Baptist tradition--the London Confession of 1644 and the Second London Confession of 1677. The former confession states nothing about a new heavens and earth or the locality of the church. It does reference the kingdom of Christ:

This Kingdom shall be then fully perfected when he shall the second time come in glory to reign amongst his Saints, and to be admired of all them which do believe, when he shall put down all rule and authority under his feet, that the glory of the Father may be full and perfectly manifested in his Son, and the glory of the Father and the Son in all his members.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith," Article 32. Accessed 8/20/2013 at [http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf\\_with\\_proofs/](http://www.reformed.org/documents/wcf_with_proofs/)

<sup>166</sup> "Westminster Confession of Faith," Article 33.

<sup>167</sup> The silence of the Westminster Confession should not necessarily lead one to conclude that the writers of the Westminster Confession of Faith did not affirm a renovation of the world. As shown previously, belief in a future restoration of creation was widely accepted in the seventeenth century.

<sup>168</sup> *The Confession of Faith of Those Churches Which Are Commonly, Though Falsly, Called Anabaptists Presented to the View of All That Feare God to Examine by the Touchstone of the Word of Truth, as Likewise for the Taking Off Those Aspersion Which Are Frequently Both in Pulpit and Print, Although Unjustly, Cast Upon Them*, (London : [s.n.], 1644), *Early English Books Online*, British Library. See Article XX.

The place of Christ's reign is not identified in this or any other article. Later, the confession affirms that believers will be joint-heirs with Christ "of the inheritance of all the promises of this life, and that which is to come".<sup>169</sup> No further description of that inheritance is forthcoming. The Second London Confession simply copies the articles from the Westminster Confession of Faith regarding final states, adding no additional material.<sup>170</sup>

The reluctance to be too specific regarding the place of the saints' final home in these creeds was not shared by all seventeenth-century English Protestants. A group of general Baptists met in March of 1660 in London to draw up a statement of beliefs, in part to defend themselves from the charge of being "Anabaptists."<sup>171</sup> Three articles deal with eschatological concerns with article 22 implying that earth will be the saints' abode. After affirming a bodily resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked as well as the judgment of both (article 21), article 22 affirms the return of Christ so that he might establish his kingdom:

For then shall he be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, *Rev. 19.16.* for the Kingdome is his, and he is the governour among the Nations, *Psal.22.28,* and King over all the earth, *Zech.14.9* and we shall reign (*with him*) on the Earth,

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<sup>169</sup> *The Confession of Faith of Those Churches Which Are Commonly, Though Falsly, Called Anabaptists*, see Article XXVII.

<sup>170</sup> William Lumpkin argues that the authors of the Second London Confession used the Westminster Confession as "the basis of a new confession of their own" in order to express their solidarity with other Dissenters who opposed the Conventicle Act, chiefly Presbyterians and Congregationalists. See Lumpkin, *Baptist Confessions of Faith*, 236.

<sup>171</sup> *A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith Set Forth by Many of Us, Who Are (Falsely) Called Ana-Baptists, to Inform All Men (in These Dayes of Scandal and Reproach) of Our Innocent Belief and Practise; for Which We Are Not Only Resolved to Suffer Persecution, to the Loss of Our Goods, but Also Life It Self, Rather Than to Decline the Same. Subscribed by Certain Elders, Deacons, and Brethren, Met at London, in the First Month (Called March, 1660.) in the Behalf of Themselves, and Many Others Unto Whom They Belong, in London, and in Several Counties of This Nation, Who Are of the Same Faith with Us.* (London : printed by G.D. for F. Smith, at the Elephant and Castle, near Temple-Barr, 1660), Title Page, *Early English Books Online*, British Library.

Rev.5.10. the Kingdome of this World, (which men so mightily strive after here to enjoy) shall become the Kingdome of our Lord, and his Christ, *Rev.11.15. for all is yours, (O ye that overcome this world) for ye are Christs, and Christ is Gods*, I Cor.3.22,23. *For unto the saints shall be given the Kingdome, and the greatness of the Kingdome, under (mark that) the whole Heaven, Dan.7.27.*<sup>172</sup>

The article clearly states the saints will reign with Christ on the earth. In addition, the parenthetical “mark that” draws attention to the fact that the location of the kingdom is not in heaven but under it. Heaven is never mentioned anywhere in the confession as the ultimate place of existence for the righteous. Finally, the confession gives no indication that the reign of Christ on earth with the saints is temporary—for a mere one thousand years. Judging by what is both stated and unstated, the confession plainly implies an earthly existence for Christ and his people in the final estate.

About thirty years later, an overt expression of the saints’ eternal home is found in another Baptist confession, *A Short Confession or a Brief Narrative of Faith*.<sup>173</sup> The confession appears to be connected with particular Baptists rather than general Baptists. Four chapters are devoted to eschatology with chapters on the resurrection, judgment, restoration of creation and the reign of Christ. Chapters 26 and 27 set forth a very clear statement on the earth’s restoration and the eternal reign of Christ on it. Article 26 is entitled “Of the Restitution of all things.” The article briefly summarizes the biblical narrative with respect to creation. Although created by God for humanity to use and possess, humanity’s sin infected the created order. God purposed to restore creation by means of the work of Christ. This restoration is not to be thought of as a creation per se,

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<sup>172</sup> *A Brief Confession*, 9.

<sup>173</sup> The confession can be found at, [www.reformedreader.org/ccs/scbn.htm](http://www.reformedreader.org/ccs/scbn.htm), Accessed 5/19/2012.

but “be a restitution, or renovation”.<sup>174</sup> Echoing the ancient distinction between substance and accidents, the article asserts that the restoration will not be “of new matter,” but rather “the old things must be made new”. As God’s wisdom and power are seen in the creation of the world, so too will his wisdom and power be displayed in its restitution.

Article 27 delineates what will occur on this renewed earth. After Christ returns in power, raises the dead, judges all humanity and restores the created order, he will take up the throne of his father David. The kingdom “will also be an everlasting kingdom, that shall have no end, nor cannot be shaken; in which kingdom the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls; where the Lord is, they shall be also.”<sup>175</sup> The new Jerusalem will descend from heaven and Christ’s earthly palace will sit on the exact hill on which David’s palace was located. The new Jerusalem “...will be the glorious place of residence, of both *Christ*, and his saints for ever. . . .”<sup>176</sup> To allay any potential fears, the confession ends decrying any who would attempt to set up the kingdom of Christ by the use of military force; Christ and Christ alone will be able to establish his kingdom.

One can only speculate as to why the authors of the Somerset Confession felt the need to include such explicit articles on the renovation of the earth and the eternal kingdom of Christ. If it is true that Thomas Collier had a hand in the composition of this

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<sup>174</sup> *A Brief Narrative of Faith*, Chapter 26.

<sup>175</sup> *A Brief Narrative of Faith*, Chapter 27.3.

<sup>176</sup> *A Brief Narrative of Faith*, Chapter 27.4.

confession, as Lumpkin suggests, then it is only natural to surmise that the position he articulated in *The Body of Divinity* in 1674 made its way into the Somerset Confession.

### **Summary**

All of the documents of this chapter and the previous one demonstrate that some Christians clearly espoused the belief in the everlasting reign of Christ on a renovated earth. Those who did so sometimes express an awareness that their views are outside of the eschatological mainstream. Their reasons for holding to such a position are grounded upon a wide range of Scriptural texts. The decision to abandon metaphorical readings of some of these texts and embrace a more literal interpretation inevitably led to espousing the view that the new heavens and earth would one day be the kingdom of Christ and the eternal home of the saints.

## CONCLUSION

As the preceding chapters have shown, the interpretation of the new heavens and earth was not monolithic among the seventeenth-century English authors. The various interpretations can be classified as belonging to one of two schools of thought. One school treated the phrase as primarily, though not exclusively, as a metaphor for changes in the civil and religious fortunes of the church in the present age rather than in the world to come. A second school treated the phrase more literally, believing its fulfillment consisted of a renovation of the material world at the consummation of all things.

That the new heavens and earth represented positive changes in the church's earthly circumstances is manifested in the works of those who viewed a singular first-century event as the fulfillment of the promise of new heavens and earth. For John Lightfoot that event was the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Jerusalem's demise signaled the rejection of the Jewish people by God and his opening up his kingdom to the Gentiles via the gospel. Lightfoot specifically rejected the notion that Peter was thinking of the transformation of creation when he wrote of the new heavens and earth in 2 Peter 3:13. Instead, Peter's prophecy referred to the change in God's economy of salvation that started with the advent of Christ and his gospel and the soon destruction of the Jewish nation. The elements that will burn (2 Peter 3:10) are Mosaic elements, Jewish rites and rituals, and the righteousness that will dwell in the new heavens and earth (2 Peter 3:13) is the justifying righteousness that belongs to the present age. Lightfoot also understood biblical references to the last days, the end of the world and the coming of Christ as all describing a time when Christ would enact his judgment on the Jews.

Henry Hammond followed Lightfoot in part while adding a new twist to the interpretation of the new heavens and earth. Hammond emphasized that the first-century persecution of Christians at the hand of the Jews is a historical reality that must be taken into account when interpreting the New Testament texts about the new heavens and earth and the return of Christ. These simultaneous events were not to be understood as summative events of human history but as events realized in the first century when Jerusalem was demolished. The fall of Jerusalem provides for the rise of a Christian people who are righteous due to Christ's provision. The severity of Jerusalem's destruction led the prophets and Peter to employ the heightened rhetoric of cosmic disruption to describe it. But Hammond also proposed a second fulfillment of the new heavens and earth. If Hammond took 2 Peter 3:10-13 to refer to the first century, he took Revelation 21:1 to refer to a one thousand year period that had already passed, a period beginning with the accession of Constantine. Though he held to two different interpretations of the phrase in these two separate texts, he nevertheless adopted metaphorical meanings in both instances.

John Owen also opted for a figurative interpretation of the new heavens and earth. He argued that the judgment by water at the time of the Flood and the judgment by fire prophesied by Peter in 2 Peter 3 did not concern the material heavens and earth but rather the inhabitants of earth since the terms "heavens" and "earth" were common idioms used to describe human beings. Since Peter's words were meant to impact the people of that generation, the scoffers who doubted the promise of Christ's coming were Jewish unbelievers who had been warned by Jewish Christians that Christ would soon come in judgment upon that generation of Jews. That coming of Christ in judgment upon the



Jews came with Titus' armies in 70 CE. The heavens and earth were shaken (Hebrews 11:26-27), not literally, but figuratively when the Jewish dispensation disappeared and Gospel times began. The new heavens and earth commenced with the arrival of the Gospel and the demise of Judaism. God's shaking of the heavens and earth is just another way of describing God's disturbing the status quo of a nation's government and the people under that government. Owen also believed that the new heavens and earth would one day be more fully realized when the papacy's power would be shaken to the core and the true church would thrive as it had never done before.

Lightfoot, Hammond and Owen were not alone in adopting a figurative meaning of the new heavens and earth. Some of the millenarians of the seventeenth century chose to do likewise, but for them the phrase was not an era inaugurated by a past event but an era of a thousand years already in progress or, more typically, wholly in the future. Early in the century, Thomas Brightman posited two millennial periods, one lasting from 300-1300, and the other from 1300-2300. It is this second millennial period that he believed was the new heavens and earth. His commentary on Revelation 21:1 makes it clear that he conceived of the new heavens and earth as a metaphorical expression for a new state of the church and a new condition of the Jews here on earth. At some time within his proposed second millennial period, the Jews would undergo a massive conversion to Christ and the Gentile church would also flourish. All of this would precede the eternal heavenly existence promised to all believers.

Joseph Mede allowed for a literal and figurative interpretation of new heavens and earth. His literal interpretation appeared in his treatment of 2 Peter 3. There, Mede argued that the world destroyed by the flood is the same world to be destroyed by fire.

That world is the earth and the sub-lunar heavens. At Christ's second coming, which will inaugurate the millennium, the world will be cleansed from all corruption permitting humans to perceive a greater brightness of the sun, moon and stars. Mede's figurative interpretation of the new heavens and earth surfaces in his famous Revelation commentary. His synchronous approach to the book understands Revelation 21:1, where John reports seeing a new heaven and earth, as descriptive of the thousand year time frame in which Christ rules over the earth, the time frame mentioned in Revelation 20:1-6.

Like Mede, John Archer also posited a millennial period (or longer) in which creation itself, along with church, would experience a great renewal. He consistently interpreted the new heavens and earth as descriptive of this lengthy earthly kingdom of Christ. For Archer, the new heavens and earth will not come in one fell swoop but they start with Christ's return and evolve throughout the millennium. Slowly, the conditions of the church will improve. After the destruction of Gog and Magog, an extended period of judgment will follow, perhaps another thousand years, during which time creation itself will experience a gradual improvement until it reaches a state even better than its original pristine condition. Archer never actually interpreted the new heavens and earth as referring directly and only to creation's renovation, preferring to see the renovation as one element of the larger concept of a new heavens and earth. Still, he believed the material heavens and earth will be restored to a glorious state before finally devolving into their original primordial chaos where hell will be located.

Not everyone in the seventeenth century believed the new heavens and earth to be a figurative descriptive of some period of time prior to the final state of all things,

whether a period commencing in the first century or one to start at some future date. The majority of scholars, though it is difficult to determine how great that majority actually was, believed the new heavens and earth to be a phrase describing God's renewal of creation as part of the four last things—death, hell, judgment, heaven. For most interpreters, this renewal was precisely that—a renewal and not an entirely new creation. The substance of the heavens and earth would remain after experiencing the final conflagration. The creation would be delivered from the effects of Adam's sin and it would enter into a liberty appropriate to its nature while redeemed individuals would enter into a liberty—heaven—commensurate with being rational creatures.

Various questions arose about the expected deliverance. Deliverance by annihilation was often discussed but rarely embraced despite its robust defense by George Hakewill. The geographical reach of the fire that would cleanse creation received some attention due to the general acceptance of a three-tiered structure of the heavens. No one suggested that the third or empyreal heaven, the home of the angelic host, Christ and the dead saints would need cleansing. Equally, no one questioned that the sublunar, or aerial, heaven would require it. The sticking point was the celestial, or ethereal, heaven, that realm above the moon but under the third heaven, the realm of the planets and stars. Divines divided on the question, some arguing that the ethereal heaven needed no purification. This heaven was believed to be incorruptible for no changes in its spheres had ever been observed. For example, Mede, a millennialist who also expected the material world to be cleansed at the commencement of the millennium, argued that the same world destroyed by the Flood would be the world cleansed by the fire. Since the Flood did not affect the celestial region, then neither would the purging fire to come. In

addition, he could find no biblical evidence that the ethereal heaven was affected by the Fall. Yet, beginning with Tycho in the late sixteenth century, scientific evidence mounted showing that the celestial spheres underwent change. If the second heaven would escape burning, then it would not be because it was incorruptible. Consequently, Thomas Burnet and John Ray posited a material, rather than biblical, reason why the starry heaven would not burn—the distance from the earth to the sphere of the stars was simply too great. It would be physically impossible for any fire kindled on earth to ever reach the second heaven.

Others scholars, such as Edward Elton and John Waite maintained the opposite view, extending the effects of the Fall to the celestial region. The “creature” of Romans 8:21 embraces the whole frame of the universe and even though the ethereal part of that universe heaven was less subject to corruptibility than the earth, it too would need renovation. Waite argued on several fronts that the future restoration would encompass the realm of the stars, appealing to word meanings (“heavens”), syntax (the distinction between “heavens” and “elements” in 2 Peter 3:10) and the psalmist’s plain statement that the heavens will perish (Psalm 102:25-26)

The expected restoration of creation led to debate over Paul’s meaning of “creature” in Romans 8:19-22. Just how much of the cosmos did the term embrace? The debate frequently centered on whether or not the term included non-rational creatures, particularly animal life. Those who rejected the renewal of animals, such as Andrew Willett and Thomas Manton, often mentioned that animals were created for humanity’s use; consequently, since humanity will not be on the renewed earth but be in heaven or hell instead, animals would serve no purpose. Manton went so far as to state than even

plant life will be excluded from the new heavens and earth. Opponents such as William Cowper, Thomas Wilson, and Thomas Horton countered with the suggestion that the creature embraces the non-rational living beings as well. In fact, the word is a general word that encompasses all that God created except for angels and humanity. Anything made subject to vanity by the curse must experience the liberation from that vanity. John Waite echoed other writers when he argued that animals will not be resurrected—resurrection being limited in Scripture to human beings—but restored. Just as God spared a remnant of animals during the Flood, so too will a remnant of animals be restored to inhabit the new earth.

The question about the purpose of renewing non-rational creatures expanded to include the wider question of why God will restore the cosmos at all. William Cowper, Edward Elton and Thomas Horton all agreed that the new heavens and earth will serve as monuments to God's glory and wisdom and goodness and further speculation about what purposes God has in mind ought to be avoided. Waite went a little further in his explanation, suggesting that in addition to being a testimony to the glory of God, the new heavens and earth will provide the saints some variety with respect to what they will be able to see. God will permit the saints, in a manner currently unknown, to view the earth and the heavens from their location in the third heaven.

A competing narrative, somewhat novel among seventeenth-century English divines, was that the cleansed cosmos will not be simply an object of contemplation from the confines of heaven but will be the eternal habitation of Christ and the righteous. Prior to the Civil War of the 1640s, defenses of this position were few and relatively unimpassioned. Andrew Willett's discussion is irenic and non-polemical. It also restricts

itself to just a two biblical lines of defense; 1) Jesus said the meek would inherit the earth and 2) Peter claimed that heaven and earth would be the habitation of the righteous.

Thomas Adams, who in the main repeated Willet's arguments, added no additional biblical support. Both writers also give no indication that their position is exceptionally novel or groundbreaking.

But during that tempestuous decade of the 1640s, several unnamed authors vigorously argued from several biblical angles—often in reaction to the resurgent millenarianism of the day—that Christ's kingdom will be erected on earth forever and not a mere one thousand years. *The Land of Promise*, *The Holy Rest of God* and *The Two Olive Trees* all offered more extensive reason to believe that the new heavens and earth would be the eternal home of Christ and his people than those offered by Willet and Adams. God had promised Abraham and his seed that they would inherit the earth and God had also promised David an eternal dynasty. As David's heir, Christ will return to earth, restore it, and take up his own earthly kingdom, having ceded the Father's kingdom back to the Father. The creation would finally enter into God's rest.

These main lines of argumentation that first appeared in the 1640s reappeared in the latter half of the seventeenth century as well; the promises of God to Abraham and David figured large in the defense of the new heavens and earth being the ultimate location of the righteous. Yet additional arguments were added by John Seager, Thomas Collier and the unknown authors of *A Treatise of the New Heavens and New Earth* and *Two Remarkable Paradoxes*. These arguments included, but were not limited to, the following: God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven when Christ and his people live here forever; the dominion over the earth that humankind lost after the Fall is

regained forever in the work of Christ; for righteousness to dwell in the new heavens and earth there must be beings in whom righteousness can inhere, i.e., Christ and the church; and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man has of yet never occurred, but it will when Christ comes to rule over the earth eternally; the dwelling place of God descends from heaven to earth at the consummation of all things . The force of these kinds of arguments led one group of Baptists to finally include the everlasting and earthly reign of Christ as a tenet among their corporate confessional affirmations.

The writers who supported an eternal earthly home for the righteous often expressed their awareness that their conceptions of the eternal state were at variance with the theological status quo. Specific statements can be found in Alcock, Seager, Collier and the author of *A Treatise of the New Heavens and New Earth*. Of course, millenarians, though more plentiful than those who espoused the earth as the final abode of the saints, also held views at variance with much of the mainstream eschatology of the day. Yet it was the millenarians that experienced the vast majority of opposition. They were attacked by all eschatological groups; groups that did not agree with one another on a variety of issues could agree on one topic—belief in a future millennium was wrong.

The one obvious explanation for the united front against the one interpretive innovation—chiliastic hopes—and not the other innovation—saints living on earth eternally and not in heaven—is the political struggle between Charles I and Parliament. Prior to 1640, Brightman and Mede had posited millennial visions and Willet and Adams had spoken of interminable terrestrial hopes for Christ and the saints. There seems to

have been scant reaction to their claims, perhaps because adopting them would not impose any immediate particular course of action.<sup>1</sup>

However, the deposing of Charles I and the subsequent civil wars and debates about the nature of how the state and church should be governed fostered in some millenarians the hope that biblical prophecy was being fulfilled in their own day. Free from censorship of the Laudian era, they loudly proclaimed the imminence of the millennium and pushed for reforms and actions that would spur its arrival. In other words, particular courses of actions were now required if one believed in the millennium—actions that had immediate and profound implications for English society. For some millennialists, the time had come for revolution and the end of the monarchy and episcopacy.

It is no wonder that any group that opposed millennial thinking would react strongly against those who embraced this form of millennialism. Examples of this reaction appeared at various points in previous chapters. John Lightfoot, Henry Hammond and John Owen agreed that the new heavens and earth was fulfilled in 70 CE and they each attempt to rebut millenarianism.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, John Alcock and several anonymous authors of the 1640s agreed that the new heavens and earth describe a renovated creation for the saints' perpetual dwelling place and they too attempted to refute millenarianism. All of these authors wrote their confutations of millenarianism during the period in which it reached its zenith—1641-1653.

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<sup>1</sup> Mede's reticence to speculate about the timing and character of the millennium also contributed to this lack of resistance. Regarding Mede, De Jong takes note of Mede's restraint in the expression of his views, claiming that Mede "showed this caution in all his writings." See De Jong, *As the Waters Cover the Sea*, 23.

<sup>2</sup> Owen was no friend of episcopacy but he did not share the millennial hopes of many of his contemporaries.



Unlike certain forms of millennialism, the belief that the new heavens and earth would be the abode of the righteous did not commit one to any particular political or ecclesiastical sect or any specific course of action. Those who held this view may have been viewed as quirky, but they were not seen as dangerous. Their eschatology did not induce the fear of anarchy. And it just may be that their eschatological arguments were not well known. Aside from the brief defense offered by Andrew Willet and Thomas Adams—both prior to 1640, four of the documents advocating this world as the saints' final abode are anonymous; three others issue from authors of whom either very little is known (John Alcock and John Seager) or from one who had no formal education and had the reputation of being something of a theological gadfly (Thomas Collier). Aside from Alcock's mentioning of *The Land of Promise and the Covenant Thereof*, *The Two Olive Trees*, and *The Holy Rest of God* as formative for his own thought, the research for this dissertation failed to uncover any further citations of these authors by their contemporaries.

It is also worth observing that as far as can be determined, all of the named writers who adopted this position were conformists, excepting Thomas Collier who was a Baptist. Willet, Adams, Alcock and Seager remained loyal to the church. This fact disproves the notion that belief in the earth as the saints' final home originated from those on the extreme fringes of the church. Accepting this teaching did not automatically commit one to embracing other forms of heterodoxy.

The exegetical history of the biblical concept of the new heavens and earth is valuable to anyone wishing to decipher the eschatology of any era in church history. This judgment is clearly warranted with respect to seventeenth-century English eschatology,

for as the foregoing chapters have demonstrated, there is a variety of *eschatologies* which can be explained at least partially by differing interpretations of what the Bible means by the expression “the new heavens and earth.” The variety of seventeenth-century English eschatologies has been obscured by scholarly fixation upon the rejuvenation of millennialism that appeared alongside with, and no doubt contributed to, an unstable political climate. Yet the interpretation of the thousand years of Revelation 20:1-6 is not the only stop worth taking on a trip through England’s seventeenth-century eschatological landscape. Another stop is the exegesis of the new heavens and earth. Exploring this region reveals why that phrase was thought to describe gospel times, a future millennium, an empty monument or an eternal home.

## APPENDIX: THESES

### **Theses from Dissertation**

1. Seventeenth-century exegesis of Scripture exhibits a marked reliance on the the unity of Scripture as compared to critical exegesis. The Bible was first of all a work of God's doing, and secondarily a product of human effort.
2. The notion that Reformed theology is "amillennial" is a modern invention that reveals a lack of familiarity with a significant portion of the Reformed tradition.
3. The idea that Christ died for more than just humans, but also to provide the grounds for the renovation of creation, is richly attested in seventeenth-century English scholarship.
4. In the later seventeenth century, Thomas Burnet offers a proleptic version of both C.S. Lewis's trilemma (Jesus is either a liar, lunatic or God) and Pascal's wager.
5. A mass conversion of the Jews is not an idiosyncratic belief of various forms of dispensationalism that developed in the nineteenth century, but a staple eschatological construct for many divines of the seventeenth century.

### **Theses from Coursework**

1. Any view of the atonement which dismisses the idea that Christ's death satisfied God's justice and wrath has a difficult time explaining what the cross work of Christ actually accomplished or why it was even a necessity.
2. Any attempt to provide morality with moral authority on the basis of evolutionary naturalism is doomed for failure. Morality without a personal God behind it is simply the ability of a majority to enforce the collective will about what is acceptable behavior.
3. Plantinga's concept of an *intrinsic defeater-defeater* provides both the theist and atheist with a mechanism for remaining warranted in their respective beliefs.
4. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* grew in size as a result of Calvin's lifetime activity as a preacher of, and commentator on, the biblical text. Hence, he tried to meld what today is called biblical and systematic theology.
5. Any injury done to another person, even a small one, is much more than a violation of a duty or command. It is always an assault on the worth or value of the person. Such injuries are ways of saying, "I count more than you."

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