THE ESCHATOLOGY OF RALPH CUDWORTH AND HENRY MORE

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          What in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support;
That to the highth of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to Men.
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                         John Milton
                         Paradise Lost (1668 ed.), 1.22

Hamlet: What news?

Rosencrantz: None, my lord, but that the world's
              grown honest.

Hamlet: Then is doomsday near.

                         William Shakespeare
                         Hamlet [237]

But 'tis the talent of our English nation,
Still to be plotting some new reformation.

                         John Dryden
                         Prologue at Oxford, 1680

INTRODUCTION

Until about thirty years ago, historians ignored certain writings of Englishmen like Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, that are the focus of this paper, because of their unhesitant declaration that the end of the world was at hand. The other religious writings of these two seventeenth-century theologians, especially those works that were intended to inspire greater piety and better Christian behavior, have attracted many scholars with enthusiastic interest. However, their treatises on the Second Coming of Christ and other heralds of the last days of earth have simply been overlooked. Apparently, no one thought it necessary, in the endeavor to understand history objectively, to reconcile the conflicting image of wise men who were also looked upon as crackpots.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, historians have dismissed these types of works as the products of superstitious people with otherwise keen religious principles; they pondered the world without the benefit of the intellectual enlightenment made possible by the wonders of modern science. In recent years, however, historians have begun to reassess the apocalyptic writings of the Tudor and Stuart periods in England, and they have found a vital relationship between the belief that the end of the world was near and the growth of modern ideas about government, science, society and the individual. Such curious beliefs actually helped fuel the development of the modern outlook. As a consequence of this recent scholarship, a more

sympathetic approach has been taken to the study of early modern interpretations of biblical prophecy. Among moderate seventeenth-century English theologians, the fearful and the hopeful expectation inherent to their Christian version of doomsday was one that involved deliverance for the elect and eternal damnation for all others. Searching to explain the source of its troubles and looking for answers that held the hope of better days, the belief of the English in the imminent institution of a new kingdom of God began to seem like a normal response for a Christian society that already assumed God's hand touched every aspect of life.

In the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation, St. John the Divine related Christ's promise to hold Satan captive for one thousand years, during the period called the millennium. English Protestants of the seventeenth century believed the advent of the millennium was imminent. They yearned for that time when good would triumph over evil and when the chosen people of the world would stand as one body, united in Christ.

In contrast to this vision of utopia was the reality of turmoil and strife in England. During the seventeenth century, the English experienced the chaos of a civil war, ending with the execution of their monarch, Charles I. Monarchy would be restored eleven years later in 1660, after the experimental Commonwealth of Oliver Cromwell had failed to create a unified and godly nation. These events were capped by the Glorious Revolution of 1688, the dethronement and exile of James II, and

the birth of modern constitutional monarchy in England.

Most English statesmen and clergymen believed that the solution to the problems of their age lay in religious unanimity and obedience to God's design. The intent of the Protestant Reformation had been to purify the Church and reunite the people with a truly reformed Christian faith. Yet discord was prevalent among and within the Protestant nations. In England, religious reformers debated every imaginable point of worship and doctrine without reaching agreement. Especially after 1650, sects began to form and break away from the Church of England, and atheism seemed to be on the rise.

The need for Protestant unity was all the more urgent because of the perceived threat of the Roman Catholic Church. A conviction had developed among the English that the Pope, his clergy and the rulers of Catholic countries intended to destroy English Protestantism and reconvert the nation's people to Catholicism. For many millenarians, contention among Protestants was preventing the advent of the millennium, a period that symbolized to these Protestants a victory in the struggle between the reformed faith and Roman Catholicism.

Moderate Protestant theologians like the Cambridge Platonists, a small circle of divines based at Cambridge University from 1633 to 1688, that included Ralph Cudworth and Henry More, were one group that urgently advocated the need for unity to battle the Roman Catholic foe. They differed from the mainstream of religious thought, however, in their promotion of

religious toleration, in their stance against religious dogmatism, and in their emphasis on morals rather than salvation as solutions to the issue of disunity.

But the Cambridge Platonists were not alone in espousing toleration and stressing morality. They were part of a clearly identifiable, though not organized, effort to establish their brand of reformation in England. Nor were the Cambridge Platonists trailblazers who wanted to turn the world upside down. They worked for improvement within the traditional framework of society while accommodating the forces of change.

These men lived during an exciting period in the history of ideas. In seventeenth-century England, the foundations of modern scientific and political theory were laid. New and revolutionary notions of the relationship between humankind and its environment and about the liberties and rights of individuals would significantly alter the outlook of leaders and thinkers by the end of the century, making possible the shape of western civilization today.

The Cambridge Platonists were not against the new ideas emerging around them. The new scientific thought, for instance, they saw as perfectly compatible with faith. New science, touted as the means to improve the physical lot of humankind, was in harmony with the quest of men like the Cambridge Platonists to improve the moral and spiritual condition of society. Any advancement of Christian society was compatible with their vision of utopia in the impending millennium. Indeed the blend of new

scientific thought and religious faith was reflected in the life of one of their colleagues, Isaac Newton. Once Newton had fathered modern science, he attempted to apply his new principles to the interpretation of the prophecies of the Bible.

Despite an open attitude toward new ways of looking at the world and society, the Cambridge Platonists essentially desired to maintain conventional values--a godly Christian society unified by one Church. However, their advocacy of religious toleration, supported by their acceptance of new scientific thought, had unexpected consequences. For instance, their promotion of toleration in all likelihood assisted the widespread acceptance of the variety of toleration later popularized by John Locke. By the time Locke was expressing his views on the matter, the Cambridge Platonists had already spent close to five decades educating the future leaders of the nation and influencing their systems of value. But unlike the Cambridge Platonists, Locke encouraged religious toleration outside the bounds of the Church of England. Locke's viewpoint stemmed from a philosophy of knowledge, developed along the lines of new scientific principles, that would open a gap between religion and science, elevate reason over faith, and call for the separation of church and state. Rather than preserving, uniting, and enhancing a reformed and pious Christian society, in their support of a concept of toleration, which they justified by the scientific approach, the Cambridge Platonists were perhaps inadvertently instrumental in encouraging greater secularization and in

fostering a strict separation of spiritual and temporal matters.

Men like the Cambridge Platonists, John Locke and Isaac Newton, along with numerous church and state leaders of the later seventeenth century, have been called latitudinarians for their shared outlook of how to transform society for the better and how to settle successfully the issues of the age. Basically, latitudinarians espoused religious toleration and promoted science. At first, the latitudinarians were opposed by those who were trying to resist the growth of science and individual choice in religion, but in the end latitudinarian thought was embraced as the sensible solution to rebind the people of England. The Cambridge Platonists have been credited as the first to be called "latitude men," and most of the later latitudinarians either were educated at Cambridge or were acquainted with the Cambridge Platonists and their writings.

The ideas of the latitudinarians were complemented by their millenarianism, a key facet of the latitudinarian point of view. This paper demonstrates that the millenarianism of the Cambridge Platonists was a primary stimulus to the acceptance of religious toleration. Millenarianism also incidentally offered support to the rise of science, because the new approach of science was expressed as an important means to advance the human condition toward that future state of perfection envisioned in the Kingdom of Christ.

This paper features the apocalyptic writings of two of the Cambridge Platonists, Ralph Cudworth and Henry More, and explores

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the significance of their interpretations of biblical prophecy in light of some of the political, religious and intellectual developments of seventeenth-century England. Their approach is measured against the standard Protestant millenarianism of the period, to help define the relative position of the Cambridge Platonists and their brand of religious thought. Finally, an attempt is made to evaluate the relationship of these men to contemporaries like John Locke and Isaac Newton, who ushered in a dramatically new age in the history of humankind.

I. PLATONISM, MORALITY AND THE MILLENNIUM

The Cambridge Platonists shared a rational Christianity with
roots in the Neo-Platonic movement of the Renaissance. Although
the tenets of Christianity remained central to their approach,
and they were greatly influenced by other philosophies,
especially that of Descartes, the Cambridge group were regarded
as Platonists by their contemporaries. John Locke, for example,
called them Platonists.[1] These men drew upon the more spiritual
aspects of Neo-Platonism, those that supported their outlook on
religion. They read Plato, but were influenced more by the Neo-
Platonist Plotinus[2] (c. 205-270), whose writings had considerable
effect upon many medieval theologians and mystics as well as upon
such earlier theologians as St. Augustine and Dionysius the
Pseudo-Areopagite. Central to Plotinian thought was the concept
of a path leading to unity of the soul with God.[3]

The Cambridge Platonists borrowed from Neo-Platonism three
main concepts: the immutable principles of morality, the belief
in universals, or innate ideas, and the supremacy of reason.
From the viewpoint of the Cambridge Platonists, the immutable
principles of morality were equivalent to the natural laws of

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[1]J. A. Passmore, _Ralph Cudworth, An Interpretation_
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 11; hereafter
cited as Passmore.

[2]Frederick J. Powicke, _The Cambridge Platonists, A Study_
(London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., [1926]), 21; hereafter cited
as Powicke.

[3]F. L. Cross, ed., _The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian
Church_ (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), 1084-1085;
hereafter cited as _ODCC_.

God. These were the fundamental laws of ethics, engraved on the hearts of humans, Christian and pagan alike, by God.[4] God's Commandments represented the immutable principles of morality.[5] The Commandments set forth His laws, but even without knowledge of the Bible, conscience served to help people follow the decrees of God. For the Cambridge Platonists, the immutable principles of morality reinforced the way of life taught by Christ. The moral principles were part of the innate ideas, or universal truths, that God had stamped upon the minds of humans. Innate ideas were the "forms" taught by Plato that gave man the ability to conceive of lofty, intangible notions of truth, beauty and perfection, for example, and also allowed him to know about ideal shapes, like circles and triangles, even when they did not occur in nature, visible to the senses. Reason was the faculty granted by God as the medium to remember or to stimulate the knowledge of innate ideas and to decipher the truths of God's revelation in Scripture. Reason was the mediator between this inherent consciousness of God and the words of His revelation, that enabled people to live according to the immutable principles of morality and thereby be one with God and in accord with His design for humankind, insofar as mortals could.[6]

The application of this Platonic philosophy differed among

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[4]Powicke, 23.

[5]Ralph Cudworth, A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at Westminster, March 31, 1647 (Cambridge, 1647), 74; hereafter cited as Sermon.

[6]Powicke, 19-23, 29.

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the Cambridge Platonists. The emphasis on reason and its elevation in regard to faith was the one point at which they most clearly aligned in opinion. Yet, they did not necessarily adhere to identical concepts of reason. For instance, Benjamin Whichcote, the first of the group to be made a fellow at Cambridge, employed reason as the key element of his approach to religion,[7] but his version of reason was Aristotelian and thus anti-Platonic. His understanding of reason did not include innate ideas. Rather the mind of man began as a blank sheet, the concept of _tabula rasa_ later popularized by Locke.[8] Reason was the faculty which allowed man rationally and properly to understand Scripture and "write" its wisdom upon the mind. Nevertheless, Whichcote was associated with the Cambridge Platonists because he, like the others, deviated from the standard Protestant approach that set faith above reason, and because he shared with the rest of the group a commitment to toleration and improved morality. Whichcote read the Platonic philosophers, and he believed he was favorably influenced by them,[9] but he was not a speculative philosopher. Rather, he was a Gospel-oriented thinker who put emphasis upon the role of

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[7]Powicke, 50.

[8]Robert A. Greene and Hugh MacCallum, eds., _An Elegant and Learned Discourse of the Light of Nature_ by Nathaniel Culverwell (University of Toronto Press, 1971), xlviii; hereafter cited as Greene & MacCallum.

[9]Powicke, 57-59.

reason in matters of faith.[10]

Six theologians constituted the nucleus of the Cambridge circle. The true Neo-Platonists of the group included John Smith, Peter Sterry, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth.[11] The last of its members, Nathaniel Culverwell, was set apart from the others by his adherence to the more puritan elements of Calvinism, which the rest spurned,[12] and as far as his philosophical tendencies are concerned, Frederick J. Powicke regarded him as an example of "arrested development."[13] Ralph Cudworth was the most well-versed scholar of the group in Greek thought. While the others might use Platonic philosophy to support the truths which they found in the Bible, Cudworth was apt to support his thoughts with the words of pagans. In contrast, Platonism held a decidedly subordinate position to Scripture in John Smith's discourses. Drawing upon the more abstract lessons of Platonism, Peter Sterry was the most mystical of the group, although mysticism was a tradition shared both by Christianity and Neo-Platonism. Sterry's sermons were filled with the raptures of God's supernatural embrace more than with His moral lessons. Henry More, on the other hand, has been called a rational mystic.[14] The inspiration of great spirituality is evident in his writings,

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[10]Passmore, 15.

[11]Greene & MacCallum, xlviii.

[12]Powicke, 134.

[13]Powicke, 50.

[14]Powicke, 19, 93, 176-177, 50.

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but his tendency toward mysticism often rendered his words obscure at best.

Platonism stimulated these men according to their distinctive characters. The singular point upon which they all agreed in their approach to religion was the elevation of the powers of reason to a level equal to the authority of faith. Reason and faith went hand in hand. For them, reason was the means to kindle faith, and they called it the candle of the Lord.[15] The idea of revelation illuminated by reason was no new or uncommon concept. All of Christian theology depended upon the right use of reason. But in the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, for instance, once reason had been employed to define doctrine, it was to be discarded in favor of faith. On the contrary, the Cambridge group asserted, each person had the potential to tap this inner spiritual guide and to come to know God intimately.[16] This conviction was complementary to a basic tenet of the Protestant Reformation: each believer must witness the words of Christ and not blindly rely upon customary thought or the explanations of others. The spirit of the Reformation, More declared, was to see the truth with one's own eyes.[17]

The chief motive for the Cambridge Platonists' promotion of reason was the cultivation of personal morality. Classic

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[15]The phrase was drawn from Proverbs 20:27. See ODCC, 222.

[16]Powicke, 24, 31, 23, 38.

[17]Henry More, Apocalypsis Apocalypseos; or the Revelation of St. John unveiled . . . . (London, 1680), 121; hereafter cited as AA.

Protestantism had placed greater emphasis on the reform of
doctrine than of ethics because of the belief that striving for a
virtuous life was a result of God's election to salvation. The
Cambridge Platonists asserted that the state of salvation was not
revealed to man in this life. The state of salvation or
damnation was known to God alone. His principal message to
humankind, therefore, was the moral elements of Scripture. Thus,
a person's primary occupation should be the development of
ethical behavior.[18]

In the seventeenth century immorality was viewed as a sign
that the end of the world was at hand.[19] However, the elect,
those whom Christ would raise to His heavenly kingdom on the Last
Day, must prepare themselves for the Second Coming by
strengthening their faith. To the Cambridge Platonists, greater
faith arose from the exercise of reason and the improvement of
personal behavior. Thus morality, reason and the apocalypse were
intertwined in the minds of the Cambridge Platonists.

The apocalyptic writings of Cudworth and More followed upon
an already rich and varied body of English works that addressed
the prophetic portions of the Bible, particularly the books of

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[18]Powicke, 33-37, 19.

[19]Examples of immorality were drunkenness, sacrilege,
adultery, fornication, lust, fraud, graft, not keeping the
Sabbath, and disrespect for the Bible. Wars were also seen as a
foreshadowing of the end. Bryan W. Ball, A Great Expectation,
Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660, vol. 12,
Studies in the History of Christian Thought, Heiko A. Oberman,
ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 97-98, 100; hereafter cited as
Ball.

Daniel and Revelation. A basic eschatology, or a set of
theological ideas about the final chapter in the history of the
world, essentially had been fully developed in England by early
in the 1600s. According to historians of English eschatology,
excitement over an impending apocalypse waned after 1660. If so,
the writings of More were produced during the decline of the
nation's apocalyptic fervor, while Cudworth would have been
writing at the peak of excitement over the apocalypse. However,
the works of More in particular actually may have served to
perpetuate the apocalyptic tradition among English Protestants
longer than it might have otherwise.

Henry More began his studies in 1631 at Christ's College,
Cambridge, where he was admitted as a fellow in 1639. Although
he was offered successively the college's mastership and deanery,
a provostship and two bishoprics during his career, he preferred
the life of teacher and scholar and remained a fellow of Christ's
College until his death in 1687. During his tenure, he wrote and
published at least sixteen volumes of theological and
philosophical poetry and prose.[20]

More published his apocalyptic writings in the period from
1660 to 1685. Five of these, in addition to the second volume of
one of his works, were devoted entirely to the books of Daniel or
Revelation. Portions of two other publications also addressed

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[20]Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, eds., The
Dictionary of National Biography, Vol. XIII (London: Oxford
University Press, 1967-68), 868-870; hereafter cited as DNB.

Revelation.[21] His works followed in the tradition of the great
English theologian Joseph Mede, who also had been a Cambridge
scholar from 1613 to 1638 and was the mentor of the Cambridge
Platonists. Mede was a major contributor to English thought and
devoted most of his career to the study of prophetic scripture.
More's works built upon the commentaries of Mede, and Mede
remained an important influence in English thought, in part the
effect of More's advertisement of Mede's contribution to his
work.[22] Judging from the number of More's publications, and the
subsequent release of many of them in new editions, it is fair to
say that he enjoyed a measure of popularity for his writings.
New editions of some of his works continued to appear long after
his death, as late as 1743.[23]

Ralph Cudworth also made a lasting contribution with his
writings, but in comparison to More, Cudworth wrote and published
very little. Cudworth had entered Emmanuel College, Cambridge,
in 1632 and was elected a fellow in 1639. J. A. Passmore
speculated that Cudworth may have been one of More's tutors,[24]
but More and Cudworth entered as students and graduated virtually

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[21]Michael Murrin, "Revelation and Two Seventeenth Century
Commentators," The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and
Literature, C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds. (Ithaca:
Cornell University Press, 1984), 142-143; hereafter cited as
Murrin. The first two footnotes to the text on pages 142-143
list More's apocalyptic works and their dates of publication.

[22]Murrin, 125.

[23]DNB, Vol. XIII, 868-870.

[24]Passmore, 16.

at the same time. Cudworth was named master of Christ's College in 1654, placing him in a position of authority over More, although he supposedly won the post only after More declined it. He continued as master until his death in 1688.[25]

During his tenure, he wrote only one treatise dealing wholly with either Daniel or Revelation, "Commentary on the Seventy Weeks of Daniel," written sometime between 1647 and 1659.[26] Although it was never published, the circulation of manuscripts was still common at the time, and since Cudworth was a popular teacher[27] and enjoyed the favor of the Cromwellian government during the Interregnum,[28] his discourse may have received attention at least within circles of like-minded thinkers.

Cudworth's contribution to future generations was his writings on ethics and the theory of knowledge, two of them published posthumously. The one significant work produced in print during his life was The True Intellectual System of the Universe of 1678, an attack on atheistic materialism.[29] It apparently was not well received; his critics felt it was blemished by unorthodox religious sentiments. Of the two discourses published after Cudworth's death, only one is pertinent here, A Treatise Concerning Eternal and Immutable

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[25]Powicke, 110-113.

[26]Powicke, 114, and Passmore, 108.

[27]Passmore, 91.

[28]Powicke, 112-113.

[29]Passmore, 19-20.

Morality. It was released in 1731, reprinted with The True
Intellectual System in one volume in 1845, and included in the
second volume of A. Selby-Bigge's British Moralists in a
condensed form in 1897. Cudworth's writings found a more
receptive audience among eighteenth-century rationalists and
their descendants, who took up his slogan, "eternal and immutable
morality."[30] The development of Cudworth's moral philosophy had
been motivated largely by the often zealous, deeply spiritual,
English apocalyptic tradition of the seventeenth century.
Ironically, Cudworth's slogan would be taken up in an age when
Christian society's ardor for God had significantly cooled.

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[30]Passmore, 115-116, 3, 91-92, 94-95, 40.

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II. THE POLITICAL AND APOCALYPTIC SCENE IN REFORMATION ENGLAND

From the fifth to the sixteenth centuries, the leaders of the Catholic Church sought to suppress ideas that the millennium would be a golden age, although the belief persisted underground throughout the centuries. During the English Reformation, Protestants revitalized the concept of a golden age and developed an optimistic theology about the last days of earthly existence.[1] Because of the enhanced role of the Cross and the Bible in Protestantism, a revival of interest in the apocalypse evolved almost naturally during the Reformation. To truly purify the Christian faith, all Scripture had to be re-examined, and the stress on Christ's sacrifice caused greater interest to be placed on the Second Advent, when Christ would return to this world, not as a humble man but as the King of Heaven. Salvation had not been accomplished on the Cross; it had only been made possible. Salvation of the elect would not be realized until the Last Day.[2]

The return of Christ was the central theme of Christian eschatology. The Second Coming of Christ dominated the concept of the millennium, the last stage in the history of humankind, but it also was intertwined with ideas about the resurrection of the dead, Judgment Day, and most importantly, the creation of the kingdom of Christ promised in Revelation. Early Christians had

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[1]Peter Toon, "The Latter-day Glory," Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology, 1600 to 1660, with an Introduction by Peter Toon, (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1970), 17, 19, 23; hereafter cited as Toon.

[2]Ball, 48.

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trusted that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent, especially during periods of rigorous persecution.[3]

The Catholic Church adopted the eschatological teachings of St. Augustine (354-430) as orthodox doctrine at the Council of Ephesus in 431. The council condemned belief in a future golden age and called it mere "Jewish dreams."[4] Augustine thought that the millennium referred either to the first thousand years of Christianity from the birth of Christ or that it symbolically represented a period of ascendancy for the Church. In the book of Revelation, Christ's promise to hold Satan captive during the millennium was interpreted not as the elimination of evil in the world but as a period when Satan would relax his hold on mankind, to enable the victory of Christianity over the forces of evil.[5]

The book also spoke of two resurrections of the dead. Augustine believed that the resurrection referred to in Revelation 20:1-6 described the rebirth of martyrs into the eternal life of God immediately upon leaving their earthly existence. In heaven, they would rule with Christ during the millennium. The second resurrection of chapter 5:28-29 was a prediction of the raising of all the dead on Judgment Day, the time of the Second Coming of Christ when the living and the dead

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[3]ODCC, 67.

[4]Toon, 14, 23. Christian eschatology has its roots in Jewish apocalyptic literature, dating from about 200 B.C. to A.D. 100 (ODCC, 67), and the Church was not yet reconciled with its Judaic heritage (Ball, 176-177).

[5]Toon, 14-17.

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would be judged and assigned to heaven or hell for eternity.
Judgment Day marked the Last Day of this earth and the universe,
the end of terrestrial space and time, and the creation of the
New Jerusalem where the chosen would live in God, free of worldly
cares.[6]

The revival of eschatological thought in England began early
in the reign of Elizabeth I.[7] Elizabeth's ascension to the
throne in 1558 restored the nation to Protestantism after five
years of persecution during the rule of Elizabeth's Roman
Catholic half-sister, Mary I. Because she had delivered English
Protestants from the cruelties of Mary's reign, Elizabeth was
consequently seen as a godly prince and defender of the true
faith.[8] The people of England, however, continued to feel
vulnerable to the threat of Roman Catholicism.

At the beginning of Elizabeth's reign, England was the only
major Protestant power in Europe and a common haven of refuge for
oppressed Protestants from the Continent. The countries nearest
to England--France, the Netherlands, Scotland and Ireland--were

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[6]Toon, 14-17.

[7]Ball, 27, 1.

[8]Bernard Capp, "The Political Dimension of Apocalyptic
Thought," The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and
Literature, C. A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich, eds. (Ithaca:
Cornell University Press, 1984), 95; hereafter cited as Capp.
Many had thought of Henry VIII as the returned Christian emperor,
a champion of Christianity like Constantine, after the King and
Parliament had broken ties with Rome in 1533 (William M. Lamont,
Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-60 [London: Macmillan
and Co Ltd, 1969], 34; hereafter cited as Lamont). The reign of
his daughter, Elizabeth, rekindled the concept of the heroic
Christian prince.

all officially Catholic countries. But the defeat of the Spanish
Armada in 1588 confirmed and consolidated England's confidence in
Elizabeth, and it caused the English to see their nation as one
specially designated by God as a defender of the faith, at home
and beyond her shores. The instruments of the fight were
preaching and the sword, and the enemy was the Antichrist. By
the middle of Elizabeth's reign, the Pope had been identified as
the Antichrist, and common belief held that the end of the world
was imminent. The people expected Elizabeth to lead the fight of
the Antichrist in Catholic countries and expected her reign to
usher in a new age.[9]

The restoration of Protestantism in England, and the sense
that God was bestowing His favor on the island nation, laid
fertile ground for the flowering of interpretations of biblical
prophecy. A favorable attitude toward the art of prophecy grew
as its veracity was validated by predictions from Scripture and
from legendary and real prophets, like Merlin, Nostradamus and
Mother Shipton, that gave special significance to the number 88,
and thus the year 1588.[10] The concurrent transition in the
traditional approach to the study of history reinforced a new
status for prophecy as well. Since the time of Martin Luther,
history had been examined to assist attacks against the
corruptions and abuses of the Roman Church. The Bible, as the

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[9]Capp, 96-98.

[10]Katharine R. Firth, The Apocalyptic Tradition in
Reformation Britain 1530-1645 (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
1979), 150-152; hereafter cited as Firth.

primary source of the primitive Church's history, was used by the
first Protestants to prove that the Roman Church had gone
astray.[11] This led to the reappraisal of all of Scripture,
including its prophetic writings, in the effort to truly reform
the Christian faith.

Early Protestants had looked to the Bible as the supreme
authority on the history of the primitive Church. Shortly, they
would also seek justification in it for their rejection of the
once-Catholic Church and signs of the special role which they
felt they were playing in history.[12] They found, particularly in
the book of Revelation, portents of a great struggle between
devout Christians and Antichrist, a prelude to the final days of
earth. Protestants already believed that they were living in the
last age and that theirs was the true faith of Christ. The
identification of the papal hierarchy as Antichrist easily
completed their picture. Further interpretations of biblical
prophecy gave the Protestants fresh hope for total victory over
the forces of Antichrist. The reward would be the Second Coming
of Christ and bliss in His embrace throughout eternity for the
chosen people.

Layered upon the Protestant emphasis on biblical prophecy
and history, the newly introduced scientific method further
enabled the English eschatological dimensions to expand in the

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[11]Barbara J. Shapiro, Probability and Certainty in
Seventeenth-Century England (Princeton: Princeton University
Press, 1983), 155; hereafter cited as Shapiro.

[12]Toon, 25.

seventeenth century. The scientific method rejected customary opinion in favor of absolute truths demonstrated in the mode of mathematical proofs, and it called for impartiality in the face of centuries of blind acceptance of ritualized attitudes and beliefs. This tendency extended to studying the historical aspects of Scripture, aided by information from secular history, in an analytical manner,[13] a development that had great influence on the works of seventeenth-century eschatologists.

Hugh Broughton pioneered the chronological approach to scriptural prophecy in England. Broughton was a fellow at Cambridge, first at St. John's and later at Christ's College, in the 1570s and 1580s. By 1588, he had left Cambridge for London, where he became a popular but controversial Puritan preacher. He wrote his commentaries on Daniel and Revelation in the first decade of the seventeenth century. Broughton found the key to chronology in his study of Hebrew documents, comparing them to one another and to the books of the New Testament.[14] Since the early sixteenth century, English Protestants had begun to acknowledge and appreciate the Jewish origins of Christianity,[15] and there was a greater interest in the wisdom of Hebrew texts, giving rise to university study in the Hebrew language. Broughton translated Revelation to Hebrew in 1610. Revelation originally had been written in Greek, but Broughton and

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[13]Shapiro, 118-120, 155-156.

[14]Firth, 153-158.

[15]Ball, 177.

subsequent interpreters of Scripture thought the more ancient language of Hebrew enhanced the divine character of prophecy, and it also gave these biblical sleuths new avenues for interpretation.[16]

By 1610, the study of the apocalypse was considered a respectable and scholarly pursuit, combining the arts of philology, chronology and history.[17] Churchmen and state leaders still commonly looked upon the English monarch as a godly prince who would lead the people into the millennium, but due to political developments, from early in the seventeenth century English eschatology began to put focus on an active role for the nation's people as well. Despite the trust which English Protestants had placed in Elizabeth to vanquish the enemy and, as the instrument of prophecy, to convey the golden age to the English people, Elizabeth had died in 1603 without removing or even reducing the threat of the Roman Catholic foe. Many then put their faith in her successor, James I, who himself had published an exposition on a portion of Revelation in 1588 that predicted the overthrow of the antichristian papal hierarchy. But James also disappointed those who looked to him as the godly prince. He made peace with Catholic Spain, gave little support to the Protestant effort in the Thirty Years' War, and declined to deal harshly with English Catholics.[18] From the beginning of

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[16]Firth, 152-154, 160.

[17]Firth, 179.

[18]Capp, 103.

his reign, the emphasis on a cataclysmic end of the world, filled with hardship, shifted to a popularization of the idea of a golden age,[19] and the concept of England as the New Jerusalem spread quickly.[20] Disappointment created by the failure of English monarchs to usher in the golden age and institute the New Jerusalem caused many theologians to theorize that God first required the cooperation of the English people in His plan as well.

The transition in apocalyptic thought can be seen in Thomas Brightman's Works, for instance. Brightman was a leading Elizabethan Puritan minister who had been at Cambridge at the same time as Broughton.[21] His eschatological writings went unpublished in England until 1610 because they slighted the notion of a godly prince and favored instead a godly people. Brightman was the first to find a special role for the English people in God's design as put forth in the prophecy of Revelation. The book of Revelation begins with letters to seven churches, communicated by God to St. John the Divine. Brightman interpreted the letters as symbolic of successive periods in Church history. The sixth letter, and thus the penultimate stage of earthly time, is addressed to the Church of Laodicea, which Brightman saw as representative of the Church of England.[22] The

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[19]Capp, 100-102.

[20]Ball, 101n.

[21]Capp, 100; and Firth, 166.

[22]Firth, 166-167.

ultimate state of religious perfection was reflected by the seventh letter to the Church of Philadelphia. The interval of the Philadelphian Church embodied the last days prior to the Second Coming and denoted a condition of spiritual purification which the Church of England could reach only through greater zeal for reform.[23]

Brightman advanced the concept that God required a reform of the Reformation before fulfilling His promise of a golden age. Just as many leading English thinkers of the seventeenth century believed that God had endowed people with the capacity to develop the new science and liberate themselves from the caprices and hardships of nature, English theologians thought that God in His revelation had given humankind the means to understand and cooperate with God's purpose throughout historical time.[24] Brightman believed the millennium had commenced in 1300 with the first stirrings of the Reformation. The thousand years had begun with a period of affliction for God's people, the torment of true Christians of the reformed faith by the antichristian Roman Church, but once Protestantism realized victory, a blissful time would follow, distinguishing the final phase in human history.[25]

After the death of James I, the endorsement of the monarch as a godly prince was supplanted by Brightman's notion of a godly

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[23]Lamont, 94-95.

[24]Christopher Hill, The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas During the English Reformation (Middlesex: Penguin Books Ltd, 1972, 1975), 92; hereafter cited as Hill.

[25]Capp, 100.

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people. Like James, his son and heir Charles I, who came to the throne in 1625, also failed to usher in the millennium. Worse yet, Charles was suspected of a favorable disposition toward Catholicism. His queen was a French Catholic, and the policies of the man he selected as Archbishop of Canterbury, William Laud, were viewed by many of the more prominent citizens, especially the Puritans, as tainted by Roman Catholicism.[26]

Ideas about the special role of England in God's design eroded further during Charles's reign. The loss of God's favor was seen as a punishment because English monarchs had failed to champion the true faith and now had even been poisoned by the Antichrist.[27] Laud and his followers were labeled Arminians, a term that implied an accusation of popery. The worries of Laud's adversaries were exacerbated further by Charles's and Laud's promotion of the concept of divine-right episcopacy as complementary to divine-right monarchy. Laud believed that bishops ruled in a successive, unbroken chain like the monarchy. This was contrary to the contemporary image of the king as a Christian emperor in the tradition of Constantine. Yet, despite the image of the king as a divinely inspired ruler, a large number of leaders felt Charles was overstepping his bounds and alienating the ancient rights and liberties of the people.[28] Among the anti-Arminian English leaders, either "fears of

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[26]Capp, 104-105.

[27]Capp, 106-107.

[28]Lamont, 57, 59, 62, 66.

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clerical supremacy coexisted with fears of royal supremacy,"[29] or there was fear that Laud would usurp the throne of the Christian Emperor, Charles.[30] Increasingly, the Puritans turned from the concept of godly prince or godly bishops and instead looked to Parliament, representative of the people, for spiritual leadership.[31]

Apocalypticism became largely associated with Puritanism and Parliament in the 1630s. Fast Day sermons reflected the new belief that a godly Parliament would battle the Antichrist and usher in a new age. The association of English Calvinists with apocalypticism was contrary to the Helvetic Confession of 1566, a Calvinist confession of faith, that denied a golden age before the Last Day and a victory of the pious over the godless on earth. John Calvin had judged Revelation as too enigmatic.[32] In its classical form, Calvinism presented God and His plan as impenetrable mysteries, and any attempt to interpret God's prophecy was like an admission that humans could fathom the depths of God. Likewise, the Calvinist objection to the concept of godly rule was its assumption that people could raise themselves to God's level of understanding.[33]

However, many English Calvinists operated in reaction to

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[29]Lamont, 62.

[30]Lamont, 67.

[31]Capp, 105.

[32]Firth, 174-175, 178.

[33]Lamont, 130.

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what they saw to be threats of Roman Catholicism. The Laudian camp was inclined to reject the notion of the Pope as Antichrist, and millenarian Puritans began to feel that the lack of any apparent progress toward a golden age was due to a failure of leadership among the bishops in battling the Roman enemy and, by extension, a defective episcopal form of English church government.[34]

Joseph Mede and Thomas Brightman were two of the most popular writers on the apocalypse up to 1660.[35] However, unlike Brightman, Mede was not a Puritan. Indeed he favored the ceremonialism of Laud's Church,[36] and he was a staunch Anglican who wholeheartedly supported the episcopal form of church government.[37] Nonetheless, because he asserted that the papacy was Antichrist, Puritans approved of his work.[38]

Mede was considered a master of philology in his interpretations,[39] and he was the first of the English eschatologists to synchronize fully the symbols of Revelation in

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[34]Capp, 105, 109. However, underneath the differences in ceremony of Laudianism and Puritanism, Laud shared one of the basic outlooks of Puritanism: the necessity for a united and godly people, guided by divinely inspired, devout churchmen, to enable the ultimate purification of Christianity and the advent of a golden age (Lamont, 69, 73).

[35]Ball, 59.

[36]Capp, 109.

[37]Ball, 59n.

[38]Capp, 109.

[39]Firth, 178-179.

his Clavis Apocalyptica, or Key of the Revelation, published in 1627.[40] The prophecies of Revelation are conveyed with references to such signs as a book with seven seals which only Christ can undo. As the first six seals are opened, four horsemen arise and 144,000 members of the tribes of Israel receive a seal on their foreheads. Seven trumpet-calls, set off by the release of the final seal, herald various calamities. Other than these types of portents and the letters to the seven churches, Revelation also contains two visions. One concerns the persecution of a woman by a dragon, and the other is a vision of a war between an agent of good and of evil.[41] Mede attempted to match the sequence of symbols to the series of phenomenon described in Revelation and then find their parallels in secular history. As a consequence, he was the first to place the millennium in the future and at the end of world history. Before, writers like Brightman had placed current events within the millennium, asserting that it had commenced and was in process, while others concluded that it was a past event.[42]

After Mede, there were three ways in which seventeenth-century people viewed the millennium. The first group, the amillenialists, thought it was a period in the past or it had already commenced. The post-millenialists believed in a future millennium, followed by the Second Advent of Christ. Finally,

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[40]Ball, 174.

[41]ODCC, 1161.

[42]Ball, 174.

pre-millenialists expected the thousand years to begin with the arrival of Christ in the flesh.[43]

Mede was a conservative pre-millenialist, who thought that Christ would return in person and initiate His kingdom upon earth. The kingdom of God was the one true Church that would displace the secular kingdoms of the world. Radical pre-millenialists supposed that Christ would rule in the flesh for a thousand years but in the flesh of the redeemed saints, the Christian martyrs of St. Augustine's first resurrection. In contrast, the considerably more popular viewpoint of moderate pre-millenialists like Mede endorsed the concept of Christ returning in person to the saints only in order to empower them with governance of His kingdom on earth. Once His earthly realm was established, Christ would return to heaven to await the end of the millennium.[44]

Mede conceived the thousand years to be prophetic imagery and not meant in the literal sense of historical time. He equated the millennium to the phase of Judgment Day. The first to be judged would be Antichrist, and the last event would be a general resurrection of the dead.[45]

In 1642, on the eve of the Civil War, the apocalyptic ideal was mainly expressed as a new age that would be established by greater purification and reformation of the English faith and the

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[43]Ball, 161.

[44]Ball, 161, 168, 164-165, 128.

[45]Ball, 166.

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creation of a godly people, with Parliament as the leader.[46]
Belief in the advent was orthodox by this time, at least among
the dominant religious party of Presbyterians,[47] as can be
observed in the Westminster Confession and Catechisms.[48] The
Westminster Assembly, appointed by Parliament to reform the
English faith, developed the Cathechisms and Confession from 1643
to 1653. Concern with the Second Coming was an active one. Each
person was urged to strive for a perfection of holiness in
preparation for the time when one would be inwardly transformed
into a new life upon Christ's return. The Puritan Richard Sibbes
compared this attitude of readiness to that of a bride in
preparation for her rite of passage into the marital state.
Daily striving for greater piety gave people hope, something for
which they had much need during the ordeal of the Civil War.[49]

Modern historian William M. Lamont regarded millenarianism
as a cause as well as a consequence of the Civil War.
Millenarianism reached its zenith in the late 1640s and remained
at a height throughout the 1650s.[50] Many parliamentarians saw

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[46]Capp, 110, and Lamont, 94-95.

[47]ODCC, 1450. Initially selected for membership were
Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, and Erastians. The
Epsicopalians refused to attend out of loyalty to the Stuarts,
and the Presbyterians thus were able to dominate the Assembly.

[48]Ball, 33, 37, 43.

[49]Ball, 215.

[50]Lamont, 97, 106.

the Civil War as the battle against the forces of Antichrist.[51] There was also a tendency to see the army as a champion of God's cause.

Radical millenarian ideas began to come from the ranks of the army from 1645. The more extreme notions included a new kingdom with freedom of religion, no monarchy, aristocracy or private property.[52] One important radical group, the Fifth Monarchists, declared that Christ would rule through the saints, who would establish Christ's kingdom. The eschatology of the Fifth Monarchists was not necessarily unorthodox. However, their militancy and their stance on revolution was. By destroying the current government of both secular and religious leaders, they expected to clear the way for rule by Christ and His saints on earth. Some of them thought Oliver Cromwell and his parliamentarian collaborators were the saints.[53]

In the aftermath of the Civil War, some influential Puritans in Parliament were disappointed to discover that society was not swiftly being cleansed of immorality, a sure sign that their godly rule was illegitimate.[54] Consequently, in 1648 army officers purged Parliament. The so-called Rump Parliament put Charles on trial, and he was executed in 1649. The Fifth Monarchists saw his death as a necessary step toward the

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[51]Capp, 111.

[52]Capp, 112.

[53]Ball, 181, 183-185, 189.

[54]Lamont, 108-109.

establishment of Christ's kingdom.[55] By 1650 Cromwell was commonly viewed by his followers as the long-sought-after godly ruler to lead Christendom into the millennium. At first, Cromwell appeared to believe it, too,[56] but he soon came to see the Fifth Monarchists as anarchists and social revolutionaries.[57]

Faith in Cromwell as the godly prince disintegrated when he failed to enforce religious unity and declined to establish a new dynastic line. The rise of sects, which also developed their own, often excessive, ideas about the apocalypse, increasingly became a problem to church unity during the period of the Civil War and the Interregnum. Widespread sectarianism caused Cromwell to believe that he could not force common principles of faith on everyone, and he eventually resigned himself to the role of keeper of the peace. Cromwell focused upon issues of morality and the building of a godly people and placed emphasis upon creating a body of well-educated, upstanding clergymen to ensure sound preaching to the various congregations.[58]

The Restoration of monarchy and Charles II's return to the throne in 1660 renewed apocalyptic hope in the godly prince. Among some divines, ideas about the millenium once again revolved around the king and the bishops of the episcopal church.[59]

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[55]Capp, 113.

[56]Lamont, 137.

[57]Capp, 114-115.

[58]Lamont, 140-142.

[59]Capp, 117.

However, the new Archbishop of Canterbury, Gilbert Sheldon, did not promote millenarian desires for a New Jerusalem, he considered the hope of religious unity vain in the face of sectarian differences, and he denied that the Pope was Antichrist. The stress upon religious unity was supplanted by the quest for a peaceful society brought about by an improvement of morals. Emphasis shifted from the state or church imposing virtue to the development of personal virtue. Religious dissent was now linked to disloyalty to the crown and to the potential for treason rather than to a disruption that would slow the approach of the millennium.[60] Since the monarchy, then Parliament, and finally Cromwell had failed to provide the English people with godly rule, greater emphasis began to be placed on the notion of a godly people, a concept complementary to the intensified accent upon personal virtue.

Although the association with radicalism and the failures of English leaders had brought a measure of discredit to apocalyptic thought, eschatology remained to be of vital interest to many after 1660. The long tradition of anti-Catholicism and continued fears of popish plots perpetuated the apocalyptic tradition. Now in addition, the issue of morality also served as a driving force. Even though apocalypticism may have lost some of its impact upon society after the Restoration, preachers and theologians continued to expound on the end of the world. They did not write or speak publicly merely for one another. They

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[60]Lamont, 155-158, 164-166.

meant their opinions to be absorbed by all Christians.[61] Indeed, their words would be carried into the next age.

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[61]Ball, 8, 54.

III. THE REFORM OF THE REFORMATION

The attitudes of Henry More were shaped by his country's history. His apocalyptic works reflected the political mood of the Stuart era and the first two decades of More's adult life, when England's hopes were battered by disappointment and failure to bring about national harmony. After 1660, he began to build upon the developments in English eschatology pioneered by Brightman, Mede, and Broughton. By the early 1680s, More was able to add to that tradition in a unique manner while drawing upon the new concerns that had evolved following the Restoration.

Henry More utilized biblical prophecy to support his plea for unity within the Church of England and among the Protestant nations. He believed this solidarity would give the Protestant community the strength it needed to resist the contamination of the Roman Church and to counteract popish plots against the reformed faith.[1] The perceived threat of the Roman Catholic Church deeply distressed More, in company with many other Englishmen.[2] There had been many supposed and several real Catholic plots to overthrow Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century. Many English statesmen wanted to enact strong measures against adherents of the Roman faith, but on the whole Catholics were subject to relatively mild persecution. The government, though,

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[1]AA, xxi.

[2]For More's assertion that the Catholic Church intended to restore England to Catholicism, see Henry More, A Plain and Continued Exposition of the Several Prophecies of Divine Visions of the Prophet Daniel . . . (London, 1681), lxxx; hereafter cited as Visions of the Prophet Daniel.

remained suspicious of the motives of Catholic princes and the papal hierarchy. After the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605, a common conviction developed that, from the palace to the barren countryside, Romanist schemers swarmed over England. If the Gunpowder Plot had been successful, its Catholic conspirators would have blown up the members of both Houses of Parliament, James I and his heir to the throne.

Seventy-four years later, in 1679, Henry More would refer in a letter to another "dismall plott," the Popish Plot of the hoaxer Titus Oates.[3] In 1678 Oates had claimed to have knowledge of a Jesuit plot to kill Charles II and to place his Catholic brother, James, on the throne. The ultimate source of the plot, Oates declared, was the Pope. When he revealed the intrigue, he employed the apocalyptic shibboleths of English anti-Catholicism[4] that activated paranoid fears and lent credibility to Oates's deception.

Roman Catholicism was not the only threat to the unity of Protestantism. The rise of sects, especially after 1650, presented yet another problem. Within the sects, faith often rested upon the grace of God and individual revelation, rather than upon the doctrinal authority of the Church of England.

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[3]Letter from Henry More to Anne Conway in Marjorie Hope Nicolson, ed., Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends, 1642-1684 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 447; hereafter cited as Nicolson.

[4]Roger Lockyer, Tudor and Stuart Britain, 1471-1714, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1985), 341-342; hereafter cited as Lockyer.

Perhaps more challenging than the sects was the perception of a growth in atheism. No organized associations of atheists are apparent in the historical record; however, many like the Cambridge Platonists rightly detected a changed attitude toward God in the new scientific thought of philosophers like Rene Descartes and Thomas Hobbes.[5]

Groups like the Cambridge Platonists sought to develop a natural theology that could re-unite the people of the Protestant nation with one faith. The fundamentals of this natural theology were faith in God and his revelation, the superiority of the spiritual world, the immortality of the soul, the spirit of Christ, and the promise of reward and punishment in the afterlife.[6] The Cambridge men held that the Church of England should acknowledge only universally accepted articles of the Protestant faith. Beyond the basic tenets was the realm of "matters indifferent," a phrase used frequently by seventeenth-century English writers, in regard to certain details of ceremony, liturgy, and doctrine.

Even with unity restored under the canopy of a natural religion, there was still a need for greater spiritual and moral transformation before the advent of the millennium. During those thousand years, the earthly Church would be purified and attain perfect harmony with the celestial realm. In order to reach this utopian state, More, and the Cambridge Platonists, called upon

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[5]Shapiro, 82-83.

[6]Shapiro, 82-83.

fellow believers to cultivate true Christian charity, or love.[7]

More used the terms charity and love interchangeably to
indicate the Christian love of God and man. For the Cambridge
Platonists, the essence of God and His creation was love.
Likewise, the framework of existence and man's inherent nature
was love. Emanating from God, love bonded man to his Maker and
to the other adherents of His Church, the community of
Christians. Thus, men bore the responsibility to practice
Christian charity not only toward God but also toward fellow
worshippers.[8]

This approach deviated from the Protestant mainstream:
"Classic Protestantism had stressed Divine Justice but the
Cambridge Platonists stressed Divine Love."[9] Ralph Cudworth had
disdainfully characterized the position of those he considered to
be irreverent opponents. He accused his adversaries of devising
a God who held sway over humans simply because He possessed
unlimited power. Such a vision of God reduced faith to nothing
more than fearful obedience and compulsory homage to a frightful
monster and an irresistible force. Cudworth believed God had
fashioned man after His own benign self and gave him the will or

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[7]AA, xxi.

[8]C. A. Patrides, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (Cambridge:
Harvard University Press, 1969), 37; hereafter cited as
Patrides.

[9]Patrides, 36.

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natural desire to choose love.[10]

The Cambridge Platonists' argument for Christian love
centered upon a rejection of the Hobbesian belief that man's
natural state was a state of anarchy, the consequence of original
sin.[11] According to Hobbes, in the state of nature, each person
thinks only of his own interests and does only what is necessary
to his self-preservation.[12] In contrast, the Cambridge
Platonists virtually ignored the concept of original sin.[13] They
promoted what John Smith termed "self-nothingness," the opposite
of self-love.[14] Cudworth believed that the cause of all vice was
self-desire. For instance, he saw the "economic man" as
"selfish, competitive, ugly, uncreative," the archetype of self-
desire.[15]

Instead of cultivating charity or love, More described some
of his contemporaries as enthusiastic nitpickers. Dissension

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[10]Ralph Cudworth, The True Intellectual System of the
Universe, in Gerald R. Cragg, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (New
York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 226-227, 230, 293;
hereafter cited as The True Intellectual System.

[11]Thomas Hobbes was a seventeenth-century political
theorist. Original sin refers to the state of man's nature
after the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and
their fall from God's grace.

[12]Thomas Hobbes, Leviathan: or the Matter, Form, and Power
of a Commonwealth Ecclesiastical and Civil, Pt. 1, XIV-XV, in The
English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill, ed. Edwin A. Burtt, The
Modern Library Series (New York: Random House, Inc., 1939,
1967); hereafter cited as Hobbes.

[13]Patrides, 37-38.

[14]Patrides, 39.

[15]Passmore, 76-77.

hindered the unity requisite to the advent of the millennium and the future golden age of the Church when godlike mortals would live in a paradisal community of truly reformed Christians.[16]

Religious reformers in England debated every imaginable point of worship. In the English mind of the seventeenth century, not only the salvation of individual souls but also the collective salvation of the nation hinged upon their decisions on issues like doctrine and liturgy or the manner of church ceremony and government. An unfortunate event like the Great Fire of London, a return of the plague or sorry economic conditions were often explained as God's punishment for the transgressions of the nation as a whole. Much of the dissension stemmed from the challenge of founding a truly reformed Christianity. Reformers had rejected the Church of Rome as corrupt and urgently desired to avoid the errors it had made. As a consequence, statesmen and clergymen in positions of power engaged in the struggle to settle upon a uniform religion, clear and well defined. However, since Martin Luther had touched off the Reformation in 1517, debate had increased and expanded, bringing not greater harmony but rather spreading hostility and strife within Protestant nations.[17]

The Cambridge Platonists recommended a back-to-the-basics scheme to reunite the leaders of reform. While religious leaders argued over what vestments the clergy should wear and whether God

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[16]AA, xxi, xxiii.

[17]Gerald R. Cragg, ed., The Cambridge Platonists (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 11; hereafter cited as Cragg.

had predestined individuals to heaven and hell, they overlooked their common bond--those ideas agreed upon by all Christians. At the heart of the Christian experience, for instance, was faith in God and his revelation, the superiority of the spiritual world, the immortality of the soul, and the spirit of Christ. The Christian's duty was to follow the example of the life of Jesus. Christian love precluded contentions about religion. To the Cambridge Platonist, that bond of charity was sufficient onto itself.[18]

Consequently, the Cambridge men held that the Church of England should acknowledge only universally accepted articles of the Protestant faith. Chronic disagreement over any particular issue was a sure sign of a nonfundamental belief or a matter indifferent. Nonessentials were based upon opinion and were thus uncertain and unverifiable as truth. Because people were unique products or reflections of their individual experiences, education, and customs, men could not think uniformly.[19] The Cambridge Platonists believed that toleration of the various opinions on matters indifferent was the key to the achievement of a comprehensive Church of England.

To the government and most of the clergy, however, toleration would have meant abandoning the ideal of a populace embraced in the folds of an all-inclusive Church of England, just

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[18]Cragg, 21-27, 30-31.

[19]Shapiro, 108.

as it had been when England was a land of Roman Catholics.[20] Now especially, the threat of the Roman Church demanded the unity of the nation, and most leaders believed true unity could only be achieved by instituting and enforcing a uniform faith. The Cambridge Platonists also earnestly believed in the need for spiritual solidarity to thwart the power of Rome. But the point of disagreement over toleration arose from their conviction that humans possessed a spark of "divine sagacity,"[21] the candle of the Lord. Presumably, even adherents of the Roman Catholic Church could be enlightened by the truth lying dormant in their minds.

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[20]Lockyer, 364.

[21]More quoted in Patrides, 13.

IV. HENRY MORE AND THE ROMAN BEAST

The plea for toleration applied primarily to Protestants. Henry More and the Cambridge Platonists would not have extended the safe harbor of toleration to Catholics but intended them to be converted to the Church of England. More said he hated the religion, not its followers.[1] More's apocalyptic writings were incidentally intended to inform Catholics, as Christians who had been led astray, of the errors of their way.[2] It is doubtful, however, that he gained many converts; his prose often disintegrated into vicious outpourings of anti-Catholic sentiment.

Both of More's apocalyptic works examined here, Apocalypsis Apocalypseos and Visions of the Prophet Daniel, were written in the same format. Each chapter of a book of Scripture was the basis for each chapter of More's commentary, in which the Scriptural text was examined verse by verse. At the end of each chapter, More supplied notes to his interpretations, to explain further his philological and chronological conclusions. Both commentaries contained a prologue to the reader giving the reasons why More felt compelled to share his thoughts on biblical prophecy. In Apocalypsis Apocalypseos, More also included an epilogue, but in Visions of the Prophet Daniel, he attached "The Threefold Appendage to the Prophecies or Divine Visions of Daniel," that in content were lengthier versions of his chapter

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[1] AA, 254-255.

[2] AA, xxviii; Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lxi, 267.

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notes. In its first section, More refuted certain comparisons between Daniel and Revelation put forth by his Dutch contemporary Hugo Grotius. The second was an apology to justify an important change he had made in his use of the classic synchronizations of Mede. Finally, in the last section he attempted to prove that the seven letters to the seven churches symbolized the condition of the Church during seven intervals of history.[3]

More's argument against the Catholic Church centered upon the theme that the papal hierarchy was the manifestation of Antichrist, and the genuinely dangerous Catholics were the members of the papal hierarchy who perpetuated a false faith. More called the Church, her Pope and priesthood, by a variety of colorful terms: Jezebel, Antichrist, Beast, the worshippers of Devils, Hereticks, Papal Tyranny, the Whore of Babylon. He also called the popes Antichrist, singling them out as the "first-born of Lucifer." More borrowed a traditional proof that the Church was Antichrist from an analysis of Revelation 13:18:

> Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.

In Greek and Hebrew, each letter has a numerical value,[4] and therefore the "number of a man" can be derived from his name. More said the Greek word whose sum was 666 was Lateinos, meaning "Latin." Hence, he asserted that the Roman head of the Fathers

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[3] AA, 243.

[4] ODCC, 969.

of the Latin, or Western, Church was Antichrist.[5]

St. Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200), the first outstanding Catholic theologian, had suggested, along with other possibilities, that the number of the beast meant Lateinos. Throughout history, a variety of other names have been proposed, including Mohammed, the Pope, Napoleon, and Martin Luther. Nero is the most common and most widely accepted solution to the puzzle of 666.[6] Protestant England, however, fiercely proclaimed it a symbolic reference to the Pope. Even King James I, in his exposition on Revelation, thought that 666 stood for Lateinos and the papal hierarchy.[7]

Not all Protestants agreed that the Pope was Antichrist, however. Hugo Grotius, the Dutch Arminian whose views More had attempted to discredit, believed that Revelation referred to the history of the Church up to the age of Constantine. According to Grotius, the millennium was an indefinite period of time that had begun with Constantine. This precluded the idea of the papacy as Antichrist and removed the focus from the Second Coming, a blow to traditional English Protestant apocalyptic thought.[8]

Roman Catholics themselves felt compelled to review their Church's orthodox eschatology to counteract slurs against the Pope. The Jesuits were central to a revival of apocalypticism

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[5]AA, 21, 28, 126, 139, 138, xi, 17, 134-135.

[6]ODCC, 701-702, 969.

[7]Firth, 178.

[8]Firth, 246.

among Catholics. The order was established by the Church in 1540, in part to battle the Protestant heresy against it. In one Jesuit interpretation of Revelation, their founder, Ignatius Loyola, was depicted as a hero who would bring about the downfall of Martin Luther and defeat his army of Protestant followers. This version had been officially recognized at the Council of Tatra in 1602.[9] In England, Catholics and those Protestants who denied standard eschatological ideas were accused of trying to avoid accepting the Pope as Antichrist.[10] The dissenting Protestants, then, were suspected of secretly supporting the papacy.

More's use of Scripture to condemn the Catholic Church was not at all unique. Linking the Antichrist to the papacy already had a long tradition in Protestantism, and More believed his works to be enhancements of what God had revealed through the pens of other learned men.[11] He relied heavily upon the interpretations of Joseph Mede, and although he also referred to several other theologians, Protestant and Catholic, he refuted most of them on key points of interpretation.

More felt it was his Christian duty to warn the European populace that at the center of the Roman Church beat the most

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[9]Firth, 162.

[10]Ball, 76.

[11]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, xv-xvi, xx-xxi, 266. Other than Mede, the theologians to whom More referred the most were John Calvin, the Dutch Arminian Hugo Grotius, and the Jesuits Cornelius à Lapide and Gaspar Sanctius.

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evil heart in the history of Christianity. He pointed to the evidence presented by many other Protestants that had also maintained that the Pope was Antichrist. In particular, he named John Jewel (1522-1571), Bishop of Salisbury. According to More, a volume of Bishop Jewel's work, proclaiming that the Antichrist was the Pope, rested in every church of the English nation.[12]

However, the papacy had not always been the agent of Satan, More asserted. Rather it had declined into apostasy and paganism because of its blasphemous (from the Protestant point of view) practice of idolatry in the use of images and in the Eucharist, their foremost offense. Joseph Mede had also claimed that the Antichrist would be known by his idolatry.[13] To many Protestants like More the Catholic Eucharist was akin to the "eating of things sacrificed onto Idols."[14] The Catholic Church professed the doctrine of transubstantiation, the transformation of the bread and wine to the body and blood of Christ in which there is no alteration in appearance but rather a complete change in the essence of the bread and wine. The English people held a variety of opinions on the nature of the Eucharist, ranging from transubstantiation to the merely symbolic presence of the body and blood of Christ. Although the Thirty-nine Articles of 1563,

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[12]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lxxxii-lxxxiii. More did not name the book, but he was referring to Jewel's Apologia Ecclesiae Anglicanae, a classic defense of English Protestantism. See ODCC, 726.

[13]Ball, 136.

[14]AA, 127-128.

the Church of England's statement of doctrine to settle religious controversy, denied transubstantiation, the religious settlement of Elizabeth I on the issue of the Eucharist was conceivably ambiguous enough to accommodate Romanist and Protestant alike.[15]

More evidently viewed transubstantiation as spiritual "fornication." The sacrament to him was solely symbolic, spiritual nourishment.[16] Furthermore, the Roman Church's Eucharist smacked of image worship because they venerated the wafer and gave it His name, and they "make it also a vile thing, that it shall be at the command of every Priest for whatever uses he will please to fetch it down by his transubstantiating charm."[17] Not only did the Roman Church slight Christ, it also utilized the icons of saints and angels and claimed they had miraculous potency. Their reputed "tricks" were the work of the devil. It was a slander to the saints and angels to think they would allow themselves to be worshipped and thus be "Rebels to God." True Christians, More declared, kept the Commandments of God that forbade adoring, serving or praying to an icon.[18] Like Mede, More declared that the apostasy of the Church was due to its decline into paganism and the neglect of its purpose to honor Christ alone.[19]

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[15]ODCC, 469, 1349.

[16]AA, 127-128.

[17]AA, 127-128.

[18]AA, 21, 19, 121, 138.

[19]Ball, 137.

V. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN CHURCH

From the prophecy in the books of Revelation and Daniel, More predicted the decline and eventual demise of the Roman Church because it had forsaken Christ, and he foretold the ultimate triumph of Protestantism.[1] Protestants like More apparently sought vindication in prophetic Scripture for their rejection of the Catholic Church. They wanted not only a tangible, divine seal of approval, but also they looked for a promise of victory and the assurance of a future free from the darker aspects of earthly life. At times when Catholicism seemed the most threatening, the Bible offered hope to Protestants like More.[2]

More compared the history of Europe and Christianity to the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation.[3] Daniel was seen as the Old Testament's prelude to Revelation, and More's interpretation of it fit the usual pattern.[4] Daniel sketched the history of civilization from the Babylonian Empire to the millennium. It predicted that four successive empires--the Babylonian, Persian, Greek and Roman--would in turn assume primacy. After the adoption of Christianity, the Roman Empire would be split into ten nations, later to be supplanted by the fifth monarchy of Christ, the thousand years before the end of the world. In

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[1]AA, 66, 11, 146.

[2]Toon, 25-26.

[3]AA, xvii.

[4]Ball, 80, 78.

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addition, More believed that Daniel also foretold some of the history of the Christians and the Jews, especially as it related to the coming of the Messiah. However, More said, it contained much less information on the history of the Christian Church than Revelation does, although it served to confirm many details in Revelation on the decline of the Roman Church.[5]

More's interpretation of Revelation began with the first section of the book, the letters to the "seven churches which are in Asia."[6] From an examination of the Hebrew word for Asia,[7] More concluded it to mean they were intended as divine messages to the community of worshippers who had been faithful to the spirit of primitive Christianity.[8] Protestants in general wanted a return to the simplicity of the early Church. More believed the model age for the Reformed Church should be the first four hundred years of Christianity, and he pointed out evidence in Revelation of a return to the initial posture of the Church during the millennium.[9]

The seven churches were symbols of intervals or successions in the historical span of the Christian Church from the Epiphany

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[5]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, 3-4, 55, 131; AA, 112.

[6]Revelation 1:4.

[7]More followed in the tradition of Hugh Broughton when he derived the significance of words from Hebrew.

[8]AA, 9.

[9]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, xcvii.

to the Last Judgment.[10] The persecution of early Christian martyrs typified the first two intervals of Church history. The third and fourth successions were periods of the Catholic Church's decline into impiety and lapse from grace. According to More, the Christian Church of his century had entered the fifth succession. The Reformation marked the beginning of this period and was a time when the tide would begin to turn against the Roman Church.[11]

From the prophecy of Revelation, Henry More established the age of the Catholic Church's fall into a state of apostasy, the third interval from 324 to 1242.[12] Although the conversion of Constantine to Christianity, which More accepted to be true, was a gift from God to the early Christians for their martyrdom under the pagan Roman emperors, More fixed the beginning of the decline of the Church in 324,[13] the year Constantine became sole ruler of the empire. According to More, the official adoption of Christianity as the state religion was a mixed blessing: "O that she [the Church] had not been . . . exalted so much in her own mind, and become . . . proud and cruel, as well as exalted in Power."[14]

Constantine apparently believed that Christianity could bind

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[10]AA, 5; Toon, 25.

[11]AA, 12-21, 66, 111, 146.

[12]AA, 61, 17.

[13]AA, 16, 14.

[14]AA, 61.

the Roman Empire. He even presented himself as the thirteenth apostle and acted as the supreme head of the Church.[15] Since antiquity, public worship of a deity usually depended upon the sanction of a king or government. Religion enhanced the authority of a ruler and lent him legitimacy. Often the underlying purpose of a state religion was to bolster the social order and to strengthen loyalty to the state.

More praised Constantine because he believed Constantine and some of his successors had not assumed the title of _Pontifex Maximus_.[16] The pagan Roman emperors had held that title as well as the title of Caesar. Once the Pope adopted the honorific of _Pontifex Maximus_, signifying that the papacy had begun to insinuate itself upon the secular world, the Church drifted into what More called paganochristianity.[17]

Paganochristianity can be described by two elements-- idolatry and papal infallibility. Idolatry had begun to creep into the Catholic faith at the Second Nicene Council, More asserted.[18] In 787 the Church of the Eastern Empire had held

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[15]Jeffrey Burton Russell, A History of Medieval Christianity, Prophecy & Order (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1968), 27, 31; hereafter cited as Russell.

[16]AA, 171. More also named the emperors Constantius, Valentinianus, Valens, and Gratian. Professor Drake says that Constantine did take the title. Need source.

[17]AA, 60-61, 122; Visions of the Prophet Daniel, 14.

[18]AA, 86.

this council and proposed a doctrine of transubstantiation.[19]
However, the Western Church did not officially approve the
doctrine until the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, and the
Eastern Church formally accepted it even later, in 1672.[20]

Claims of papal infallibility, More stated, were like a
declaration that the Pope was God. It was as if

> His power is absolute. . . . he can change the Nature
> of things, make something of nothing, make Injustice
> Justice, and Wrong Right. That all Laws are in his
> Breast. That he can dispense with the Canons of the
> Apostles, and with the New Testament itself. That he
> is the Cause of Causes. That it is Sacriledge to doubt
> of his Power. That he has dominion over Angels,
> Purgatory and Hell. That he is the Monarch of the
> World, and exceeds the Imperial Majesty as much as the
> Sun does the Moon. And, That he is to be adored by all
> the Potentates of the Earth.[21]

The papacy had gradually assumed power over the secular world
before making its assertion of infallibility. It had acquired
its power by training monks to do government work. The popes
would not allow the clergy to marry because a single life was
more conducive to further papal ambitions for control over the
public and private domains.[22] In addition, the papacy secured

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[19]William C. Placher, A History of Christian Theology, An
Introduction (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983), 128;
hereafter cited as Placher.

[20]ODCC, 1372.

[21]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, 41.

[22]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, 16, 204. More did not
elaborate on the motives for prohibition of clerical marriage,
whether it put church lands and profits in jeopardy or was simply
a distraction to productivity, for instance.

its position through persecution of dissenters.[23] More did not pinpoint the time when the Pope supposedly became Antichrist, but the Pope as Antichrist was first revealed in 1120 in a history of the Waldensian sect, he said.[24] More did acknowledge that not all of the popes or Catholic princes had been Antichrist, but they were sadly disadvantaged by their religion.[25]

According to More, the Antichrist had fooled all but the true Christians of the pre-Reformation period. For him, the book of Revelation foretold the age when groups like the Waldensians and the Albigensians would face martyrdom rather than deny the pure faith of the primitive Church.[26] The Catholic Church had named members of both sects heretics and had persecuted them vigorously.[27] More, like many other learned Protestants, thought the Waldensians had maintained the true faith despite the temptations of a corrupt Church. The Waldensians actually may have formed in the twelfth century, but they and some seventeenth-century Protestant historians claimed that St. Paul, who lived in the first century, was their founder, or that they

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[23]AA, 68.

[24]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, 238.

[25]AA, 254-255.

[26]AA, 17.

[27]ODCC, 30-31, 1434-1435. The Waldensians raised the ire of the Pope because they accused the Church of being tainted by temporal things. The more radical Albigensians denied the sanctity of the sacraments and several Church doctrines--"hell, purgatory, and the resurrection of the body," to name a few of their transgressions.

had risen in reaction to the age of Constantine. Many influential Englishmen recognized them as special Christians. In the seventeenth century, the persecution of the Waldensians in Savoy led the poet John Milton to write a sonnet on their plight that provoked Oliver Cromwell to call for active intervention on their behalf. As a consequence, the Duke of Savoy granted them religious freedom and desisted from any action against them for twenty years.[28] More erroneously linked the Waldensians to the Albigensians and claimed the first interval of the decline of the Catholic Church terminated in 1242 when, according to More, the Pope ended the war against the Albigensians.[29]

Persecution of the Protestants was the hallmark of the next interval of history, that is, the fourth period in the history of the Church and the second of the Roman Church's decline. To More, those accused of heresy in the pre-Reformation period after 1242 were Protestant. During this fourth succession of Christianity, true Christians began to break from Rome, and as a consequence, the political power of the papacy began to decay. It was also weakened by a drop in tithes.[30] Then, in the fifth interval, from the time of Martin Luther, the Reformed Church was established[31] to battle the corruption and evil in the Church of

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[28]ODCC, 1434-1435.

[29]AA, 17. The Church continued to persecute Albigensians, however, and had eliminated them by the end of the fourteenth century. See ODCC, 31.

[30]AA, 20, 108.

[31]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lxvi.

Rome and to vindicate Christ.

To More, the fourth interval marked the beginning of the fifth monarchy. In his Visions of the Prophet Daniel, More asserted that the millennium had commenced and that the saints had risen. One hallmark of the dawn of the millennium, according to More, was the resurrection from the dead of past Christian martyrs, the saints or witnesses. Mede had not believed that the millennium had begun or that the first resurrection of the martyrs had occurred. Therefore, More had added at the end of his commentary on Daniel a defense of his position, in opposition to Mede's opinion, that the resurrection had taken place.[32] However, in agreement with Mede, More equated the millennium to the phase of Judgment Day. The first to be judged was the Roman Church, and evidence of the verdict was the Church's loss of authority over the true Christians and the subsequent decay of power once afforded by its material wealth. This process had begun with the fourth succession of Christian history in 1242.

Now more than ever, all of the Reformed Churches must overlook their differences and unite against Rome, More therefore wrote. He apparently believed that a shared defense against Roman Catholicism was an adequate basis for the alliance of the Reformed Churches and that it would be sufficient fare to calm dissension over matters indifferent in Protestantism, thus paving the way for religious toleration within the shelter of one reformed faith. More explained that conflict and a relaxed

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[32]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lv, 268.

attitude toward Rome had made the Churches prey to popish
contamination and the plots of the popish party. For instance,
the state of the Church of England was essentially sound, yet
even it was still contaminated with popishness in its prayers,
articles of faith, and liturgy.[33]

As a whole, More stated, the Protestant nations made up the
kingdom of Christ, and their leaders--high and low, spiritual and
temporal--were Christ's ministers of government, the resurrected
saints risen. Groups like the Fifth Monarchists refused to
acknowledge that existing civil magistrates were the saints,
because they were seekers of power. If they were in command,
More declared, no doubt they then would quickly acknowledge that
the saints had risen.[34] Because they were chosen by Christ,
obedience was due to the civil authorities in matters
indifferent, said More, that was no less than early Christians
had paid to their rulers. Indeed, the early Christians had the
disadvantage of rendering obedience to pagan Caesars.

More warned the English against "the least blemish or taint
of Disloyalty to their lawful Sovereign, upon any account
whatsoever, but especially upon a Religious one" and admonished
that the people must have

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[33]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lxviii, lxxviii, lxxx,
lviii, liii-liv. However, writing informally to his friend Anne
Conway two years before, he called the Protestant Churches
"wanton [sic] heedlesse and unthankfull" to God and ranted "that
it may be just with God to cast a dunghill upon a Dunghill and to
overthrow Protestantism with Poperie" (in Nicolson, 447).

[34]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lv, lxii, lx.

> Faith and Patience to bear all tryals and hardships, as the old Primitive Christians did, whose eyes being lift up Heavenward, and their feet wholly in that path, by Providence stumbled on the Imperial Crown, the Emperour at last becoming a professed Christian.[35]

This statement carried the implication that his sovereign Charles II had been tainted by Roman Catholicism, and More was addressing common fears that the prospective reign of Charles's Catholic brother and successor to the throne, James II, would be another time of tribulation for true Christians in England.

In 1678, shortly after Titus Oates had uncovered the Popish Plot, a movement had begun in Parliament to exclude James from his hereditary right to the throne in favor of a Protestant successor. Charles attempted to block exclusionary bills and to appease the opposition by intensifying the enforcement of oppressive laws against English Catholics. Finally in 1681, the year More published his commentary on Daniel, Charles was compelled to dissolve Parliament, and to back him up, he kept the army in wait and on the alert.[36]

Popular reaction was in favor of the king, enabling Charles to take tyrannical steps against his enemies. Charles initiated a series of arrests of his opponents, and many went into hiding or exile as a consequence. He also took measures to ensure that influential government positions would be occupied only by his supporters. By the time of his death, Charles had a firm hold at

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[35]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, lxxxviii-lxxxix.

[36]Lockyer, 341-346.

all levels of government, ensuring the succession of James.[37] Henry More died a little over one year before James II, the Catholic king of a Protestant nation, was deposed.

More obviously saw the last years of Charles's reign as an affliction upon the people. He exhorted them to resign themselves to God's will. God's plan had included the persecution of early Christians, yet they had been raised from their torment by Constantine. Likewise, More expected God's plan to include the deliverance of the English people and all Protestants into the golden age.

More believed that the New Jerusalem would be erected here on earth. At the end of the millennium, Christ would create a new heaven and a new earth, where there would be no pain or sadness. The New Jerusalem was symbolic of a fully purified Church. It was not a city, but a polity of the people, in which the spirit of Christ prevailed. There would be elders to guide the people, but the blessed Philadephian Church would have no need for king or emperor, and Christ's laws would bind humankind.[38]

For More, then, the millennium was a period that had commenced in 1242 with the judgment of the Roman Catholic Church. As part of God's heavenly design, the witnesses had risen to lead the faithful through a period of trial and tribulation, through persecution and tests of their faith. The saints were God's

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[37]Lockyer, 347-349.

[38]AA, 214, 216, 219, 222, 230-231.

appointed governors, alone knowing and following His master plan, to lead the people to the strength of faith worthy of the golden age, the final chapter of the millennium and of earthly existence as people knew it. Then, Christ would return to the world to purge it of all sinners, creating anew the state of humankind before its Fall from grace.

VI. THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Before the golden age, two other milestones were expected to occur: the conversion of the Jews to Christianity and the subjugation of Rome and Italy by the Ottoman Empire. More claimed that the Turks and the conquered Romanists would be converted to the reformed faith, thus restoring both to Christendom.[1] Most English Protestants like More believed that the final war of the world would be with Turkey.[2] More spoke of the events of Armageddon in cryptic terms, leaving the reader with nothing of a useful nature for this study, but both he and Ralph Cudworth dealt at length with the conversion of Jews.

Conversion of the Jews to the Christian faith before Christ's return was orthodox thought among English Protestants, and it was standard to think a general conversion was imminent. Many also surmised that, once converted, the Jews would return to Palestine.[3] There was another way in which the term Jew was employed, however. Since early in the Reformation, the conversion of the Jews often meant the rebirth of Roman Catholics into the Protestant faith. Thomas Brightman and Henry More are examples of theologians who used the word in this manner.[4]

There were also two basic ways in which English Protestants looked upon the book of Daniel. It told the story of Daniel and

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[1]Visions of the Prophet Daniel, 214.

[2]Ball, 102; and AA, 202.

[3]Ball, 107, 152.

[4]Firth, 170-171.

his three companions in the reigns of the kings Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar, and Darius the Mede, during the exile of the Jewish people to Babylon. It also relates the visions which Daniel received during the reigns of Belshazzar, Darius, and Cyrus.[5] Almost all biblical interpreters or students of Hebrew tackled Daniel, resulting in fresh interpretations or confirmations of the old ones. Some followed in the tradition of Brightman and considered it to be a Jewish version of Revelation and a history of the Jews until the Second Coming of Christ. Revelation, on the other hand, contained the history of the Gentiles, also a complete account ending with the Last Day. Despite Brightman's use of the word Jew to denote Roman Catholics, he nevertheless believed that the Christian and the Jewish Churches would merge in the New Jerusalem.[6] Henry More concurred with the Brightman approach.[7]

Cudworth fell into the alternate school of thought that judged Daniel to be a history of the true Jews from the period of the Babylonian Captivity to the birth of Jesus, the seventy weeks of Daniel's visions. During the reign of Elizabeth, Hugh Broughton had pioneered this version in England as a result of

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[5]ODCC, 371.

[6]Firth, 172-173, 153-154.

[7]More, however, contradicted himself on this point. In Apocalypseos Apocalypsis, he claimed the Jews would join the Christians at the beginning of the thousand-year reign of Christ (195). In Visions of the Prophet Daniel, his eschatology was more fully developed, and he apparently viewed the conversion of the Jewish people as part of a later stage of the millennium.

his chronological approach to biblical prophecy. Cudworth, like Broughton before him,[8] had determined the seventy weeks of Daniel to be the 490 years before the arrival of the Messiah.[9]

Cudworth's "Commentary on the Seventy Weeks of Daniel" survives in manuscript form at the British Library. Cudworth filled much of two oversized notebooks with his discourse. In a fairly orderly manner, Cudworth preceded the main text of each chapter with outlines and pages of preliminary calculations. His formal hand is a combination of the Elizabethan and Italian styles[10] and is reasonably legible throughout. However, in many portions Cudworth abandoned his clear handwriting, mainly in those pieces intended as preparatory notes to the text, and they are crabbed and often indecipherable. Likewise, lengthy sections are written in Latin and in Greek or Hebrew.

Cudworth, like Broughton and the Jews themselves, identified the principle Beast of Daniel as Antiochus Epiphanes Longimanus[11] (d. 163 B.C.), king of Syria from 175 B.C. Although the popular tradition maintains that the book was written by Daniel during the exile, most authorities believe it was actually composed during the reign of Antiochus as inspiration to persecuted Jews. Syrian Jews had violently resisted the plan of Antiochus to

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[8]Firth, 153-154.

[9]Ralph Cudworth, "Commentary on the Seventy Weeks of Daniel," (need pg. #), Add. Mss. 4986-4987, British Library, London; hereafter cited as "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel."

[10]Passmore, 108.

[11]"The Seventy Weeks of Daniel," 305; and Firth, 159.

achieve political unity by promoting Greek culture in his kingdom. Consequently, Antiochus attempted to eliminate Judaism, a course of action that resulted in the Maccabean revolt and Antiochus's retreat to Persia, where he died.[12]

Most Protestants associated the Beast of Daniel with the papacy. Those like Cudworth who did not were primarily concerned with inducing the Jews to convert to Christianity.[13] With his commentary on Daniel, Cudworth apparently hoped to convince the Jewish people that God had spoken through the book of Daniel to tell them that the Messiah would be Jesus. Page after page is filled with tedious calculations matched to the events of the book and to the corresponding secular history in order to show that the revelation of the seventy weeks began with the Babylonian Captivity and was fulfilled in the birth of Christ.

In the 1650s, some Hebrew scholars announced the coming of the Messiah was near. Technically, the Jews and the Christians could say the Messiah had not yet appeared to the Jews, and thus the Second Coming for the Christians would be the unveiling of the Messiah to the Jews. In 1655, the Hebrew scholar Menasseh Ben Israel petitioned Oliver Cromwell to re-admit the Jewish people to England.[14] His exposition of Daniel of the same year followed upon a long tradition of Jewish commentaries that

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[12]ODCC, 64, 371-372.

[13]Firth, 159.

[14]An edict of Edward I in 1290 had excluded the Jews from England (Ball, 149n).

reached conclusions similar to those of English Protestants like Cudworth.[15] The English government considered their readmission, thinking that this might mark the beginning of the long-awaited conversion of the Jews.[16]

Cromwell apparently favored the petition, and in November he called a conference to consider granting the Jews permission to enter England as citizens. The conference was attended by the Council of State and twenty-eight advisors,[17] composed of lawyers, merchants, and clergymen.[18] Cudworth was appointed an advisor to the conference.[19] For the prophecy to be realized, both Christian and Jewish theologians acknowledged that the Jewish people had to be dispersed throughout Christendom, then converted to Christianity, and finally returned to the Holy Land. Members of the conference considered whether the prophecy could be fulfilled if the Jewish people had not dispersed into England. After a month of discussion, Cromwell named Peter Sterry,

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[15]Ball, 147. Although Cudworth placed a great deal of emphasis upon chronology, his "The Seventy Weeks of Daniel" also was a response to the works of several Jewish scholars. A source that recently came to my attention, David S. Katz's Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), reviewed their eschatological works. Unfortunately, at this late date, I must reserve further investigation into the subject for another time.

[16]Ball, 149.

[17]Vivian De Sola Pinto, Peter Sterry, Platonist and Puritan (New York: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1968), 30; hereafter cited as Pinto.

[18]Ball, 149.

[19]Powicke, 113.

Cudworth's Cambridge colleague, along with two others, to support the effort of those in favor of Menasseh Ben Israel's petition;[20] however, by end of December the conference closed without reaching a consensus.[21]

Cudworth may have written his commentary on Daniel during this period, preparatory to a conversion of Jews newly admitted to England, and his stance on toleration probably would have inclined him to favor their access to English shores. Perhaps his manuscript went unpublished because the matter was soon forgotten, the words and sentiments assigned to a dusty corner.

[20]Pinto, 30-31.

[21]Ball, 149.

VII. THE LATITUDINARIANS

Cudworth and More were "first-generation" latitudinarians who linked new science, or natural philosophy, with spiritual, political and social aims. Millenarianism was also fundamental to latitudinarian goals and thought.[1] Latitudinarianism evolved from the pursuit of two interrelated goals: a desire to maintain the traditional framework of an authoritarian society linked with the objective of permitting a measure of liberty within that structure.[2] It was essentially a religious movement founded upon the promotion of natural theology, and it employed the development of modern scientific thought to resolve issues in religion, politics and society, all of which constituted one fabric in the seventeenth-century mind.[3] At its foundation, latitudianarianism was a plea for toleration.[4]

The acceptance and promotion of the new science was what set the Cambridge Platonists apart from other orthodox millenarians.[5] Churchmen like Henry More and Ralph Cudworth were instrumental in explaining science in religious terms and thus making it more

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[1]Margaret C. Jacob, The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), 22, 19; hereafter cited as Jacob.

[2]James Hinsdale Elson, John Hales of Eton (New York: King's Crown Press, 1948), 2.

[3]Jacob, 30, 15-16.

[4]G. R. Cragg, From Puritanism to the Age of Reason (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 59; hereafter cited as FPAR.

[5]Rosalie L. Colie, Light and Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 5; hereafter cited as Colie.

respectable in the eyes of those who saw it as tampering with God's plan or as a denial of God's existence and supreme authority. The Cambridge Platonists employed science to support the establishment of the Church upon the essentials of natural religion. In the seventeenth century, natural philosophers were redefining the knowledge of nature according to uniform, unchanging principles. The Cambridge Platonists borrowed this innovative approach, that fit so well with Platonic thought as well, to demonstrate that religion also was a stable, orderly and regulated system. They believed God had created religion with a harmonious design, like He had for nature, that, once discovered, would allow mankind to cooperate fully with God's plan and would generate correct moral behavior in society. Ultimately, it also would bring peace and unity to Protestantism.[6]

The motive of the Cambridge Platonists in promoting science and imposing its features on Christianity was to prepare the English people for the millennium and the Second Advent of Christ. Protestant unity was elemental to this readying process, and the two obstacles to solidarity were sinfulness and the Roman Antichrist. The leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were on a continual crusade to bring about the downfall of the reformed faith, they feared, by contaminating Protestantism with its wicked ways. Meanwhile England's general lack of resistance to evil and its consequent iniquity eventually would anger God, and

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[6]Jacob, 15-16, 60-61, 18.

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in His wrath he would remove His favor from the English people.[7]

As discussed earlier in this paper, the Cambridge Platonists professed that the cumulative outcome of the proper exercise of each individual's faculty of reason would be religious comprehension and better social morality. This assurance in effect promoted an exceptional level of individualism and personal liberty, contrary to the implicit demands of the standard authoritarianism of the age. The Cambridge Platonists, with their brand of religion, when stripped bare, solicited an approval of unprecedented latitude for personal expression, putting a great deal of trust in individual integrity. The call for religious toleration was by extension a call for political liberty.[8]

The Cambridge Platonists were the first to be called "latitude men" by their contemporaries. At the beginning it was a term of reproach that carried an accusation of carelessness in religious and political matters,[9] but by the end of the century, many of the Cambridge Platonists' latitudinarian successors dominated the hierarchy of the Church of England and the label denoted respect.[10] By then, the leaders of the nation held the new science in greater esteem and judged religious toleration the unavoidable path to bring peace and order to society. Almost all

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[7]Jacob, 19, 71, 100.

[8]FPAR, 46-47, 59.

[9]Powicke, 38.

[10]FPAR, 61.

of the second-generation latitudinarians were educated at Cambridge or personally knew More or Cudworth.[11] The latitudinarians who came out of Cambridge were taught by Cudworth and More at Christ's College or John Smith at Queen's College and most likely heard Whichcote's sermons at Cambridge's Holy Trinity Church.[12]

Although many of the latitudinarians were clerics, two of the most famous of the latitudinarians were not churchmen: John Locke and Sir Isaac Newton. Newtonian science strengthened the quest for church comprehension and a natural theology.[13] Newton was the first to explain the basic theories of planetary and astral motion, the culmination of more than a century of scientific investigation and speculation by Newton and his predecessors. According to the epistemology Newton established, natural laws are universal, uniform and unchanging. This outlook formed the basis of modern scientific thought and secured the foundations of natural theology. The acceptance of this development in natural religion and philosophy encouraged the inclination to apply natural laws to all other areas of knowledge in the eighteenth century. This type of methodology had been

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[11]Jacob, 34. Examples of second-generation latitudinarian leaders are Richard Bentley, Samuel Clarke, William Whiston, John Harris, Samuel Clarke, and William Derham. Many others could be named (see Jacob, 143-162). The first generation included clerics like Edward Stillingfleet, John Moore, John Evelyn, and Thomas Tenison, in addition to the Cambridge Platonists.

[12]FPAR, 63.

[13]Jacob, 73.

steadily maturing throughout the 1600s. In the latter part of the century, for instance, the theoretician John Locke produced his ideas about the human capacity to know and the proper form of government in a formulaic manner that mirrored the Newtonian approach.

Newton graduated from Trinity College, Cambridge, where he served as a fellow from 1667 to 1694.[14] Upon his death in 1727, he left behind a great number of volumes on a variety of subjects other than physics and mathematics. Many works were treatments of world geography, chemistry, theology, mythology, and prophecy, for example. His interest in biblical prophecy and chronology began during his student years at Cambridge, and he studied and wrote about these subjects throughout his adult life.[15]

Like his friend, Henry More, Newton was a millenarian. Newton's Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse was published in 1733, six years after his death. Apparently, the text formed only a small portion of a larger work. Frank E. Manuel proposed that Newton was planning a complete history of civilization in a series of volumes to prove the accuracy of his explication of biblical prophecy. Newton's interpretations were fairly standard and followed in the tradition of Joseph Mede. He filled pages with painstaking chronological and historical detail. Although he did not dwell

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[14]ODCC, 950.

[15]Frank E. Manuel, Isaac Newton Historian (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1963), 1, 9; hereafter cited as Manuel.

upon the events at the end of the world, like More, he believed he was adding to the accumulation of knowledge of biblical prophecy. Newton was more interested in showing that history operated according to a pattern mimicking the response of planets to the physical laws of nature. The key to the system lay in biblical prophecy. He believed, however, that the apocalypse was near, and he thought the Jewish people would regather at Jerusalem soon. Newton also prayed in expectation of the Second Coming and Christ's Kingdom.[16]

Any clear-cut evidence of More's influence on Newton's eschatology is uncertain. The two men were undeniably good friends and freely exchanged theological ideas. Because of the obviously close relationship between More and Newton, Manuel found it surprising that in his Observations Newton lauded the contribution of Joseph Mede to English eschatology but gave no credit to More. More's works on Revelation and Daniel were part of Newton's library,[17] but apparently More and Newton did not see eye to eye on some points of interpretation. In a letter written in 1680 to John Sharp, a former pupil and later the Archbishop of York, More remarked upon some peculiarities of Newton's synchronization of the symbols of Revelation. However, true to the Cambridge Platonists' theory on the individual use of reason, More respected Newton's reliance upon his own spiritual resources

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[16]Manuel, 14, 145-146, 150, 163, 165.

[17]Manuel, 290n-291n, 145-146, 288n.

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and his reluctance to abandon his own insights.[18]

The lack of any mystical quality in the works of Newton was probably the key point of his divergence from the apocalyptic thought of More. Newton visualized the events, characters, and objects of prophecy in mathematical terms. Thus, "his passion for factual detail shriveled the past to a chronological table and a list of place names."[19] To Newton this pattern was firm evidence of God the Creator. Just as God had blessed the universe with His divine touch and set the universe in motion, so He had initiated a design for history, driven by His heavenly force. Matching biblical prophecy to historical activity was evidence of God's constant connection with mankind.[20]

The absence of mysticism was one of the important characteristics of second-generation latitudinarians that divided them in thought from their masters. The early latitudinarianism of the Cambridge Platonists was in accord with the Platonic philosophy of innate ideas.[21] Those universals intimately joined man to the true reality of God. Man's spark of divinity was like a magical gift that facilitated his grasp for spiritual heights, yet reaching those heights delivered only a dim rendering of God's reality. Newton, on the other hand, rejected the concept

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[18]Nicolson, 478-479.

[19]Manuel, 10.

[20]Manuel, 147.

[21]FPAR, 51, 34.

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of innate ideas.[22] He believed in universals, but he assumed the truth of God, that rested in the systems of nature and revealed religion, could be discovered with the use of reason and described in the precise terms of mathematics, the language of God.

Newton's concept of reason and knowledge was akin to John Locke's. All ideas are sensations derived from human experience through the channels of the senses, Locke declared. Reason, a God-given gift, is a tool that enables people to understand and bring order to sensations. The human mind begins as a blank slate, that becomes filled by a lifetime of experience, and it is not divinely stamped with innate ideas. If everyone had access to the absolute truth of innate ideas, all men should be able to come to agreement. On the contrary, men cannot realize complete accord because they are the products of individual experience. Locke also explained that knowledge derived only from the senses necessarily limits the human ability to know, thus justifying why people can perceive God but not know Him fully. Mathematics, Locke believed, was the surest means for mankind to come to an understanding of the supreme reality and certainty of truth in God.[23] Newton applied mathematical principles to biblical prophecy and saw history as the accumulation of the total of human experience, the extent of all that was known. Hence, if he

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[22]Manuel, 147.

[23]John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding in Edwin A. Burtt, ed., The English Philosophers from Bacon to Mill (New York: Randon House, Inc., 1939), 248-9, 300, 327, 345.

was little concerned with the unfulfilled predictions of prophecy, it was because humankind had not yet lived through the corresponding events.

Locke's concept of reason identified best with that held by Benjamin Whichcote, who was Locke's favorite preacher during the time that both men resided in London.[24] However, it was during his college years that he first came in contact with the ideas of the Cambridge latitudinarians,[25] probably through his mentor John Owen, an Oxford theologian and an early advocator of freedom of worship.[26] Locke studied at Oxford from 1652 to 1660.[27] He later became friends with Newton, Henry More, and Ralph Cudworth while in London, and their writings were included in his library. Locke was also a Bible commentator. He thought Newton was highly proficient in the understanding of Scripture, and the major part of Newton's correspondence with John Locke during the 1690s dealt

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[24]Powicke, 200. Whichcote was ousted from Cambridge at the Restoration and in 1668 he became vicar of St. Lawrence Jewry in London. From 1666 to 1675, Locke's primary place of residence was London.

[25]Powicke, 200.

[26]John Locke, A Letter Concerning Toleration, with an Introduction by Patrick Romanell (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1955), 5; hereafter cited as A Letter.

[27]Powicke, 199-200. A moderate approach to religion also had its tradition at Oxford within the Great Tew Circle of the 1630s. Associates of the Great Tew Circle were calling for the need for greater Church unity by relying upon the essentials of religion. They also saw the advancement of better morality as the antidote to dogmatism. Like the Cambridge Platonists, the Great Tew Circle responded to the perceived threat of Roman Catholicism and resisted the concept of papal infallibility or the inerrancy of church authorities in England (Shapiro, 80).

with the meaning of biblical prophecy and with early Church history.[28] Of the two theologians, More and Cudworth, apparently the latter had more intimate contact with Locke. Cudworth's daughter, Lady Damaris Masham, had a longterm relationship and correspondence with Locke. Even if Locke did not have regular, direct contact with Cudworth, which appears not to be the case, he had ample opportunity to absorb his ideas through his association with Lady Masham.[29]

Locke began his correspondence with Cudworth's daughter as early as 1681, and after 1691 Locke resided permanently with Lady Masham and her husband. In Ralph Cudworth, An Interpretation, J. A. Passmore noted striking similarities between Cudworth's True Intellectual System and Locke's Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Essay Concerning Human Understanding. Locke never gave Cudworth credit for his ideas, but Passmore pointed out that Locke was ever reluctant to attribute his ideas to anyone other than himself. It was not a matter of pride or egotism but rather was a consequence of Locke's philosophy that the individual determines truth. However, Passmore was certain that Locke was the triumphant champion of the Cambridge Platonists' campaign for rationality and toleration that would decisively color the spirit of the eighteenth century.[30]

However, the latitudinarianism of Locke and the Cambridge

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[28]Manuel, 44, 141, 2.

[29]Powicke, 200.

[30]Passmore, 92-95.

Platonists differed considerably in some significant ways. For one, the Platonic concept of innate ideas, put into practice, was susceptible to abuses that the Lockian system avoided. Each person, they claimed, had access to the uniform knowledge of innate ideas that constituted true, elemental knowledge. Religious convictions could also be reduced to fundamentals that would allow all Christians to worship under the canopy of one Church. Presumably, the individual exercise of reason eventually would lead the English community to basic accord. But this outlook left ample room for assertions of infallible certainty. Any dissenter from the Church of England could claim to have genuine knowledge of God and His requirements of all true Christians. The consequence of such certitude could easily lead to zealous disagreement and sectarianism.

Like the Cambridge Platonists, Locke believed in the merits of religious toleration to help restore peace and order to society, but he recognized the futility of comprehension. All human knowledge was uncertain, based upon opinion, and most theology was little more than personal speculation about "nice and intricate matters that exceed the capacity of ordinary understandings." According to Locke, variety in religion must be allowed because the absolute truth will never be agreed upon by the whole. People cannot conform because they have different opinions based upon different life experiences. Locke supported the need for religious toleration, but unlike the Cambridge Platonists, he conceded that toleration must be extended to

groups outside of the Church of England.[31]

Locke took the matter yet another step apart from the thought of the Cambridge Platonists: he called for a separation of church and state. The Cambridge Platonists and their contemporaries saw the two as a whole in which there was a separation of powers. Henry More's idea of paradise maintained that sense of wholeness. He had envisioned a polity of the people in the New Jerusalem that thrived within the "state" of the Church, the community of true Christians, where no separation of powers needed to exist. Locke saw the state in a another way. It was the protector of man's right to survival and of the means to his survival in this world. The role of the Church, on the other hand, was to guide people to virtue and piety. Both could serve to check immorality, but faith was not something that could be forced by church or state. People were bound to obey the laws that ensured the maintenance of civilization and to abide by those that God had specifically revealed to the human race, but beyond those laws, each individual was responsible for his own salvation and relationship to God.[32]

Because of their mystical tendencies, of all the latitudinarians, the Cambridge Platonists struck the most spiritual note. However, at least in some part a result of their

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[31]A Letter, 7. However, Locke qualified who should be tolerated. Excluded from his blanket of protection were Roman Catholics, atheists, citizens of other countries, and those who would disrupt the peace and good order (A Letter, 10).

[32]A Letter, 13-17.

quest to strengthen religious unity by advocating toleration, enabled by natural laws and the light of reason, subsequent thinkers like Newton and Locke stripped religion of its mystery. Despite Newton's obvious reverence for the Deity, Newton revealed to humankind the sterile splendour of God with his mathematical imagery of a vacuous, mechanical universe. Only the traces of God could be found in the workings of the universe, nature or history; the Newtonian system tended to nullify the dynamic, personal God of the Middle Ages in a void. It stressed the physical world, an emphasis that was embraced in the eighteenth century[33] and overshadowed the supernatural aspect of the cosmos. Soon, reason was no longer a divine spark, the candle of the Lord. After Locke, it was a useful tool to reach commonsensical decisions.[34] The truth of knowledge, the accretions of experience, was limited by man's necessary dependence upon the test of probability. Through the exercise of reason, one could measure and judge according to the level of probability, but one could never attain absolute certitude. Presumably, the means to knowledge was yet another system of God, like history and the universe, which He had created and set into perpetual motion, thereafter requiring no intervention or maintenance. God was the Creator, but the active, intimate, mystical God of the Cambridge Platonists essentially was gone. Men like Locke and Newton inadvertently dissected the world, pruned off a once-vital

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[33]FPAR, 53.

[34]FPAR, 37.

portion of the cosmos, and virtually removed God from it.

Despite these exceptional differences, the latitudinarians shared the same basic concerns and a propensity to seek the help of the Bible. However, while the power of science and self-reliance continued on an ascending path as the eighteenth century advanced, the earlier ardor for millenarianism soon was delegated to the realm of the eccentric. Shortly after Newton's death, for instance, his friends and colleagues debated whether to publish some of his religious works. His clerical friends thought their publication would prove that Newton was a good Christian and, therefore, that science was compatible with Christianity. Members of the Royal Society, on the other hand, thought that his nonscientific writings would act to the detriment of a rational, physically oriented science.[35]

The integral concern of millenarianism to improve morality remained strong, and the English people and their leaders continued to press for better social behavior. People were beginning to view civilization and history as progressively growing toward perfection. A recent writer speculated that the modern theory of progress stemmed in part from the concern of seventeenth-century theologians like the Cambridge Platonists and other latitudinarians to prepare the nation for the Second Coming.[36] On the other hand, the birth and growth of modern

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[35]Manuel, 4-5.

[36]E. L. Tuveson, <u>Millennium and Utopia: A Study in the Background of the Idea of Progress</u> (New York: , 1964), 134.

science alone may have instilled confidence in the idea of progress. Greater scientific knowledge and the resulting technological advantages depended upon progressive knowledge of how things operated.

In The Newtonians and the English Revolution, Margaret C. Jacob denied the connection between the idea of progress and millenarianism and favored instead the simple explanation that interest in biblical interpretation was a psychological response to an insecure political situation. She believed that the Cambridge Platonists were the first to stimulate the interest in millenarianism among subsequent latitudinarians.[37] Cudworth and More began their academic careers three years before the outbreak of the Civil War in 1642, and the political and religious issues that led up to the war were not adequately resolved until the Glorious Revolution of 1688. The results of the events of 1688-1689 were constitutional monarchy and a greater level of religious toleration. After the Revolution and nearly fifty years of divisive unrest, the latitudinarians were called upon to fill the ranks of church leadership because of their temperate stance and their commitment to establishing a sound Christian society. England settled into a new era of religious and political moderation and relatively unbroken ease that had no need for apocalyptic answers. After 1720, the orthodox millenarianism of the seventeenth century died out with the last generation of latitudinarians who had experienced the disruption

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[37]Jacob, 139.

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of the Revolution. However, significant traces endured: a high

regard for science and the faculty of reason and trust in

moderation in political and ecclesiastical affairs.[38]

[38]Jacob, 139, 107, 72, 140.

CONCLUSION

The long-neglected apocalyptic writings of the Cambridge Platonists and other latitudinarians have provided a new source of investigation to enhance the modern understanding of the progression of ideas that built the profile of Enlightenment thought. Although millenarianism died out as Enlightenment thought became ingrained in English society, modern historians now recognize its valid, intermediary role in the development of the eighteenth-century outlook.

The millenarianism of the Cambridge Platonists had two basic goals: to restore peace and order in England and other Protestant countries and to put English society on a path toward its grand destiny as they saw it foretold in the Bible. The grant of religious toleration and the beginning of greater national stability came in 1689, the year after Ralph Cudworth, the last of the Cambridge Platonists, had died. England was now ready to face a noble future, although that future held in wait not the Kingdom of God but rather a vast, earthly empire instead. Belief in the imminence of Christ's Second Coming endured, however, for almost a half of a century after religious toleration was made official. The establishment of natural theology and toleration in religion was the legacy of the millenarianism of the Cambridge Platonists, ensured after they were gone by their writings and by the lives of their students who later became the nation's leaders.

The Cambridge Platonists ultimately achieved their goals but

only after a younger generation of men had digested their brand of thought and modified it to satisfy the demands and trends of the post-Newtonian scientific age. Once it had served its purpose, millenarianism was then dislodged from the collective public mind and relegated to the realm of the bizarre.

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