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## The Kingdom, the Power, & the Glory: The Millennial Impulse in Early American Literature: General Introduction

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*The Kingdom,  
The Power,  
& The Glory*

*The Millennial Impulse in  
Early American Literature*

*Introduced and Edited by*

***Reiner Smolinski***

*Georgia State University*

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*Note: The page numbers given above refer to the print edition of the anthology, published in 1998 by Kendall-Hunt. In the versions of the text presented online in the "Electronic Texts in American Studies" series, each text is paginated separately. Most texts have been reset using contemporary seventeenth-century typefaces and ornaments, to reflect the look and feel of the original documents.*

## Preface

In the past two decades, many useful anthologies of American literature have appeared that have tried to come to terms with the revolutionary transformation of the literary canon. If early anthologies by and large focused on the authors canonized by Charles E. Richardson, Moses Coit Tyler, Vernon Louis Parrington, Perry Miller, F. O. Matthiessen, or by the Modern Language Association through its research guide *Eight American Authors*, recent scholarship has almost uniformly undone what critics have called the “dead-white-male-author” principle—better known as the “classics.” We know better now than to leave such important determinations to a handful of individuals who have dominated the discipline in the past. Unfortunately, the demons thus exorcised from the house of American literature have inexorably returned by another door, albeit in a different guise and with greater vehemence. Today’s college anthologies are no less driven by political and ideological agendas than those that determined canonization in the past. The presently ruling parameters are class, gender, and race. As much as the academy has welcomed this invigorating change, the selection of representative authors has not become any easier. What further complicates matters is that in trying to do justice to ever-increasing numbers of worthy authors, editorial boards are caught between the Scylla and Charybdis of ideological and economic exigencies. Suffice it to say that in expanding the size of their volumes to meet the current demands of the marketplace, compilers of anthologies are forced to make painstaking decisions about just how many paragraphs of any given author can be included. No matter how well-intentioned, the final “product” is often less than satisfying in the classroom. Students and teachers are now confronted with ever shorter fragments—even snippets of a few lines—that require more time for contextualization and background than time to discuss the selections themselves.

This anthology, *The Kingdom, The Power, & The Glory: The Millennial Impulse in Early American Literature*, seeks to redress some of these problems by providing a thematic approach to one of colonial America’s most trenchant ideologies: the rising glory of America. The selections included below represent a wide spread of authors and texts that discuss America’s place in the millenarian cosmologies from the colonial to the Federalist period (c. 1600-1800). The texts address such issues as the great migration, the transformation of the howling wilderness into an agricultural Eden, the jeremiad, King Philip’s War, Salem witchcraft, the Great Awakening, the French-Indian War, the Revolution, and Manifest Destiny. The mortar for these seemingly unrelated building blocks is provided in my introduction, which discusses the colonists’ millenarian sense of mission and destiny within the progressively unfolding cycles (or rather gyres) of a historical continuum.

Except for the extracts from Joseph Mede’s *Works*, George Morton’s *Mourt’s Relation*, and Cotton Mather’s *Magnalia Christi America*, all selections are reprinted in their entirety. The excerpted selections represent coherent units of arguments that can stand on their own. Unless otherwise indicated in the biographical essay preceding each entry, all texts are based on their first editions taken from microfiche or microfilm. The tendency to “improve” texts by modernizing spelling, punctuation, and other conventions determined by the MLA Handbook or the Chicago Manual of Style seems to imply that today’s generation of students and scholars lacks intelligence or dedication that only a modernized text can redress. For this reason, I have retained archaic spellings (even misspellings), punctuation, and letters in an attempt to catch the flavor of the original text in as far as modern computer technology allows. Thus, I have retained the archaic conventions of using the letters *u* for *v*, and *v* for *u*, and *ß* for *ss* (except for long-tailed *f* for *s*). I have further elected to retain Ezra Stiles’ unusually inconsistent upper- and lowercasing of names like “athens,” “america,” or “sparta,” which smacks of Noah Webster’s endeavor to establish a separate convention of American orthography. For

as in a foreign poem translated into the English vernacular, the translation (like a modernization of spelling) loses the subtle nuances of the original.

In preparing this anthology for the press, I have incurred many debts from students, friends, and colleagues. I wish to thank the members of my doctoral seminar on “The Rising Glory of America” at Georgia State University (winter quarter 1998) for hunting down many typographical errors and for providing much needed feedback; Anna Paige Rogers for typing and proofreading several selections during the early stages of the project; Sophia Panaghis for devoting many hours in collating my typescript with the original; Jeffrey Rumiano for saving me much time by writing the biographical entries of Bradstreet, Carmichael, Drayton, Keteltas, Mourt, Sewall, and Wigglesworth; and Tanya Caldwell (who has since become my spouse) for spending hours upon hours in helping me collate typescripts and microfilm copies, for improving untold stylistic vagaries, and for supporting me during this time of trial. Without her faithful assistance, this project would not have been completed on time. Thanks, dear friend! Last but not least, I wish to mention my siblings Ute, Gudrun, Horst, and Irene, to whom this book is affectionately dedicated.

Atlanta, January 1998

Reiner Smolinski

#### **Preface to the Electronic Text Edition**

Since the first edition went out print after a short run of only three years, I have elected to make the various texts printed in this anthology accessible to whoever is interested in millennialist themes in early American literature, history, and theology, in the “Electronic Texts in American Studies” series, hosted at <http://digitalcommons.unl.edu>. Some errata have been silently corrected, and a section of “Questions for Discussions, Research, and Writing” has been added.

Atlanta, July, 2007

Reiner Smolinski



***The Kingdom, The Power, & The Glory:  
The Millennial Impulse in Early American Literature***

**General Introduction**

The discovery and settlement of the New World is perhaps not entirely attributable to the geopolitical accidents of Ottoman expansionism that blocked the lucrative trading routes with India and China. Recent scholarship has established that religious convictions and millenarian cosmologies constituted significant factors in the exploration of the New World. Such is the case with the famous explorer, the Genoese Christopher Columbus (1451-1506), Admiral of the Sea, whose religious convictions played a vital function in his "Enterprise of the Indies." In popular tradition, Columbus has come down to us as an individualistic, self-reliant hero, who with science and maps at his finger tips persuaded Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain to send him westward across the Atlantic to discover a new route to India and China. No matter how entrenched, this romantic tale only tells part of the story. Historians have revealed that in the wake of Spain's conquest of Moorish Granada, Columbus saw himself as a latter-day *Christoferens*, or Christ-bearer, on an errand to the ends of the habitable earth: "Of the new heaven and of the new earth, which Our Lord made . . . He made me the messenger and He showed me where to go."<sup>1</sup> His little known *Book of Prophecies* records Columbus' deeply held eschatological beliefs, his calculations about the world's cataclysmic end in 1656, excerpts from Franciscan and Joachimite millennialism, plans for liberating Jerusalem from Muslim overlords and, above all, lengthy passages from Pierre d'Ailly's *Imago mundi* (1410) and *Opuscula* (1414) about how astrology could be made serviceable for interpreting prophecies. In short, Christopher Columbus was swept up in the millennialist fervor of the period which promised that the expulsion of the Muslims from Spain would usher in the recovery of Jerusalem, the conversion of all peoples, and the last period of the reign of Antichrist, terminating in Christ's Second Coming. In the events of these last days, Columbus argued in his fourth voyage, the Spanish monarchy would play a key role: "Jerusalem and Mount Sion are to be rebuilt by the hand of a Christian; who this is to be, God declares by the mouth of His prophet . . . [Psalm 14:7]. Abbot Joachin said that he was to come from Spain. St. Jerome showed the way of it to the holy lady. The emperor of Cathay [China], some time since, sent for wise men to instruct him in the faith of Christ. Who will offer himself for this work? If Our Lord bring me back to Spain, I pledge myself, in the name of God, to bring him there in safety" (*Four Voyages* 2:104). Seen in this light, Ferdinand Colon's philopietist description of his renowned father as Christ-bearer who "carried the grace of the Holy Ghost to that New World . . . that the Indian nations might become dwellers in the triumphant Church of Heaven" reveals a much different aspect of Columbus' mythic image than the popular tradition of the discoverer as romantic

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<sup>1</sup> *The Four Voyages of Columbus*, edited by Cecil Jane. 1930; New York: Dover Publications, 1988. 2:48. For background information, I have relied on Pauline Moffit Watts, "Prophecy and Discovery: On the Spiritual Origins of Christopher Columbus's 'Enterprise of the Indies.'" *American Historical Review* 90 (1985): 73-102. See also John V. Fleming, "Christopher Columbus as a Scriptural Exegete." *Lutheran Quarterly* 5 (1991): 187-98. Arno Schilson, "Die Entdeckung des Kolumbus in religionsgeschichtlicher Sicht: Ein neuer Blick auf Bekanntes und Unbekanntes." *America: Entdeckung, Eroberung, Erfindung*. Ed. by Winfried Herget. Trier (Germany): WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 1995: 33-48.

hero allows.<sup>2</sup> If Columbus did not learn before his death in 1506 that the West-Indies were no part of the Asian continent, it was left to subsequent generations of cartographers and theologians to integrate the American continent into existing cosmologies.

Cartographers and theologians alike were faced with the difficult task of reconciling this New World with the World Map of Claudius Ptolemy, compiled c.150 C.E., and first published at Florence, in 1482, by the German Benedictine cartographer Donnus Nicholaus Germanus. Encompassing the known world of the Mediterranean, most of Europe, northern Africa, the Middle East, and parts of southern Asia including the Indian subcontinent, Ptolemy's map posed few if any problems to theologians of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They discovered an intrinsic harmony between the terrain of the Roman Empire as it was known to the Apostolic church and the cosmography of the New Testament that confined Christ's millennial kingdom to the Old World. Nations included in this territory would become subject to Christ's rulership; all others were consigned to outer darkness. What then was one to make of this new continent America and its people? Theories differed wildly, and the debate about this New World was carried out in theological treatises just as much as in contemporaneous cartography. For instance, Columbus' geography of salvation included the Indians because to him the West Indies were part of Eastern Asia and per consequence shared in the terrain of Christ's earthly kingdom. Besides, Columbus was persuaded that the terrestrial paradise was located below the equinoctial line at "'the end of the East,' where end all the land and islands." There, at the summit of a mountain in the Orinoco River, where the globe was not spherical but in "the shape of a pear which is everywhere very round except where the stalk is," there the abundance of fresh water issuing from Gihon, the second river of Paradise (Gen. 2:9-14), along with the mild climate of the region, "are great indications of the earthly paradise" (*Four Voyages* 2:28-38). Columbus' conjecture is perfectly consistent with medieval tradition that variously located paradise in the Mountains of the Moon at the springs of the Nile, in mythical Ophir of the Arabian peninsula, in eastern India, or even in China. Given that the Admiral of the Sea believed he had arrived in India, to which remote location, according to one tradition, God had removed the lost paradise of Adam and Eve, Columbus' assertions seem sincere. If nothing else, they testify to contemporaneous efforts to integrate the New World into existing biblical and Ptolemaic cosmologies.

Roughly ninety years after Columbus's first voyage, Heinrich Bünting's world map "Die gantz Welt in ein Kleberblat," ["The whole World in the shape of a Shamrock"], *Itinerarium sacrae scripturae* (Helmstedt, 1581) still wrestled with the theological dilemma of reconciling the New World with the geography of salvation restricted to the old hemisphere. Bünting's map does not pretend to be an accurate depiction of the world. It renders the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa, as three leaves of a pointed shamrock, locating Jerusalem at its geographical and spiritual center. Conspicuously placed outside this soteriological map are England and Scandinavia to the north, and South America ("Die Neue Welt") to the south-west of Africa, for these were the territories unknown to the Apostles and thus to be excluded from the Christianography of the millennial kingdom. Early in the next century, the English millennialists Nicholas Fuller (1557?-1626), in *Miscellaneorum Sacrum libri duo* (Leyden, 1622), and Joseph Mede (1586-1638), in his influential *Clavis Apocalyptica* (London, 1627), still struggled with reconciling the New World with the *Heilsgeschichte* of the Old. They altogether excluded the American hemisphere from Christ's saving influences because it was "the seat of Hell" from which hemisphere Satan's minions, Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:8-9), would arise at the end of the millennium to encompass the Saints of the terrestrial New Jerusalem in the Old

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<sup>2</sup> *The Life of the Admiral Christopher Columbus by his Son Ferdinand*. Translated by Benjamin Keen. 1959; New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1992. 4.

World. In his “A Conjecture Concerning *Gog* and *Magog* in the Revelation,”<sup>3</sup> Mede adopted Fuller’s postulate, “That the people of *America* are Colonies of the nation of *Magog*”—Scythians, whose spiritual descendants had come to America through an isthmus in Asia, now submerged (*Miscellaneorum Sacrum* II.iv). These “nations, &c. which are spiritually called *Gog* and *Magog*,” Mede conjectured, “live in the Hemisphere opposite to us,” which God had excluded from the call of the Christian Gospel. Christ’s saving influence would principally be restricted to the territory of Daniel’s four empires, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (Dan. 2:31-45): “This universal Hemisphere (I say) of the Earth, and which onely is partaker of the promised instauration, shall become the camp of the Saints, and the seat of this blessed kingdome; but whatsoever nations are without this (in the places where the Ancients placed the seat of Hell) shall be reserved to the last triumph of Christ, to be destroyed by fire from heaven.” The nations of *Gog* and *Magog* in “the land of *America*, both Northern and Southern,” are said “to ascend” from “the four corners of the earth, and the same to encompass round the camp of the Saints” (Rev. 16:14, 16; 20:8-9) by shipping across “the Ocean from their own coasts” in their last stand against Christ’s millennial kingdom in the Old World (“Conjecture” Tr, Tv, T2).

The significance of Mede’s restriction of Christ’s future kingdom to the territory of the ancient Roman Empire and his identification of America as hell cannot be overemphasized, for in essence he had consigned America to outer darkness. It was to this remote world, Mede conjectured from reading José Acosta’s *The Natural & Moral History of the Indies* (1604), that Satan in former ages had led several nations of Scythians. There they would be out of reach of the Gospel, when Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine I (c. 306). In Mexico, the Scythian nations of *Gog* and *Magog* built him temples from which Satan ruled supreme until European missionaries arrived to contest his power.<sup>4</sup>

The reason why Joseph Mede’s exclusion of America did not raise any eyebrows among the first great wave of English settlers in North America (1620s-1640s) is because his *Key of the Revelation* (1627; 1650) did not become widely available until John Worthington’s enlarged edition of Mede’s *Works* appeared in London (1663-64). But the defense of the New World was slow in coming. New Englanders did not take exception to Mede’s postulate until the eschatological fervor of the 1690s triggered a full-scale rebuttal among several prominent eschatologists in the Bay Colony. For if Mede was right and the American hemisphere did not share in the sacred geography of Christ’s millennial kingdom, then the Puritan Errand into the Wilderness was an errand in futility, an errand, ironically, not into the future garden of Eden but to the very gates of Hell itself. By transplanting themselves to America, Puritans had in effect foolishly traded Christ’s future Paradise in the Old World for Satan’s abode in the New. Such challenges to the Puritan cause in North America could not easily be ignored: “If the Blessed God intend that the Divil<sup>5</sup> shall keep *America* during the Happy *Chiliad* which His Church is now very *quickly* Entring into,” the Boston clergyman Cotton Mather (1663-1728) warily remarked in his *The Present State of New England* (Boston, 1690), “then our Lord Jesus will within a few Months break up House among us, and we go for our Lodging either to *Heaven* or to *Europe* in a very little while. But if our God will wrest *America* out of the Hands of its old Land-lord, *Satan*, and give these *utmost ends of the Earth* to our Lord Jesus,” then the Great Sabbatism of Christ would soon be on the horizon. The Rev. Nicholas Noyes (1647-1717) of Salem shared his displeasure with Mede’s conceit, in his election sermon *New-Englands Duty and Interest* (Boston, 1698), and

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<sup>3</sup> Appended to his *The Key to the Revelation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1650) Tr-Tv.

<sup>4</sup> *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly Learned Joseph Mede*. Edited by John Worthington. 4<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1677) 798-802.

<sup>5</sup> Archaic: *devil*.

defended the Puritan experiment in the New World: “Now as for *New England*, if the *First Planters* of it had dream’d that the very Situation or Climate of this Land had been crime enough to make men *aliens from the Covenants of promise*; they would not have Sold their *European Birthright*, for a mess of *American Pottage*” (76). This initial volley of self-conscious denials and refutations sporadically resurfaced in New England’s eschatological literature even until the end of the eighteenth century. Such disquieting issues engaged clergy and laymen alike as they rose in defense of their homeland. For instance, Judge Samuel Sewall (1652-1730), president of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to the Indians, wrote a full-fledged defense of the New World in 1697, which he felt the need to reprint in a second edition thirty years later: “To strive to exclude *America*,” the good Judge fumed, “And to make *America* to be the whole, and only Object of the *Curses* denounced against *Gog* and *Magog*; and to shut them [Americans] out from all Promised Blessings; is altogether Unscriptural and Unreasonable.” For “We need not go further than” Nicholas Fuller and Joseph Mede “to expose this Antick Fancy of *America’s* being Hell.”<sup>6</sup> Indeed, Mede’s conceit deeply rankled millennialists of the period, and Sewall’s friend, pastor of the Second Church of Boston, went on record as the first descendant of English settlers to call himself an “American”—a dubious honor hitherto only applied to the savages of the American wilderness: “I that am an *American*,” Cotton Mather countered indignantly in his millennialist treatise “*Problema Theologicum*” (1703), “must needs be Lothe to allow all *America* still unto the *Devils* Possession, when our Lord shall possess all the rest of the World.”<sup>7</sup> Just seven years later, Mather still bewailed the bleak vistas of Mede’s conjecture: “O AMERICA, will no Share of the Lords *Garments* and *Glories*, and the *Righteousness of the Saints*, fall to thee, who art a Part of the World singly almost as great as the Other *Three*?” he continued in *Theopolis Americana* (Boston, 1710). “Certainly, It was never intended, that the Church of our Lord, should be confined always within the Dimensions of *Strabo’s* Cloak; and that, *All the World*, should always be no more, than it was, when *Augustus* taxed it” (45-46). Similar disavowals sporadically surfaced in the millenarian literature until the end of the century.

Even a century after Mede had excluded America from Christ’s sacred geography, Jonathan Edwards still felt the need to defend his homeland by invoking Mede’s exclusion of the New World. Vaguely remembering Acosta’s old tale that led to Mede’s legerdemain denigration of America as hell, Edwards addressed the issue in his posthumous publication *A History of the Work of Redemption* (New York, 1774): “’Tis a thing which if I remember right I have somewhere [heard] tell of . . . that the devil being alarmed and surprised by the wonderful success of the gospel . . . and [by] the downfall of the heathen empire in Constantine’s time . . . led away a people from the other continent into America, that they might be quite out of the reach of the gospel that here he might quietly possess them and reign over them as their god.” Although the success of the gospel among the Indians has been “small,” yet through the discovery of America and the preaching of the gospel here, “providence is preparing the way for the future glorious times of the church when Satan’s kingdom shall be overthrown not only throughout the Roman empire, but throughout the whole habitable globe, on every side, and in all its continents.”<sup>8</sup> As this small sample of self-conscious denials indicates, Joseph Mede’s conjecture perturbed American millennialists at least until the middle of the eighteenth century. In fact, more than twenty years after Edwards’ death, Thomas Wells Bray, pastor of Guilford, Connecticut, felt compelled once again to address the uncomfortable issue of America’s

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<sup>6</sup> *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boston, 1727) 40, 42.

<sup>7</sup> “Cotton Mather’s ‘*Problema Theologicum*’: An Authoritative Edition.” Edited by Jeffrey Scott Mares. *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 104 part 2 (1994): 412.

<sup>8</sup> Edited by John F. Wilson. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 14 vols. New Haven: Yale UP, 1989. 9:434-35.

exclusion in his *A Dissertation of the Sixth Vial* (Hartford, 1780). Like his predecessors, Bray implicitly accepts the terms of Mede's argument but refutes him in the specifics by defining America as one of "the appendages of the Roman Empire" which through the papacy had extended its dominion across the Atlantic: "This takes in America; which is undoubtedly comprehended in these prophecies," Bray triumphed at last—oblivious to the irony that according to his scheme America was saved only through the intervention of the Puritan Antichrist (vii n.).

### ***Errand into the Wilderness***

With such self-conscious exertions to make the New World safe for the millennial kingdom, it is all the more surprising that in its national mythology America is portrayed as the Promised Land of the Bible. According to this familiar argument, American Puritans saw themselves as God's chosen people on an "Errand into the Wilderness," there to set up a city upon the hill as a shining beacon to the rest of the world. Come the millennium, New England and the American continent at large, would be transformed into the eschatological New Jerusalem, where Christ would set up his throne to govern the effete nations the world over. Put in another way, the Mosaic exodus from Egypt through the Red Sea and the Sinai Desert to the Promised Land is seen as the prophetic type foreshadowing its eschatological antitype fulfilled in John Winthrop's Puritan exodus from England through an Atlantic baptismal font into the Wilderness of the New English Canaan. In short, the appropriation of the City of God to the American hemisphere, modern scholars have argued, instilled in the colonists a sense of purpose that came to fruition during the First Great Awakening, the War of Independence, and in the American missions to the Third World in the nineteenth century. Whether or not English Puritans justified their removal to the New World in eschatological terms is an issue that has divided the scholarly community since the 1980s. One school of thought (historians of religion and literary scholars) argues that the Puritan fathers' emphasis on purity of doctrine and church discipline, on conversion as a prerequisite to church membership, and on de facto separation from the lukewarm Church of England (of which Laodicea was the type) was informed from the start by a fully articulated millenarian credo that sought to anticipate the City of God in America. These ideas were inscribed into the typology of their errand and invoked in the jeremiads of their descendants who summoned the ghosts of their illustrious ancestors to revitalize their mission whenever a crisis threatened their survival.<sup>9</sup> Representative examples of this type include Samuel Danforth's *Errand into the Wilderness* (Boston, 1670) and Increase Mather's *Ichabod, Or, ... The Glory is Departing from New England* (Boston, 1702). The creation of this mythic Errand occurred in the decades after the Half-Way Covenant (1662) and proved so adaptable to the changing needs of the revolutionary pulpit that it was constantly reinvented as the Puritans' usable past, this time as a quest for a civil millennium in which God's American Israel was now called upon to defend her civil and religious liberties against the encroachments of the British Antichrist. The demons and monsters populating the imaginary landscape of the St. John's Revelation are adaptable to any age and virtually any occasion.

Modern historians tend to project this errand back into the motivation of the first settlers and thus read the literature of the transmigration in light of its later manifestation. Be that as it may, a second school of thought examines much more mundane factors of economic and political pressures that encouraged relocation. These historians stress specific "push" and "pull" factors that led Englishmen to abandon their old home for opportunities in the New World. They point to promotional tracts of the period that emphasize overcrowding, poverty, lack of opportunity, or simply political and religious oppression as reasons for leaving England. Conversely, economic improvement, free tracts of land,

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<sup>9</sup> See Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1978.

exploitation of natural resources, and religious freedom are listed as pull factors for those who could be lured away by new opportunities in America.<sup>10</sup> Representative examples include Capt. John Smith's *The Generall Historie of Virginia, New England, and the Summer Isles* (London, 1608), George Mourt's *A Relation or Journall of the beginning and proceedings of the English Plantation settled at Plimoth in New England* (London, 1622), and William Wood's *New-Englands Prospect* (London, 1634) among many others. More recently, a third school of intellectual historians has challenged the old paradigm that end-time visions invested the Puritan errand from the very start. Members of this group argue that *no* millenarian ideology informed the Puritan exodus during the first wave of emigration. Neither John Winthrop's oft-quoted lay sermon *A Model of Christian Charity* (1630) nor John Cotton's farewell sermon to the departing Winthrop fleet at Southampton *Gods Promise to his Plantation* (1630) articulate any eschatological agenda beyond the Reformation conviction that Protestants need to curtail Jesuit activities among native Americans.<sup>11</sup> In fact, millennialist fervor did not become pronounced until a full decade after the first wave of settlers had arrived in New England. For instance, such well-known millennialist treatises as John Cotton's *The Powring Out of the Seven Vials* (London 1642), Edward Johnson's *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New England* (London 1654), and John Eliot's seditious *The Christian Commonwealth* (London, 1658) are all products of eschatological speculation spurred on by political and religious turmoil in England during the 1640s and 50s. Still other scholars have amplified this ongoing revisionism by demonstrating that Puritan New England did not proclaim Boston as the future site of Christ's millennial throne (as is commonly believed), but located the eschatological New Jerusalem in Judea and expanded the Christianography of salvation to include America. For better or worse, it is against this background then that apocalypticism in colonial America must be examined.

#### ***Millennialist Theories in the Context of their Development***

The codification of apocalyptic hermeneutics was slow in coming, and the plethora of diverging interpretations may strike modern readers as a veritable confusion of Babylonish tongues. At the end of the seventeenth century, the English Presbyterian Richard Baxter (1615-91) summarizes the state of eschatological affairs among his contemporaries, dedicating his *Glorious Kingdom of Christ* (London, 1691) to his friend Increase Mather (1639-1723), lately arrived in London to negotiate a new charter for the Bay Colony:

Some of them say, The Thousand years are on Earth; and some say, they are only of the Souls of the Martyrs and Confessors in Heaven: Some say, They are both in Heaven, or in the Air, and on Earth at once. Some say, That they shall be a Jewish Monarchy at *Jerusalem*; and some, That it shall be of the Godly all over the World. Some say, Christ will Reign there visibly in his Human Nature: Others, That he will only sometime appear, as he did after his Resurrection: And some, That he will Rule there only by Reforming the Christian Princes.

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<sup>10</sup> See David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1987, and John Canup, *Out of the Wilderness: The Emergence of an American Identity in Colonial New England*. Middletown: Wesleyan UP, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> See also the various copies of John Winthrop's "General Observations for the Plantation of New England" (1629). In *Winthrop Papers*. Ed. by Stewart Mitchell. 5 vols. 1931; New York: Russell & Russell, 1968. 2: 111-49.

Some hold but one Thousand years, and some two, (one being after the other.) Some hold two New Jerusalems, and some but one. Some say, That the Day of Judgment is the Thousand years (and yet that Scripture hath not told us how long Christ will be Judging us.) And some, That it is only the Beginning and the End of the Thousand years, that the Judgment will take up, and the rest will be in other Government. Some think that Execution on Men and Devils will be but that Thousand years; which some decry. Some think that the first Resurrection, is from an Aereal Vehicle or Body into an Ethereal; and others that it is from earthly dust to a heavenly body by transmutation of Elements: And others that it is to be a Paradise body, like *Adams* before he sinned. Other differences seem almost reconciled to some, by the bare name of a Thousand years reign. (9-10).

Richard Baxter's consternation indicates there was no consensus as to what the golden age would look like: whether literal, spiritual, in heaven or on earth, or indeed when the millennium was to occur, whether past, present or future. To appreciate how American eschatologists fit into this debate, when and why they departed from their European colleagues, and how three basic patterns of millenarian interpretation became codified at the beginning of the eighteenth century, we need to turn to the eschatological theories of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in order to understand their development. Such English Reformation theologians as John Bale (1495-1563) and John Foxe (1517-1587) did their share in unlocking the prophetic mysteries. While Bale correlated the prophetic peregrination of the church in its fight against Satan with specific events in secular history, he dated the thousand-year reign of the "church invisible" (Rev. 20:4-5) from Christ's resurrection, in 33, and with St. Augustine asserted that Christ ruled in the hearts of man rather than in any visible organization. John Foxe inherited Bale's ideas and contributed his famous martyrology *Acts and Monuments* (1573). This work greatly influenced Elizabethan reformers in their efforts to portray the English nation as God's chosen people on the vanguard of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>12</sup>

Whereas many reformers employed prophecy as a means to spur on the Protestant Reformation, the more radical-minded successors in the first half of seventeenth century tried to turn England into a Puritan stronghold. Apocalypticism furnished them with ideological direction. Among the late sixteenth-century Protestant heirs to Bale and Foxe was the Cambridge-trained theologian Thomas Brightman (1562-1607), whose *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos* (Frankfurt, 1609) is a fresh commentary on the Revelation, greatly appealing to the Congregationalist movement of the period. While both Bale and Brightman read John's Revelation as prophetic history of the periods before, during, and after the millennium, they parted company on the nature of Christ's kingdom. Brightman's fervent millennialism sought to establish a pure church polity this side of paradise, because particular visible churches and their largely Presbyterian polity could be identified with the invisible kingdom of God. Brightman did not correlate the millennium with Satan's concomitant binding, but rather saw them as two separate events following each other: Satan's binding began with Constantine the Great becoming the first Christian emperor of Rome (c. 306) and ended in 1300, with the invasion of the Ottoman Turks; next, Christ's millennial reign began from the reformation of Wycliffe (c. 1300) and ended in the day of judgment, a thousand years later (in 2300). For Brightman, then, Christ's spiritual reign was already in progress, and his saints of the "first resurrection" (Rev. 20:4-6), consisting of his martyrs and witnesses, were presently ruling through their spiritual successors in the church militant on earth.

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<sup>12</sup> For helpful background information, I am indebted to Joy B. Gilsdorf, "The Puritan Apocalypse: New England Eschatology in the Seventeenth Century." Ph.D. diss, Yale University, 1964.

If Thomas Brightman thus made the church militant part of the ongoing millennium and placed the church triumphant after the day of judgment, then his German colleague, Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588-1638), at Herborn University, significantly revised the interpretation of prophetic periodization. In his tract *Diatribes de Mille Annis Apocalypticis* (Herborn, 1627), Alsted did not place the millennium of Antichrist's binding in the past (as did Bale), nor as Brightman in the present, but with Francisco Ribera (1537-1591) at his elbow projected it into the future. This revision was a decisive break from traditional interpretations of these matters. Significant for later Puritan interpretations in England and America is Alsted's insistence on Christ's spiritual reign on earth and a corporeal first resurrection "in which the Bodies of the Martyrs [only] shall rise."<sup>13</sup> The remaining saints, less holy than the martyrs but far different from the wicked, would not rise until the "Universal Resurrection of all the dead" (19). This hyperliteralism of the first resurrection marks a hermeneutic split between those who allegorized the first resurrection as a conversion of individuals by grace "common unto all good men and happeneth daily" (18), and those for whom this event was a literal and corporeal resurrection of Christ's martyrs. The allegorists would eventually give rise to the so-called postmillennialism; Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), Jonathan Edwards (1703-58), Joseph Bellamy (1719-90), and Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803) are eighteenth-century representatives of this group of expositors, whereas the literalists would evolve into the so-called premillennialist camp as represented in Cotton Mather's mature eschatology. However, these handy (albeit too neat) distinctions remain problematic for most of the seventeenth century in that both groups spoke of an inchoate, progressively unfolding millennial of mortals who would not attain eternal life until judgment day, in the second resurrection (Rev. 20:11-15). Perfection and immortality would not be the lot of this mixed multitude of saved nations until they, too, had undergone death, corporeal resurrection, and life everlasting in the church triumphant. Not until the concept of the saints' Rapture at Christ's Second Coming (2 Thess. 4:15) was fully understood did the inevitable consequences of Alsted's hermeneutical break become the deciding factor in the split between pre- and postmillennialists.

Alsted's eschatology, then, stands at the crossroads between a premillennialism of the supernatural type advocated in Cotton Mather's "Triparadisus" (1724-27) and postmillennialism of the developmental type erroneously attributed to Daniel Whitby's *Treatise on the True Millennium* (1703) and proliferated in America by the disciples of Jonathan Edwards and the nineteenth-century apostles of progress. The much-touted postmillennialism (which has been attributed to Jonathan Edwards as its first American progenitor) seems therefore little more than a variation on a familiar theme outlined by Alsted more than a century earlier. The point of departure between the two systems, then, is not determined by whether Christ's visible return occurs at the beginning or end of the millennium, but whether the first resurrection was to be understood as a literal and corporeal resurrection of the saints and martyrs or merely as a spiritual resurrection of the saints through conversion or of the church's reformation. Indeed, the nucleus of both systems was already present in Alsted. As I shall demonstrate below, the millennialist systems of American theologians, from the Puritan exodus to the Revolution, were little more than variants of Alsted's system—even if his eighteenth-century emulators employed the trappings of Enlightenment thought to clothe their received ideas in new garb.

The next step in the development of apocalypticism that affected how Americans viewed the millennium came through Joseph Mede (1586-1638), a nonconformist with Anglican sympathies, master of Christ College, Cambridge. His most significant work for our purposes is *Clavis*

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<sup>13</sup> Alsted, *The Beloved City, Or, The Saints Reign on Earth A Thousand Yeares*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London, 1643) 17.



*Apocalyptica* (London, 1627), a commentary on the Revelation that described St. John's visions as coterminous prophecies about the development of church and state. Mede's most important contribution is his analysis of the inner coherence of John's Apocalypse, in which Mede identifies (even coins the phrase) "the Synchronisme and order of the Prophecies of the Revelation." By this "Synchronisme" he meant "an agreement in time or age: because prophecies of things falling out in the same time, run on in time together, or Synchronize" (*Key of the Revelation*, pt. I, 1). According to Mede's eschatology, Antichrist's reign of 1260 years was to be dated either from 456, the fall of Rome under Genseric, the Vandal, or twenty years later, in 476, when the last of the Roman Emperors, Romulus Augustulus, was deposed by Odoacer, the Hun. Antichrist's fall, Satan's binding, and Christ's Second Coming could all therefore be expected either in 1716 or 1736. With this Archemedian fulcrum in place, Mede had at once solved the types of problems that had plagued the systems of John Bale and Thomas Brightman.

Like Alsted before him, Mede situated the millennium in the future upon the fall of Antichrist and made Satan's binding for a thousand years coterminous with the corporeal resurrection of the raised saints (first resurrection). Moreover, those alive at the beginning of the millennium would reign in the earth: "Those who shall be Partakers of this Kingdome are described to be of two sorts: 1. The deceased Martyrs, who ... shall resume their Bodies and Reigne in Heaven. 2. Such of the living as have not worshipped the Beast, nor his Image, neither received his marke, &c. These shall Reigne on Earth."<sup>14</sup> Significantly, unlike Alsted, Mede placed the corporeal saints of the first resurrection in the heavens as permanent occupants of Christ's celestial city. Yet like his predecessors, Mede also asserted an inchoate millennium. While more or less free from Satan's encroachment, the saved nations of "Virgin-Christians of the *Gentiles*" and "the Nation of the *Jewes*" now converted to Christianity (*Remaines* 25) would still retain the sting of mortality, their sinful dispensation, and ultimate disease and death not obviated until the second resurrection at the end of the millennium. By all accounts Alsted and Mede are perhaps the most significant Protestant millennialists of the early seventeenth century. Their guidelines became the touchstone for all those who shared similar concerns.

Mede's colleague John Cotton (1584-1652), vicar of St. Botolph's in Lincolnshire, was guided by similar expectations after he had established himself in New England in 1633. Cotton's calculations about the coming millennium, however, centered on 1655, and were not formulated until roughly 1639, six years after his establishment in the First Church of Boston, in New England. By that time, he was preaching a series of sermons on the Apocalypse that linked the covenant, regeneration, and church membership with the visible church. In his *The Churches Resurrection, or the Opening of the Fift and Sixt verses of the 20<sup>th</sup> Chap. Of the Revelation* (London, 1642), his *Powring Ovt of the Seven Vials* (London, 1642), and in *Exposition upon the Thirteenth Chapter of the Revelation* (London, 1655), Cotton adapted Thomas Brightman's Augustinian First Resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) as a *spiritual rebirth* of individuals and of reformed churches that excluded the unregenerate by making conversion the litmus test for church membership. With Thomas Goodwin's *An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (London, 1650) at his elbow, Cotton charged the holy ministers with examining applicants' regeneration before admitting them to the communion table. Cotton's *Churches Resurrection* deserves detailed attention because it has been at the center of the recent critical debate. As mentioned above, many intellectual historians and literary critics point to John Cotton's emphasis on individual conversion prerequisite to church membership in New England as having been galvanized by his millennialist endeavor to set up the New Jerusalem in the American wilderness. What is often ignored, however, is that in his *Churches Resurrection* Cotton is as much preoccupied

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<sup>14</sup> Mede, *Paraleipomena. Remaines On some Passages in The REVELATION* (London, 1650) 24-25.

with positioning his own theories between those of Bale and Brightman on the one hand and Mede and Alsted on the other, as with the purity of New England's church ordinances, doctrine, and polity. To shed new light on the issue we need to understand exactly what Cotton's millennium looked like in order to determine if at any time before or after his migration to America he tried to establish the New Jerusalem church in New England. The millennial reign of the saints would begin with Antichrist's fall and Satan's binding in 1655. At that point, God would employ "powerfull Ministers" who would bind Satan with "the strong chaine of God's Ordinances Word and Sacraments and Censures" (*Churches Resurrection* 5).

Satan's binding during an inchoate millennium signifies to Cotton the purity of church discipline, doctrine, and polity by admitting only regenerate members. As with Alsted, the rulers with Christ in heaven would be his martyrs: "those that were branded before as Hugunots, and Lollards, and Hereticks" would nearly be the only ones worthy to wear crowns of righteousness. Yet unlike Alsted's, Cotton's martyrs "lived in their Successors," among the regenerate of saved nations during the millennium. And as in the case of Alsted and Mede, these saved nations were little more than a mixed multitude of regenerate and unregenerate (both still mortal and sinful), of church members and the wicked nations now bound "in chaines of . . . Admonition and Excommunication" (6). The unregenerate among them "remaine dead in sinne" and would be excluded from the spiritual blessings bestowed upon the saved nations. The first resurrection then is twofold: a resurrection of particular persons dead in sin but renewed by regenerating grace (Eph. 2:1; 5:14; John 5:25, 28] and of particular churches recovered from their spiritual apostasy and dead estate in idolatry and superstition (Rom. 11:15; Ezek. 37:1-10). The martyrs and witnesses would invisibly govern through "Men of the same Spirit" (6) the nations of the earth, "either keeping them out, and binding them, leaving them under Satan if they would not come in: Or if they be come in, binde them with this great chaine that they shall not trouble the Church any more, as carnall members use to doe" (10). This context, then, establishes why Cotton emphasized church purity and admissions tests. Not, as some critics have argued, because Cotton and company wanted to set up their own New Jerusalem in Boston—for that belonged to the church triumphant following judgment day at the end of the golden age (in 2655)—but to make sure New England's churches would not be excluded from the millennial Church, shut out as it were from God's ordinances, and thus share in the lot of the wicked nations as they rise with Gog and Magog against the camp of the saints. Individual regeneration and the resurrection of individual churches were therefore crucial to Cotton, if New England were to have a share in the millennium.

Mere church membership, however, was not enough: "If we do not now strike a fast Covenant with our God to be his people . . . then we and ours will be of this dead hearted frame for a thousand yeares; we are not like to see greater incouragements for a good while then now we see . . ." (17). In short, Satan was being bound gradually through the ongoing reformation; the first resurrection of the churches, however, still lay in the future and would not begin until Antichrist's fall: "Therefore let it be a serious warning to every one not to rest in Reformation and formes of it, and to blesse yourselves in Church Membership, because to this day, this first Resurrection [of the churches] hath not taken its place, nor will not take his place till Antichrist be ruinated" (20). Communicants had to experience true regeneration, or else their church membership would remain inefficacious. Likewise, true reformation of the church could only be achieved after Satan's binding, through a process of clerical preaching and censuring that would not achieve completion until the church triumphant. Absolutely imperative to Cotton's millennial system, therefore, is that New England's churches have tests of regeneration to *anticipate* the pure church; else New England, like her unregenerate sister in Old England, would become part of Gog and Magog's final destruction by forfeiting her present opportunity to join in Christ's salvation. Notwithstanding the emphasis on high admission standards

for new applicants to church membership, Cotton was fully aware that New England's churches could no more than anticipate the New Jerusalem state this side of the millennium. But he was quick to point to the vast gulf that separates anticipation from accomplishment, the church militant from the church triumphant. Not even during the millennium could complete purity be actualized.

Although Cotton's millennial fervor did not reach its full flower until about six years after his ordination in the First Church of Boston, his stringent requirements of regeneration of every communicant and exclusion of the unregenerate are clearly informed by his millenarian theories about the resurrection of the churches in an imminent millennium. Certainly, Cotton's position was not an isolated case but was shared by a number of his colleagues whose efforts to purify New England's churches through admissions tests was informed by the same millenarian concern for their survival into the millennium. These ideas were shared by his New Haven colleagues Peter Bulkeley (1583-1659) in *The Gospel-Covenant* (London, 1645), by William Hooke (1601-1678) in *A Short Discourse of the Nature and Extent of the Gospel-Day* (London, 1673), and by John Davenport (1597-1670) in "An Epistle to the Reader," published in Increase Mather's *The Mystery of Israel's Salvation* (London, 1669).

Like Thomas Goodwin in England, John Davenport became an ardent Congregationalist through Cotton's preaching in 1633. Davenport ultimately joined Cotton in New England in 1636, but settled in the New Haven Colony in 1648. There, Davenport set out to make the visible close to the invisible church as a means of anticipating the New Jerusalem condition on earth, by attaining "perfection of light, and holiness, and love, as is attainable on this side of heaven."<sup>15</sup> His millennialist ideology differed from that of Goodwin, Alsted, and Cotton only in that Davenport's chiliasm led him to embrace the idea of Christ's physical and visible co-regency on the millennial earth with his corporeal and immortalized raised saints over the still mortal saved nations. More significantly, Davenport singles out for praise those who rescued millennialism from this stigma of infamy: Thomas Goodwin's *The World To Come; Or, The Kingdom of Christ Asserted* (London, 1651) for having restored "the literal exposition of the first Resurrection" to the millennial system and for proving that "the world to come" [Heb. 2.5] carries a double signification. The first entails an inchoate millennium of the church militant, "a state between the state of the world as now it is"; and second, the perfection of the church triumphant at the end, "the state of things after the day of judgment, when *God shall be all in all*" ("Epistle"). Davenport also commends Mede's *The Key to the Revelation* for making his synchronism of parallel events the key to unlocking the mystery of John's Apocalypse. Last, he celebrates Alsted's *Beloved City* for demonstrating that the millennium was not past but future. Perhaps that is why Davenport was so adamant about his chiliasm that he did not renounce it even after the collapse of Cromwell's interregnum and the anathema of the Fifth-Monarchists. Davenport's millennialism expressed here is also informed by the momentous events of Shabbateanism in Europe, which prompted Increase Mather (1639-1723) to write his *Mystery of Israel's Salvation* in the first place. For Davenport, then, the return of European and Ottoman Jews to Jerusalem betokened the nearness of the Second Coming—all the more reason to press on with the reformation of the churches in New England.

This agreement between these notable New Englanders of the first generation should not lead one to assume that there was a consensus among the millenarians of the period. Far from it. In fact, their views on the millennium oftentimes differed as much as their views on church government and admissions tests. Thomas Parker (1595-1677), pastor of Newbury, Massachusetts, is a case in point. His Presbyterian leanings and standards of church admission had more in common with those later

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<sup>15</sup> Davenport's "Epistle" appears in Increase Mather's *Mystery of Israel's Salvation* (London, 1669), n. p.

held by Jonathan Edwards' maternal grandfather Solomon Stoddard (1643-1729) of Northampton, than with John Cotton of the Boston church. If Cotton, Davenport, and Hooke tried to keep the visible church as close to the invisible by limiting church membership to the elect, Thomas Parker admitted virtually anyone with the faintest stirrings of grace. The church doors in his Newbury congregation were open as wide as any barn door in New England—or at least as wide as those of Stoddard in the Connecticut Valley fifty years later. In his *Visions and Prophecies of Daniel Expounded* (London, 1646), Parker argued for a chronological scheme of the millennium that had more in common with the preterist systems of Augustine, Bale and Brightman than with the futurist systems of Cotton, Alsted, or Mede. According to Parker's system, the millennial reign was already in progress in his lifetime, intermitted only by the destruction of Gog and Magog, in the last 45 years before the Last Judgment. The ministers of "particular Churches," who admit the yet unconverted elect "into the community of the whole Church of New Jerusalem: shall hereby be instruments of bringing them into the heavenly perfection, and shall therein be glorified with their converts" (148-49). Parker's views on the millennium, then, shaped his position on church membership as well: Even the weakest must be admitted to safeguard their membership in the church triumphant.

Thomas Shepard (1605-49), minister at Cambridge, shared similar views on church admission when compared to those espoused by Davenport and Cotton, but was far less willing to let the unpredictable nature of millennialist exegesis determine his views on such crucial issues. The most interesting of his sermons on the topic is his *Parable of the Ten Virgins* (London, 1660). Here Shepard speculated about two comings of Christ: the one, a spiritual appearance to call Jews and Gentiles in their final ingathering before the destruction of Antichrist; the other, a literal corporeal appearance of Christ to judge the world at the end of the 1000-year reign.<sup>16</sup> Either way, the bride of Christ had to be holy and clean to receive the groom—even though there would remain enough foolish virgins left unprepared at his coming. But lest New England deem herself wise beyond safety, Shepard made sure that no carnal hypocrites might delude themselves with false security. He shared John Cotton's emphasis on an inchoate millennium or "Middle Advent," even as both deferred Christ's literal return in the clouds of fire to the day of judgment. Since both preparationists like Shepard and anti-preparationists like Cotton described the sequence of events leading up to and during the millennium in essentially the same terms, the issue of premillennialist gloom or postmillennialist optimism, as critics are wont to argue, seems altogether mute. Even if Shepard (unlike Cotton) still expected the slaughter of the martyrs and witnesses to occur before the golden age, it was the preparation of the heart in terms of personal conversion (Cotton's spiritual first resurrection) that safeguarded an individual's entrance into the millennium. Even on this issue then both clergymen saw eye to eye. Matters of church government and purity of its members were also much on the mind of John Eliot (1604-90) of Roxbury, New England's Apostle to the Indians. He began his missionary work among the Indians in 1646, translated the Bible into their Algonquian language, and published several Indian grammars, to speed their conversion. Cultural differences notwithstanding, Eliot's admission requirements for his communities of praying Indians were as stringent as for any English settler and required years of preparation. Guided by his belief in the Indians as the remnants of the Lost Tribes of Israel in America, he did his best to convert them to the gospel of Christ and thus bring home Indian Jews. As could be expected, Eliot's millennialism grew more fervent with the rise of Cromwell's Interregnum, and in the wake of the execution of Charles I, Eliot wrote a tract on the form and nature of Christ's millennial government. Unsurprisingly, when Eliot's *The Christian Commonwealth* belatedly appeared in London, in 1659, on the eve of the

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<sup>16</sup> *The Works of Thomas Shepard*. Ed. by John Adams Albro. 3 vols. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1971. 2:24-26, 2:507-10.

Restoration, he caused his fellow New Englanders great embarrassment. To appease English critics, the Massachusetts General Court forced Eliot to recant and had his tract publicly burned in 1661. The bone of contention was his insistence on Christ as “the only right Heir to the Crown of England”—a rather impolitic if not seditious argument that could do anything but please the more mundane interests of Charles II (“Preface” Bv).

Eliot’s millennialism has much in common with that of Thomas Goodwin and John Cotton. Like his colleagues, Eliot allegorized Christ’s millennial reign on earth as the leadership of holy ministers who were preeminently guided by the Bible. For Eliot, then, Oliver Cromwell’s Interregnum had “cast down not only the miry Religion, and Government of Antichrist, but also the former form of civil Government, which did stick so fast unto it, until by an unavoidable necessity, it fell with it” (“Preface” Bv), and the millennial reign was imminent. What then did Eliot’s government look like? It was a covenanted community of visible saints in which civil and ecclesiastical society would be modeled after the patterns established by Moses and evident in the division of Angels in myriads: in the order of tens, hundreds, or thousands (“Preface” B4-B4v). Arranged in groups with one elected ruler for every ten households, these elected officials would form a council of five, governing fifty families, a council of ten for every one hundred families—all the way up to the highest council of rulers headed by Christ. His government would thus be administered by councilors convening in progressively higher courts while receiving guidance from the Holy Scriptures. Thus, the Word of God would become the supreme measure for all the world. Eliot instituted this form of government in his communities of Praying Indians with some success. If his Mosaic administration was thus closer to Biblical precedent than any colonial government in Boston, then Eliot, ironically, set some sort of beacon for the capital of the Bay. He was wise enough not to press the issue.

The layman’s point of view on matters apocalyptic is represented in Edward Johnson’s *The Wonder-Working Providence of Sions Saviour in New-England* (London, 1654). Like Judge Samuel Sewall’s much later *Phaenomena quaedam Apocalyptica* (Boston, 1697), Johnson’s text demonstrates that millennialism was not solely in the domain of the clergy. As a military leader of Woburn, Johnson (1508-1672) knew much about service in the militia. It is therefore not surprising that his millennialism is surcharged with images of the church militant—the church in battle against Antichrist—led by Christ and “freeing his people from their long servitude under usurping Prelacy.”<sup>17</sup> Assuming the prophetic voice of some latter-day military leader in the army of Christ, Johnson intoned his millenarian rallying cry: “You are called to be faithful Souldiers of Christ, not onely to assist in building up his Churches, but also in pulling downe the Kingdome of Anti-Christ, then sure you are not set up for tollerating times” (30). Significant is that throughout his *Wonder-Working Providence*, Johnson speaks of the battle against Antichrist as having begun: a clear indication that his fervency was informed by an imminent millennium. No wonder Johnson does not shrink from encouraging his Christian soldiers to die gleefully, for the promised resurrection would almost be instantaneous: “Babylon is fallen. . . . Nay I can tell you a farther word of encouragement, every true-hearted Souldier that falls by the sword in this fight, shall not lye dead long, but stand upon his feet again, and be made partaker of the triumph of his Victory: and none can be overcome, but by turning his back in fight” (271). Johnson is unclear on whether those who died fighting against Antichrist were saints of the first resurrection, who would then (as Alsted and Davenport believed) share in the corporeal first resurrection and in Christ’s government on earth.

So far as can be gathered from the evidence, millennialism was certainly a significant facet in the works of the leading ministers and laymen of the period. But we must be cautious not to project such

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<sup>17</sup> *Johnson’s Wonder-Working Providence*. Ed. by J. F. Jameson. New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910. 23.

fervency back into the settler's motivation for emigrating to New England in the first place—certainly not during the first wave of migration (1620-1640s). The earliest Puritan documents with sustained millennial fervor in New England can be dated from 1639. There was no divine “Errand into the Wilderness” at the outset. Rather, with the political crisis in England, the coming Civil War and Interregnum, just as much as with the proliferation of eschatological theories in the early decades of the seventeenth century, millennialism became a defining feature in the sermon literature of the time. As Johnson's providence history demonstrates, New England millennialists (clergy and layman alike) invented a religious errand as a means to stem the tide of reverse migration to Old England at a time when the crown of England was likely to be offered to the King of Kings. We also need to be reminded that neither Johnson nor any of his confreres believed that perfection was possible on either side of the millennium. In fact, there is sufficient evidence that at least until the time when, in his “Triparadisus” manuscript, Cotton Mather (1663-1728) began to advocate a supernatural millennium of immortal saints both in heaven and on earth, the inchoate millennium of progressive sanctification tempered by sin, disease, and death (even among the saved nations) was the standard form of millennialism—certainly in the authors discussed here.

### ***Premillennialism, the Conflagration, and the Conversion of Israel***

The debate on whether the millennium of peace was past or future spilled over into the next generation of American eschatologists. Perhaps the best example of how some of its leading representatives struggled with this issue can be seen in Increase Mather's “New Jerusalem” (c. 1689-95) and in *A Dissertation on the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (London, 1709) as well as in Cotton Mather's eschatological tract “Problema Theologicum” (1703). It is safe to say that both father and son were of one mind on these issues until roughly 1720 when son Cotton began to put forth this new theories in “Triparadisus,” recently published in *The Threefold Paradise of Cotton Mather* (1995). His earlier “Problema Theologicum” (c. 1695-1703) is an attempt to persuade his Salem colleague Nicholas Noyes (1647-1717) to relinquish his preterist millennium in favor of Alsted's futurist system. At the opening of his argument, Mather identifies his principal opponents who placed the millennium of the church either [1] at *Christ's birth*, or [2] at *Christ's death*, or [3] at the *fall of Jerusalem* by the Romans in 70, or [4] at the *baptism of Constantine I*, who became the first Christian emperor of Rome in 306, or [5] at *Luther's Reformation* in 1517. And in one fell swoop, as only Cotton Mather knew how, the pastor of the Second Church of Boston attempted to set the record straight: Christ will appear at the beginning *and* end of the millennium; the first and second resurrection are both literal and corporeal; the raised saints of the first resurrection would rule visibly in a *literal* New Jerusalem in the heavens, hovering over the restored Jerusalem in the new earth (“Problema”423; *Threefold Paradise* 245); the millennium begins with a literal yet partial conflagration confined mostly to Italy and ends with a global fire dissolving the elements; and last but not least, an inchoate millennium of raised saints ruling over the saved nations of mortals who had escaped the partial conflagration.

For our purposes, Cotton Mather's early views on the first resurrection are again crucial for the development of his later eschatological system in his *Threefold Paradise*. He berated his allegorizing colleagues who saw the first resurrection merely in terms of a person's conversion and of the church's reformation. But as if remembering that his illustrious grandfather John Cotton had espoused the exact same allegorical position more than sixty years earlier in *The Resurrection of the Churches*, Mather became more conciliatory: “It will not Do! It implies that the Martyred Saints, *Lived again*, only in their *Successors*, not in their *own Persons*; whereas, the *Resurrection*, as the word itself imports, is of *the Same*.” In fact, it would be disheartening to these saints and martyrs if they came

alive only in their successors who carry out their bidding in the millennial earth (“Problema” 407). To settle the issue once and for all, Mather enlisted Justin Martyr (c. 100-c. 165), Irenaeus (c. 130-c. 200), Papias (c. 60-130), and Polycarp (c. 69-c. 155) in his battle against the allegorizers of the first resurrection among whom Mather identifies Jerome (c. 342-420), Eusebius (c. 260-c. 340), Cornelius à Lapide (1567-1637), and Caesar Baronius (1538-1607).

If Mather seemed more than certain on the issue of the corporeal nature of the raised saints in heaven, he was more cautious on the issue of their mortal counterparts on earth. Like his predecessors, he believed in an inchoate millennium of saved, albeit mortal, nations. In this early work, he did not quite know what to make of those nations who had not yet come to accept Christianity. These “Nations in the Remoter Skirts of the World,” Mather speculated, “will not be under so high a Dispensation of Christianity, as those that ly nearer to ye *City of God*, & under its more Direct and Shining Influences” (“Problema” 422). These intractable nations required “a Rod of Iron” to make them see the light, their remaining sinfulness constantly leading them astray. Thus wondering, Mather raised the issue point blank: “How far *Sin* shall be extinguished and Extirpated among the *Righteous*, by whom the *New Earth* is now inhabited?” (423). Thus wondering, Mather listed it as a theological query alongside the issue of the rapture (1 Thess. 4:15) and invited his fellow millennialists to present their written answers in print or at their next meeting.

Mather was not happy with such an imperfect millennium in which saints and sinners would still be plagued by sin, disease, and death. Neither did he like the idea of two separate conflagrations, a partial one destroying the papal dominions of Italy at the beginning, and a global one at the end of the millennium—offered as a hermeneutical compromise in Drue Cressener’s *The Judgements of God upon the Roman-Catholick Church* (London, 1689).<sup>18</sup> But how else would the saints alive at Christ’s Second Coming escape the burning fire unless the conflagration were limited in space and time to a particular region of the Old World? Joseph Mede had not solved this issue to his satisfaction either, for he too had opted for a double conflagration when he limited the initial conflagration to “exactly M.DC furlongs, or 200 Italian miles” of the papal territories in Italy, however leaving the ancient terrain “occupied by the *Babylonians*, *Persian*, and *Graecian* Kingdomes . . . untouched” (*Works* 593). Neither was Mather happy with Mede’s vacillation between an inchoate millennium of gradual improvement within history and a supernatural millennium in which the saints alive on earth would attain their immortality suddenly and rapturously in the clouds of heaven (1 Thess. 4:17), before being returned to fill the Earth with their immortalized offspring (Mede, *Works* 775). These issues rankled him a great deal and were subject to countless debates with his father Increase at least until 1720, yet Cotton tried to make amends in his final treatise on the issue. Instrumental in Mather’s break with his predecessors and decisive for the development of premillennialism in America was a little-known tract by Praisegod Barbon (fl. 1670s), whose *Good Things to Come* (London, 1675) addressed the issue of an inchoate millennium as well and argued for a supernatural solution. The immortality of the saints would be attained either by a corporeal resurrection of the dead or by a corporeal transformation of the living: “the one, is by dying; and after lying a time in the grave: rising again, or being raised out of the prison grave at the sounding of the trumpet of God. . . . The other way is, by not dying, but being changed, in a moment, at the very same time, the dead are raised [1 Thess.4:17]. This change: is a mistery; a secret: not much taken notice of” (53). In short, the raised saints, just as much as the changed saints (saved nations), would attain their immortality miraculously; the one by corporeal resurrection, the other by corporeal transformation without first incurring death. Both classes of saints would be endowed with immortal bodies, yet their function in the millennial earth would differ greatly. No doubt, the position of the raised saints would be more

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<sup>18</sup> See especially 284-99.

illustrious, their principal function to serve as kings, priests, and governors over their fellow inhabitants; the changed saints, though not far behind, would be mainly concerned with the more menial tasks of rebuilding and repopulating the burned earth with immortal offspring—duties from which their superiors were exempted (Barbon 59-65). Suddenly, all pieces of his eschatological puzzle seemed to fit together, and Mather could now iron out the remaining kinks as he pinned down his new system less than a year before his death.

The Petrine conflagration of the globe (2 Pet. 3) was one of those problems that could now be addressed with some consistency, for the earth's predicted dissolution was now no longer impeded by the saved nations, whose remaining mortality had necessitated a limited conflagration to allow for their escape. Indeed, this inelegant solution had been less than satisfying, but with Mather's new system of the changed saints in place, he could turn his back on Mede, Cressener, even his father Increase, and assert a single, yet global conflagration at the opening of the millennium (*Threefold Paradise* 314-16). With this puzzle solved, Mather could now address a much more threatening problem of a different sort raised by the Dutch jurist and theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and by his English colleague Henry Hammond (1605-1660). In its literal sense, Grotius and Hammond argued, the Petrine conflagration was applicable only to the historical destruction of Jerusalem; any futurist application of the fire dissolving the heavens and the earth would violate the historical context of the prophecy and had to be understood in an allegorical sense. Preterists like Grotius and Hammond thus subverted the very foundation on which much of the literalist's expectation of the future conflagration depended.

That the Atlantic proved no barrier to the hermeneutical tempests gathering strength in Europe can be seen in Mather's *Threefold Paradise*. His incessant calculations of prophetic chronometry repeatedly provoked a retrenchment of his avowed literalism. Yet while Mather willingly compromised on his literalist stance on the restoration of the Jewish nation, he drew his line of battle in front of the camp of the metaphorists who ridiculed the hyperbolic language of the Hebrew prophets. Grotius' allegorist disciples missed the whole point by ignoring the prophetic intent of the Scripture, Mather countered. Nor did they understand the typological design of the "Prophetic Spirit," for which "the lesser *Particular Judgments*" were "an *Earnest* as well as a *Figure*, of the *General One*, wherein the *Frame of Nature* shall be dissolved" (184). Preterist exegesis, Mather retorted, attenuated the prophetic spirit, which true to God's design, intended a double fulfillment: The smaller event generally accomplished in the historical past of the prophet's own time really signified a second, much larger, and most of all, literal fulfillment in the latter days. This was certainly the case with the Petrine prophecy, Mather judged, which in predicting the immediate fall of Jerusalem actually intended the passing away of heaven and earth at Christ's Second Coming. In redressing the contradictions of his millenarian thought, Mather—like his English colleagues—was forced to adjust his taxonomy to maintain the interior logic of his system. At the same time, he safeguarded his literalism by merging Cartesian notions of the earth's fiery magma with the modifications introduced by John Ray (1628-1705), in *Three Physico-Theological Discourses*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (London, 1713), Thomas Burnet (c. 1635-1715), in *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (London, 1684), and ultimately by William Whiston (1667-1752), in *A New Theory of the Earth* (London, 1696). Mather was not far behind his English colleagues in explaining the supernatural conflagration in terms of its feasibility. And gathering evidence about volcanoes existing in every hemisphere, he was convinced that the Lord of Hosts would muster at his coming the unextinguishable fire of the deep to do his bidding: "What Commotions, what Convulsions has this Planet, in many Parts of it suffered from Subterraneous *Combustions*, and such Amassments of *Igneous Particles*, which are an *Eternal Fire*, breaking forth at those formidable *Spiracles*, which if they had not been afforded, the Globe would, no doubt, have been torn to Peeces!" (*Threefold Paradise* 209). In short, the holocaust of nature did not require



supernatural intervention—all that God had to do was to withdraw his restraint from the fiery magma locked up in the earth, and the whole globe would turn into a lake of fire.

Praisegod Barbon's *Good Things to Come* (1675) also helped Cotton Mather to solve yet another puzzling issue that had long resisted clarification. Most millennialists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries insisted that the Jewish nation would play a central part in the Second Coming of the Messiah and in the theocracy of the new heavens and the new earth. St. Paul had foretold their restoration in Romans 11, predicting that their unbelief would be removed, and natural Israel then embrace Christianity in everlasting communion with the Ancient of Days. Most millenarians agreed therefore that the Jews' return to the Holy Land and their national conversion were the most reliable signs of Christ's Second Coming and of the end of the times of the Gentiles. More important, these events were prerequisite to the golden age, which would be postponed until their accomplishment. Few millenarians differed from this mainstay of Christian exegesis popularized by Joseph Mede. He theorized that nothing short of a miracle could effect this conversion, whose smaller type was evidenced in St. Paul's mystical conversion on the road to Damascus: "That of the *Jews* may be like it; *viz.* That though many were present with *S. Paul* at that time, yet none saw the apparition of Christ, nor heard him speak, but *Paul* alone" (*Works* 767). This exegetical issue did not enter the limelight of eschatological speculations until the renowned Dutch Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604-57) published his tractate *Spes Israelis* (Amsterdam, 1648), in which he validated earlier eyewitness accounts by Antonio de Montezinos that the Lost Tribes of Israel had been discovered in the Peruvian Andes. This alleged discovery in America raised tremendous hopes among millennialists all across Europe, and when Shabb'tai Zvi (1626-76), a Turkish Jew from Smyrna, proclaimed himself the messiah and called on European and Ottoman Jews to return to the Holy Land, the excitement of the 1660s reached a feverish pitch. A commemorative marker at the Eisener Steg, a bridge crossing the Main river in Frankfurt, Germany, still testifies to the millenarian ferment of the day, when many members of Frankfurt's Jewry boarded barges for Amsterdam to return to the Holy Land.

Increase Mather spoke for all of his Puritan colleagues in New England when he pleaded for the literal restoration of Israel in his book-length *The Mystery of Israel's Conversion* (London, 1669) and in his updated interpretation *Diatriba de Signo Filii Hominis* (Amsterdam, 1682) in response to several European colleagues who were prone to read Romans 11 as an allegory of the Christian church. Championed by Hugo Grotius, Henry Hammond, Jacob Batalerio (1593-1672), James Calvert (d. 1698), John Lightfoot (1602-75), later joined by Richard Baxter and others, these notable scholars adopted a preterist interpretation of Romans 11 and asserted with Grotius that St. Paul's prophecy had literally been fulfilled in the first two centuries of the Christian church when the churches of Palestine, Asia Minor, and Rome mostly consisted of Christian Jews. St. Paul's prediction, so they argued, must therefore be understood literally only of the Christian Jews and their offspring, who through intermarriage with their Gentile brethren lost their distinction. Any latter-day conversion of the Jews as a nation was therefore illogical and had to be understood of the surrogate Israel, the Christian church. This radical subversion of millenarian hope triggered a widespread debate in which the literalist and allegorist camps positioned their arms at each other's hermeneutical foundation.

In his old age, the renowned English clergyman Richard Baxter (1615-91) defected and went over to the allegorists—much to the dismay of all those who appreciated his conservative Presbyterianism. In justifying his new position in *The Glorious Kingdom of Christ* (London, 1691), he dedicated his treatise to Increase Mather, who was then in London and negotiated New England's second charter at the court of William and Mary, calling on his American friend to debate the issue. Mather complied in his *Dissertation Concerning the Future Conversion of the Jewish Nation* (London, 1709), but did not publish his rejoinder until almost two decades after Baxter's death. Back in New England, Cotton Mather joined the debate by issuing his *Faith of the Fathers* (Boston, 1699), a catechism that aimed at

converting Jewish readers in America. The anticipated conversion of the Jewish nation just before the millennium never quite squared with Cotton Mather's own conjecture that Christ's sudden coming, like a thief in the night, would find the whole Christian world in a dead slumber. How could the sleepy world be caught off guard by his coming, if such telling signs as Israel's national conversion were to precede the Second Coming? Something did not jibe here. And to join the postmillennialist camp of Daniel Whitby, whose *Treatise of the True Millennium* (1703) asserted the rise of a Jewish monarchy during the millennium, was altogether out of the question to Mather. Perhaps Hugo Grotius' preterist reading deserved another chance. If St. Paul's prediction was really fulfilled in the times of the early church and in the surrogation of the Gentiles as the elect, then the Jews' literal conversion was already past and thus the surprise of Christ's coming in the clouds of fire could still be maintained. So ruminating in the last decade of his life, Cotton Mather defined his ultimate thoughts in his *Threefold Paradise* (295-318), in which he turned allegorist on the issue of Israel's conversion by insisting on their surrogation by Gentile Christians, yet lambasted all those who dared to join Grotius and allegorize the envisioned conflagration. The fine lines between literal and allegorical exegesis had to be drawn somewhere to keep his house in order.

Mather's friends in Boston were shocked to find a defector amidst their own conservative ranks. Judge Samuel Sewall (1652-1730) tried to ward off such Deist inroads by dusting off his earlier *Phaenomena* (1697), reminding Cotton of his father's orthodox position in *Mystery* (1669) and *Future Conversion* (1709), and appending Samuel Willard's literalist defense *The Fountain Opened* (1700) to the second edition of his *Phaenomena* (Boston, 1727). In the next generation, Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) held fast to orthodoxy and pointed to Judea as the land where God's promise would be fulfilled: "Without doubt, they will return to their own land," he asserted in his "Notes on the Apocalypse," yet "remain a distinct nation" even after their conversion, to be "a visible monument of God's wonderful grace and power in their calling and conversion." In the Holy Land, "Religion and learning will there be at the highest; more excellent books will be there written," and "all nations will be as free to come to Judea, or to dwell in Jerusalem, as into any other city or country, and have the same privilege there as they themselves."<sup>19</sup> Postmillennialists like Joseph Bellamy and Samuel Hopkins were not far behind their master in asserting the literal accomplishment of Romans 11. The destruction of Antichrist and his pagan and Moslem allies prior to the millennium "will open the way for their return to the land given to their ancestors," Hopkins determined in *A Treatise of the Millennium* (Boston, 1793). But whether God's ancient people would "continue a distinct people" during the millennium or "intermix with others" can only be settled after the fact (119, 120). At the fall of the Roman Antichrist and of his Turkish ally, the "powerful obstacles to the coming in of the Jews" would be removed, Connecticut's own Thomas Wells Bray (1738-1808), pastor of Guilford, intoned in his *Dissertation on the Sixth Vial* (Hartford, 1780), during the War of Independence (39).

It is safe to say that with a few exceptions, the return of God's ancient people remained an exegetical touchstone in the millenarian treatises throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet such niceties of interpretation were not always taken too literally as the pressures of political upheavals in America called for a prompt response from the pulpit. Perhaps the zeal of the moment prevailed as the revolution loomed on the horizon; for as America's patriotic clergy called on God's newly chosen people to defend his American Israel against the tyranny of the English Antichrist, the civil millenarians of the period had long forgotten Nicholas Noyes' neat (perhaps too neat) distinction

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<sup>19</sup> "Notes on the Apocalypse." In *Apocalyptic Writings*. Ed. by Stephen J. Stein. *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1977. 5:135.

between the literal application of God's prophetic promises to his ancient people and the "Analogical sense" and "Analogical Accomodation" to God's surrogate Israel, the Protestant church in America.<sup>20</sup>

### ***The Great Awakening and Jonathan Edwards***

Much, perhaps too much, has been made of Jonathan Edwards' heady assertion that the revivals in his day might be "the beginning or forerunner of something vastly great" in America.<sup>21</sup> If his conniving colleagues ridiculed him for reading the spiritual awakening in New England as signs of the millennium lately begun in Northampton, modern critics are no less liable to fall into the same trap—albeit for different reasons. Roughly until the early 1980s, historians of the period were wont to see the events of the First Great Awakening (1734-35; 1739-43) as some sort of latter-day manifestation of the Puritan errand into an American wilderness. The surprising conversions up and down the Connecticut Valley began in the winter of 1734/35, sporadically swept across New England, and climaxed in mass revivals in the years between 1739-1743. Such unprecedented outpourings of the spirit certainly required official interpretation especially in the wake of charges by Old-Light theologians that Jonathan Edwards and his compeers had fallen prey to dangerous enthusiasms and delusions by mistaking raised affections for the work of grace (Charles Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New-England* [Boston, 1743]). But there were others who looked on these occurrences in New England with much more expecting eyes. Inquiries from home and abroad kept fueling the debate. Thomas Prince (1687-1758), for instance, was eager to publish eye-witness accounts of the surprising conversions in his *Christian History* (2 vols. Boston, 1744-45) for his inquisitive readers on both sides of the Atlantic. Likewise, John Gillies (fl. 1740-60s) edited his *Historical Collections* (2 vols. Glasgow, 1754) and involuntarily supplied grist for the mills of later historians in search of their own usable past. If Edwards' contemporaries constructed their interpretations as signs of providential history unfolding in front of their very eyes, early nineteenth-century participants in the "Second Great Awakening" (1790-1840) just as much as late nineteenth-century historians reinvented Jonathan Edwards as an ideal if not convenient figure to reify their own views of a First Great Awakening as a formative event in American religious history. This "interpretive fiction" says as much about our present need of reconstructing cultural history in our own image as it does about past historians who inscribed their own agendas into the subtexts of their histories. Whether "great" or small, the Great Awakening and its principal participants are presently being reinvented not the least in the republication of Jonathan Edwards' works in the mighty Yale edition (1957--).

Scholars of the period may do well in examining the development of Edwards' eschatological thought in terms of the continuity or discontinuity of his interpretive environment. If Edwards really did focus myopically on America as the center of latter-day activities (as historians searching for the roots of America's national identity are wont to discover), then we should be able to substantiate these interpretations in the deep structure of his millenarian theories. Among his most valuable works on the issue are his "Notes on the Apocalypse," a running commentary on the Revelation, begun in 1723 and continuously revised until his death in 1758; *An Humble Attempt* (Boston, 1747), a transatlantic endeavor to encourage concerted prayers to hasten the millennium<sup>22</sup>; *A History of the Work of Redemption* (1774), a historical and prophetic interpretation of soteriology from the creation

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<sup>20</sup> *New-Englands Duty and Interest* (Boston, 1698) 10, 42.

<sup>21</sup> *Thoughts on the Revival of Religion in New England* (1742), in *The Works of President Edwards*. 4 vols. New York: Robert Carter and Brothers, 1864. 3:316.

<sup>22</sup> Both of these works are reprinted in Stein's *Apocalyptic Writings*.

to the end of the millennium, in 30 sermons preached in 1739; and his recently published *The "Miscellanies,"* Edwards' encyclopedic commonplace book on all issues relevant to his theology.<sup>23</sup> If Edwards did expect to hear the silver trumpets in his own day, his public and private calculations of the millennium should provide us with helpful insight into the matter. The earliest published example of Edwards' calculations is his *Humble Attempt*. Here, Edwards voices his dissatisfaction with Moses Lowman (1680-1752), whose *Paraphrase and Notes on the Revelation of St. John* (London, 1737) is central to an understanding of Edwards' theology. Lowman conjectured that Antichrist's 1,260-year reign would terminate in 2016 "more than two hundred and fifty years hence" (*Humble Attempt* 394). Edwards did not like this late date at all and objected that Lowman placed Antichrist's rise "300 years later" than Joseph Mede did in his chronology (403). Mede's old mainstay of commencing the rise of Antichrist at Genseric's destruction of Rome in 456 or with the deposing of Romulus Augustulus, Rome's last emperor, in 476, yielded much earlier dates, according to which the fall of Antichrist could be expected either in 1716 or 1736. But while the latter date may have played some part in Edwards' response to the first outpouring of the spirit in the winter of 1734/35, by the time he was writing his *Humble Attempt* (1747), Mede had long been proven wrong (Edwards, *History* 412). But neither Lowman nor his French Huguenot colleague Charles Daubuz (1673-1717) seemed to furnish satisfactory calculations. Perhaps a much more revealing comment can be found in his private "Notes on the Apocalypse" (esp. no. 11-16), which have been dated to the "late spring or early summer of 1723" (77). Commenting on Rev. 13 and 20, Edwards conjectured that Antichrist's reign began in 606 and would therefore "end about 1866," even though he did not completely dismiss Lowman's conjecture about the year 2,000 ("Notes" 129). These two references provide a framework for Edwards' own expectation of Antichrist's fall. Yet Edwards is quick to remind us that this crucial event would *not* occur all at once, but during a period of gradual decline ("the drying up of the Euphrates") at which time Antichrist's revenues exacted from his regal supporters would totally dry up (*Humble Attempt* 410).

In explaining these events, Edwards kept supernatural explanations to a minimum, stressing Antichrist's gradual decline over a long period of time, rather than resorting to a miraculous intervention of God. Antichrist's waning power was already apparent since Luther's reformation in 1517. The loss of French Canada to the British terminating the French-Indian War (1754-63) further contributed to the pontiff's loss of revenue. So, too, the rebellion of Spain and Portugal and "the late peeling and impoverishing the Pope's temporal dominions in Italy, by the armies of the Austrians, Neapolitans and Spaniards" further weakened his power. Furthermore, his dominion was further curbed by the "almost miraculous taking of Cape Breton, in the year 1745, whereby was dried up one of the main sources of the wealth of the kingdom of France"; by the great earthquake of Lima (1746), which disrupted the flow of silver and gold to the Spanish crown; and by the loss of the French fleet under Duke D'Anville in 1747 (King George's War, 1744-48). These and more were all signs of the sixth vial poured out on Antichrist, whose gradual, yet inevitable demise, was already in progress (*Humble Attempt* 421, 422, 423). Whatever the year of this final dissolution and whatever shape, form, or opinion Antichrist might assume, Edwards called for concerted prayers on both sides of the Atlantic to cast him out—even if Antichrist lately changed his spots, appearing in the guise of Anabaptism, Quakerism, Socinianism, Arminianism, Arianism, and Deism (*History* 430-32).

That Antichrist would not relinquish his reign without battle unto death was all too clear to anyone who understood the prophetic "slaying of the witnesses" (Rev. 11:7-10). In fact, Jonathan Edwards worried in his *Humble Attempt* that if Moses Lowman were right in placing this dreadful calamity in the future, such an expectation of carnage just prior to the millennium of peace would be "a great

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<sup>23</sup> Ed. by Thomas A. Schafer, in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (1994), vol. 13.

damp to their hope, courage and activity, in praying for, and reaching after the speedy introduction of those gloriously promised times” (378). The anticipation of such doom would positively “deaden and keep down, life, hope and joyful expectation in prayer,” for in quickening the coming of Christ’s kingdom, the saints were in effect hastening their own doom: never in this life would they see the glory of Christ’s coming (379). Edwards could not reconcile himself to this futurist application. Like Mather before him, he was certain it was an event of the past as described in the martyrology of John Foxe, where the slaughter of the Waldenses, Albigensians, Bohemians, Huguenots, and Calvinists in Poland, Palatine, Lithuania, Holland, even in England under Queen Mary and King Charles I, fully answered the description of this prophetic event (*History* 419-29). Interestingly, Edwards’ American colleagues distanced themselves from Edwards’ preterization, even as they joined his concerted effort to pray for the coming of Christ (*Humble Attempt*, “Preface” 310).

Besides, Edwards objected, the gradual decline of Antichrist’s power since the Reformation would render this slaughter impossible—even if Satan’s visible empire on earth would join forces against true religion: the antichristian kingdom (the beast), the Mahometan kingdom (the false prophet), and the heathen kingdom (the dragon). They would join forces in all parts of the world as the heathens would battle “against Christianity in America, and in the East Indies, and Africa,” just like “the Mahometans and papists do in the other parts of the world” (“Notes” 174). Of all these looming events, the bloody defeat of the Ottoman Turks in 1697 and during the Russo-Turkish War (1735-39) was a harbinger of things to come (“Notes” 190-91). As is clearly evident from the many pages of commentary that Edwards invested in this issue, the horrors of Antichrist’s global warfare in Edwards’ postmillennialist system were not all that different from the awe-inspiring description of Christ’s supernatural destruction of Antichrist as championed by premillennialists of Cotton Mather’s persuasion. In either system, the events leading up to the millennium pictured fearsome desolation that only the strong in faith could broach with some measure of confidence. Whatever the precise nature of this imminent catastrophe, God would see to it that his people would not come to harm.

The main features of Edwards’ millennialism were certainly not new in his day, and neither Daniel Whitby, nor Moses Lowman, nor Charles Daubuz can be credited for being his principal sources of inspiration on these issues. Again crucial here is that Edwards followed the Augustinianism of his predecessors Brightman, Alsted, and Cotton, and allegorized the first resurrection (Rev. 20:5) as a spiritual conversion of individuals (Edwards, “Notes” 144-45, 151). Significant, too, is that Edwards’ millennium remains inchoate, a mixture of the saints in heaven ruling through their spiritual successors over their mortal and sinful counterparts in the earth. The corporeal resurrection of body and soul would be “absolutely necessary” for both classes of saints (Rev. 20:6, 14), for the soul in separation from the body cannot achieve “complete happiness” (“*Miscellanies*” 179). However, this union would not occur until judgment day, when God would establish his literal new heavens and new earth, of which its inchoate counterpart was merely a spiritual type. St. John’s Revelation is not hyperbolic, Edwards insisted, but employs “mixed prophecies” that have “an eye to several events” (“Notes” 150) adumbrated in double manifestations: the first during the golden age of Christ’s spiritual reign and the second after the literal resurrection at the end, when the New Jerusalem descending from Heaven (Rev. 21:2) would be established on a literal new earth located in an altogether different part of the universe (“Notes” 151-52).

Edwards’ double application of the new heavens and new earth has frequently been mistaken for the same eschatological event in time. It is evidently inspired by his British colleagues Thomas Burnet, William Whiston, and Isaac Newton (1642-1727), who had much to say about the predicted conflagration of the earth (2 Peter 3), the globe’s condition and location following its dissolution. Edwards was certainly familiar with their daring theories. Adopting some of their interpretations, Edwards insisted that the Petrine conflagration was not a metaphor for human warfare, as Sir Isaac

Newton opined in his famous *Observations upon the Prophecies* (London, 1733), nor an allegory of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem, as Grotius and Hammond argued in their *Annotations* (1642) and *Paraphrase* (1653), but a literal melting and total dissolution of the earth's elements, as asserted in Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684-91). This hyperliteralism becomes significant in light of William Whiston's conjecture that after its conflagration by a passing comet "the Earth will desert its present Seat and Station in the World, and be no longer found among the Planetary Chorus."<sup>24</sup> Edwards was not far behind his English colleagues. As the eternal abode of the corporeal Saints following the universal resurrection, the new earth must surpass in glory even its millennial predecessor. A purging by fire, Edwards felt, could do no more than facilitate the "primitive state" of this new earth, but not achieve a "new creation." His pyrotechnics therefore necessitated a new planet altogether: If the Petrine description of the earth's melting elements is to be taken literally, then "this globe with all its appurtenances is clear gone, out of the way; and this [planet] is a new one, materially as well as in form." Its location, though the Bible did not say so, would likely be in "some glorious place in the universe prepared for this end by God, removed at an immense distance from the solar system" ("Notes" 140-41), while the old earth consumed in the flames of fire "shall be the place of the damned" (*Miscellanies* 376). Edwards knew enough about the state of contemporary science to assert with Burnet and Whiston that God's prophecies did not represent these cosmic phenomena "according to philosophic verity, but as they appeared to our eyes." Yet Edwards was convinced "that this place shall be remote from the solar system" ("Notes" 141-42). A totally new creation of the globe was all the more logical, Edwards observed, because nothing in nature could last forever. The habitation where the blessed would reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:5) must needs be an eternal abode not subject to mutability: "'Tis manifest God did not make these fleeting systems for an eternal duration as might be more fully shown, if the place were proper for such a philosophical discourse" ("Notes" 141-42). From these passages we can gather that for Edwards the restitution of all things after the day of judgment, when the corporeal saints would enjoy immortality in primitive purity, did not imply stasis or cessation of all deterioration, but an everlasting rise and fall of all matter. Not even God's restitution of all things could offset the inevitable laws of nature, and Edwards was too much of an Enlightenment thinker to ignore the scientific knowledge of the day.

What then did Edwards' millennial earth look like, when Satan was bound, the gospel preached universally, even though the saints on earth retained their mortality and sinful disposition? For Edwards, the whole earth would be filled with universal peace and love. Naturally, there would be righteous governors who love their people, ministers who cherish their parishioners in sweet harmony, people who joyfully submit to their rulers, churches without division or strife, discipline without dissent, and all inscrutable points of biblical exegesis clarified for good. "It may be hoped that then many of the Negroes and Indians will be divines, and that excellent books will be published in Africa, in Ethiopia, in Turkey—and not only very learned men, but others that are more ordinary men, shall then be very knowing in religion" (*History* 480). In short, all nations in all parts of the habitable globe would be united in "sweet harmony." Geographic isolation would cease through improved communication, and "the art of navigation" fully dedicated to holy uses, as the saints the world over would gather around Christ's throne in Judea, "at the center of the kingdom of Christ, communicating influences to all other parts" ("Notes" 134). With all things in beautiful proportion, there would be "a time of great temporal prosperity," improvement of health, ease, material wealth, and "great increase in children," as each and every one "shall build houses, and inhabit them" (*History* 480-85) and benefit from all useful knowledge and improvements in "the arts and sciences" (*Humble Attempt* 338-39, 342-43, 359).

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<sup>24</sup> *A New Theory of the Earth* (1696). 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (London, 1737), pt. II, 289, 291.

Edwards' inviting description of these Edenic prospects reverberate in the works of his principal disciples, the Congregationalist minister Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, Connecticut, and Dr. Samuel Hopkins, fervent abolitionist pastor of the First Congregational Church in Newport, Rhode Island. Both clergymen were faithful to the Edwardsian tradition of the millennium and differed only in minor points from his New Light exegesis. For instance, in his vastly popular homily *The Millennium* (Boston, 1758), Bellamy largely dissociated his millennialism from direct references to contemporary events. Yet everyone of his parishioners knew what he meant when he offered comfort in visions of hope and peace so befitting this "terrible darkness" of the French-Indian War (1754-63). In the glorious days of the millennium, universal peace would prevail, all war would cease, and the nations beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning-hooks (Isa. 2:4). No doubt, such soothing words (no matter how apolitical in outlook) were welcome balm in the face of wartime ravages, when death and desolation depleted the resources of the colonies. But come the millennium in 2016, as Moses Lowman seemed to suggest, Bellamy was certain everyone would diligently work in his calling, live in his own house, and eat the fruits of his own labor, while all the losses and suffering of the great war would be forgotten in the billions of new offspring populating the new earth: "It is certain that this Globe will be able to sustain with Food and Raiment, a Number of Inhabitants greater than ever yet dwelt on it at a time. And if *all* these shall *know the Lord* . . . it will naturally come to pass, that there will be more saved in these Thousand Years, then ever before dwelt upon the Face of the Earth from the Foundation of the World" (*The Millennium* 63-64). And if Bellamy were not mistaken in modifying the conjectures of Thomas Burnet and William Whiston, then the ratio between the eternally lost and saved would be 1 in 17,476 during a millennial period of peace and plenty that might last as long as 360,000 years (*Millennium* 50-53, 64-66).

That Bellamy's popular *Millennium* greatly impressed parishioners far and wide is well known, notwithstanding the fact that Hopkins at century's end did not see why God would need 360,000 years to accomplish the task of saving his elect. A literal period of a thousand years would be totally sufficient. In chapter 2 of his *Treatise of the Millennium* (Boston, 1793), Hopkins agreed with Lowman and Bellamy that the hoped-for millennium was little more than 200 years off. Yet that did not deter Hopkins from dedicating his tract to all those who would live during those halcyon days. In fact, his glowing description rose to a veritable crescendo of symphony and anticipated bliss as he sketched his picturesque vision on the canvas of his readers' imagination: Though far from being immortal, mankind would continue to incur death, yet without "painful sickness or distress of body and mind" and without grief to their "surviving relatives and friends" who would "expect soon to arrive" in the invisible world as well (75). While here on earth, they would enjoy eminent degrees of holiness short of perfection. Holy teachers would enlighten the nations in all useful branches of the arts and sciences that promote spiritual and bodily comforts in this life. Unanimous belief in God and unanimity in his worship would banish all sectarian strife and disagreeable doctrines while promoting political harmony through separation of church and state (79). Though hardly a republican government of, by, or for the people, Christ's monarchy would uphold material prosperity through improvements in the "art of husbandry" and the cultivation of the soil, increasing its productivity "20, 30, and perhaps an 100 fold more" (71). Great discoveries and inventions in the mechanical arts would ensure that "all utensils, clothing, buildings, &c. will be formed and made, in a better manner, and with much less labour . . . beyond our present conception" (71). No "more than 2 or 3 hours in a day" would be necessary to acquire one's wherewithal, leaving ample time for "reading and conversation" and the improvement of one's mind (72). No doubt, the global population would increase in an unprecedented fashion without leading to strife, famine, or war.

International communication would be fostered by one universal language taught throughout the world. And "this useless and imprudent waste of time and money" to which millions of young

scholars were subjected in learning dead languages, Hopkins' Yankee ingenuity surmised, would finally cease (75). That Samuel Hopkins not even once alluded to the American Revolution or the independence of the United States so painfully acquired during his lifetime certainly speaks loudly. The internecine rhetoric of Federalists and Anti-Federalists, the contrasting visions of Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson, clearly indicated to Hopkins that the political messiah had not come to the young republic, the millennium not begun. Concentrating on the timeless promises of God was far safer than being swept up by the patriotic rhetoric of his misguided colleagues.

If Hopkins' vision of abundant happiness struck a responsive chord in his parishioners, then Elhanan Winchester's *Universal Restoration exhibited in a Series of Dialogues* (London, 1793) would equally appeal to those who had no patience with a wrathful God condemning all sinners to eternal perdition. An English Baptist turned Universalist, Elhanan Winchester (1751-97) came to the United States late in his life and preached his new doctrine to whoever was willing to listen. His tract is modeled after Justin Martyr's famous *Dialogue with Trypho* (c. 156), in which a sympathetic interlocutor raises questions to facilitate the teacher's programmatic answers. In his *Universal Restoration*, Winchester took issue with the Calvinist doctrine of arbitrary election and eternal reprobation, asserting instead that all mankind, no matter how sinful, would ultimately attain redemption through a cycle of retribution, conviction, and conversion. The doctrine of eternal punishment (no matter how small the crime) seemed unreasonable to this former Baptist, for a God of fairness could not be presumed to punish mankind eternally: "The current doctrine of *endless misery*, destroys this rule of equity and proportion: for though it contends for degrees of future punishment, yet it makes the duration the same, whether men sin more or less" (5). Besides, such indiscriminate punishment would merely harden reprobates in their belief that God's punitive measures were akin to vindictiveness.

More to the point, Winchester argued, the apostles rarely ever used the term *everlasting* ("aionian") in the context of "damnation" (17). And mustering more than fifty passages in which the terms *everlasting* and *forever* signified a limited period of time (f. e. Hab. 3:6), Winchester brushed aside all those who relished the eternal fires of hell where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched (18-19). Even the "second death" (Rev. 20:14) could not be everlasting, but was limited to a specific duration of time, while the earth's elements were turned into liquid fire. Besides, since the melting earth would be the seat of hell, it could only last as long as there were "combustible matter" available. It followed, that those who partook in the second death would also be restored to eternal life on the new earth, their period of punishment in the lake of fire terminated, when sinners had sufficiently atoned for their iniquity. Subsequent to their restoration, they would willingly undergo conversion and gladly join the saints of the New Jerusalem in the worship of Christ their Redeemer. In this manner, the "universal deliverance of all men from the bondage of sin" would be accomplished (181), and eternal happiness be the lot of all mankind. Such promises of universal redemption certainly appealed to Winchester's spiritual descendants in early nineteenth-century America, as the Transcendentalists formulated their credo of man's divinity in union with an all-loving Over-Soul.

### ***The American Revolution and the Arms of the Pulpit Regiment***

If Winchester represents the first stirrings of Universalism in the young republic, then David Austin (1760-1831), Yale graduate and Presbyterian colleague in Elizabethtown, New Jersey, is a milestone of rabid millenarian fervor, wedding his patriotic rhetoric of freedom and independence to liberty of (Protestant) conscience. Austin's *The Downfall of Mystical Babylon* (Elizabeth Town, 1794) eagerly asserts his Edwardsian roots by reprinting Bellamy's *Millennium* and Edwards'



*Humble Attempt.* Yet Austin's mixing of the sacred with the profane goes beyond anything that either of his predecessors would have deemed appropriate or safe. The United States of America represented to David Austin the apocalyptic "stone cut out of the mountain" soon to cover the whole earth (Dan. 2:31-45). Young America, according to Austin, is that prophetic "kingdom of the stone," born on July 4, 1776, steeled in the War of Independence, and soon to become the kingdom of the mountain in its conquest of the political pagans the world over: "Behold the *regnum montis*, the kingdom of the mountain, begun on the Fourth of July, 1776, when the *birth* of the MAN-CHILD—the hero of the civil and religious liberty took place in these United States. Let them read the predictions of heaven respecting the increase of his dominion—that he was *to rule all nations with a rod of iron*. . . . Behold, then, this hero of America wielding the standard of civil and religious liberty over these United States" (392-93). The American man-child must spill the blood of civil and ecclesiastical tyranny by smashing the feet of Nebuchadnezzar's Antichrist, Austin intoned, as he called on his fellow ministers to wield their spiritual weapons in pulling down the anti-Christian strongholds across the Atlantic. The ongoing revolution in France that outlawed the Roman Catholic Church and confiscated its property signaled the next stage in Antichrist's declining power.

Thus for the United States to become the kingdom of the mountain and cover the whole earth, a second, albeit spiritual, revolution would have to take place (sometime in 1813) in which the ideas of liberty, democracy, and Protestantism would mop up the rubble of the anti-Christian Babylon. "Is not the *Stone* now rolling against the feet and toes of the mighty image?" Austin enthusiastically appraised the French Revolution and its break from the tyranny of church and state (390). But while the European world was doing its share of fighting the beast, the church, escaped on the wings of an eagle, was safely ensconced in the American wilderness: "she hath her station upon the broad seal of the United States; and from thence has perched upon the pediment of the first government-house, dedicated to the dominion of civil and religious liberty, where she is still to be seen, an emblem of the protection of Providence towards our present government, and towards this our happy land" (415). And while thus celebrating the victory of good over evil, David Austin also built landing piers in the Long Island Sound to facilitate the return of American Jews to the Holy Land: the Second Coming was at hand. The notion of a civil millennium in which mitre and scepter were supplanted by liberty of conscience and political independence can be traced to the emergence of a republican eschatology in the decade before the French and Indian War. While some historians see this civic millennium as a direct outgrowth of the Great Awakening with its New Light emphasis on prayer, piety, and conversion, other historians point to eighteenth-century political philosophy and millenarian apocalyptic shared by both New and Old Light theologians. To suggest, however, that disillusioned postmillennialists turned to statecraft for signs of the Second Coming when the religious awakenings in the mid-1740s dwindled to a mere trickle seems to ignore the secular application of the prophecies implicit in Daniel and the Revelation. New Light millennialists did not have to replace their pious dictums with political metaphors to reawaken their parishioners, because all prophecies were to be interpreted by their post-facto accomplishment in the course of empire. Jonathan Edwards' *History of the Work of Redemption*, first preached between March and August 1739, is certainly no exception. Yet it is fair to suggest that this hybrid eschatology of politics and religion breathed new life into an ancient script, for in the wake of the Stamp Act of 1765 and the Quebec Act of 1774, millenarian tracts featured King George as Antichrist, the American colonists as the New World Israelites shackled in Egyptian bondage, and Jehovah of Armies as an American minuteman ready to cast his plagues upon any English (or French) pharaoh unwilling to let his people go. On this basic level, all denominations could make common cause and enlist behind the banner of virtue, liberty, and providence in God's American Israel. Opportunities for such a cause came early on.

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Early in King George's War, New England's regiments captured the French bastion of Louisbourg, in Nova Scotia, in July 1745, and founded Halifax as an English stronghold against the Catholic Acadians and their Indian allies. Newspapers and sermons up and down the East Coast celebrated Protestant victory over their antichristian enemy to the north. This blow against the "Man of Sin" furnished new themes for the political sermons in the decades before the Revolutionary War. As if Thomas Prince and Joseph Sewall of Boston had dusted off Cotton Mather's inveterate *Shaking Dispensations* (1715) and his only sermon in French *Une Grande Voix Du Ciel A La France* (1725), the fall of that "French Leviathan, the oldest son of Antichrist" was nothing less than "the Doings of God."<sup>25</sup> And as King George's War wore on into the French and Indian War (1754-1763) by which time George III was on the throne, the "Gallic threat" in French Canada virtually engrossed the spotlight in the sermon literature of the period. Painting images of bloodshed and rape, enslavement in Catholic dungeons and forced conversions by Jesuits no less, the black regiments of Ebenezer Pemberton (1705-77), Gad Hitchcock (1719-1803), Solomon Williams (1700-76), Isaac Stiles (1697-1760), and a whole host of others thundered from their pulpits doom and destruction—if God's people in Protestant New England did not unite behind the banner of their British majesty: "It is possible, our land may be given to the beast, the inhabitants to the sword, the righteous to the fire of martyrdom, our wives to ravishment, and our sons and daughters to death and torture."<sup>26</sup>

This Gallic threat to Protestantism was little short of rivaling the heinous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, when Guy Fawkes (1570-1606) tried to blow up king and parliament for the glory of the Church of Rome. By invoking the ominous language of warfare between Satan and Christ in the battle of Armageddon, ministers lent cosmic significance to the minutiae of infantry combat, mixing pious maxims with the ideals of civic liberty. Sermons were surcharged with ominous forebodings as parishioners flocked to the churches to hear the latest news from Quebec improved with apocalyptic significance. In the unfolding events of the period, Old and New-Light millenarians made common cause in focusing more on Antichrist's fall than on saving souls. This shift in focus set the stage for the Peace of Paris (1763), in which France relinquished her Canadian colonies to the British crown. Babylon has fallen, Harvard's euphoric Samuel Langdon (1723-97) proclaimed in his sermon *Joy and Gratitude to God* (Portsmouth, NH, 1760), "the final ruin of that spiritual tyranny and *mystery of iniquity*" was at hand (42-43).

The genre and language of the apocalypse proved so adaptable to the civic needs of clergy and statesmen that the myth of the Puritan Errand was put to new use: our fathers came to America for freedom of religion and to preserve their political liberties. Just like Jonathan Mayhew (1720-66), Andrew Eliot (1718-78), Nathaniel Appleton (1693-1784), Eli Forbes (1726-1804), Mather Byles (1707-88), and Abraham Keteltas (1732-98), the Rev. James Cogswell (1720-1807) yoked the sacred with the profane: "Liberty is one of the most sacred and inviolable Privileges Mankind enjoy," James Cogswell declared in his sermon *God, the Pious Soldier's Strength and Instructor* (Boston, 1757). "Without it Life itself is insipid and many Times burdensome. . . . Endeavor to stand as Guardians of the Religion and Liberties of *America*; to oppose Antichrist . . . [as] the art of War becomes a Part of our Religion" (26, 31). In the excitement of the moment, the fine line between God's will and colonial politics was largely obliterated. As usual, Jehovah of Armies was on the side of the victor. In celebrating the victory of the British crown over Antichrist's eldest son, the American colonists were proud to be English subjects.

All that would change with one stroke. Scarcely had the colonial troops returned home when the Stamp Act of 1765 incensed the pulpit with the tyranny of arbitrary taxation without representation.

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<sup>25</sup> Thomas Prince, *Extraordinary Events the Doings of God* (Boston, 1745).

<sup>26</sup> John Mellen, *The Duty of All to be Ready for Future Impending Events* (Boston, 1756) 19-20.

The corruption of the Hanovarian court was all too obvious when King George III threatened his American subjects with loss of liberty if they did not pay for the expense of the recent war. If that were not enough, the Quebec Act of 1774 added insult to injury as George royally restored Canadian civil law and confirmed freedom of worship for all Acadians, Roman Catholics no less. Such a betrayal of the Protestant cause betokened King George's complicity in this Catholic plot. Samuel Sherwood's famous *The Church's Flight into the Wilderness* (Boston, 1776) is a representative example of the sermon literature of the period: French atrocities against Christ's "humble followers" are ominous, and "the corrupt system of tyranny and oppression, that has of late been fabricated and adopted by the ministry and parliament of Great-Britain, which appears so favourable to popery and the Roman catholic interest . . . awfully threatens the civil and religious liberties of all sound protestants" (15). In short, the blending of apocalyptic fervor with civil liberty forged expectations for a civil millennium that climaxed in the American Revolution. In this eruption, political rationalists and millenarians of all shades made common cause in unleashing the full force of their pulpit rhetoric that had heretofore battered the walls of Louisbourg on Cape Breton Island. Satan's plot to enslave God's people in America was most of all evident in the tyranny of British power: standing armies, corrupt politicians, taxation without representation. The fervor of the moment heightened the divine mandate against all types of oppression, as the pulpit issued the call to arms: "We must beat our plowshares into swords, and our pruning-hooks into spears." Remember "that terrible denunciation of divine wrath against the worshippers of the [British] beast and his image." For all those who received his mark on their forehead, would be tormented forever and ever in the fire and brimstone of Christ's coming.<sup>27</sup> The conflation of sacred and secular metaphors mobilized intellectuals just as much as it did backwoods farmers who were tilling their stony glebe. It also inspired a group of visionary poets among the Connecticut Wits, who celebrated America's rising glory in their epic poems about the young republic. In hindsight, it is not surprising that the revolutionary pulpit did not develop any fully matured eschatological system until long after those heady days were over and theologians had sufficiently distanced themselves from the events to give them meaning. By that time, the Second Great Awakening was taking shape, and American patriots, employing sacred and secular metaphors with ease, reinvented the Puritan Errand, the Edwardsian Awakening, and the Revolution to give mythic dimension to the new nation. Of the many writers who incorporated these new myths into their works, Herman Melville said it best in his antebellum novel *White-Jacket: or The World in a Man-of-War* (1850):

We Americans are the peculiar chosen people—the Israel of our time; we bear the ark of the liberties of the world. Seventy years ago we escaped from thrall; and, besides our first birth-right—embracing one continent of earth—God has given to us, for a future inheritance, the broad domains of the political pagans, that shall yet come and lie down under the shade of our ark. . . . God has predestinated, mankind expects, great things from our race; and great things we feel in our souls. The rest of the nations must soon be in our rear. We are the pioneers of the world, the advance guard, sent on through the wilderness of untried things, to break a new path in the New World that is ours.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Samuel West, *A Sermon Preached before the Honorable Council, May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1776*. In *The Pulpit of the American Revolution*. Ed. by John Wingate Thornton. Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1860. 318.

<sup>28</sup> In *The Writings of Herman Melville*. Eds. Harrison Hayford et al. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern UP, 1970. 151.

That the American Revolution against Britain's "oppressive" policies did take place still borders on the miraculous. By European standards of the day, America's colonists were among the freest people of the world for sheer reasons of geography. Behind them lay a vast Atlantic that sheltered them from virtually any European aggressor; before them lay a vast and unexplored continent that assured virtually unlimited resources and arable land free for the taking. The colonies did not have a feudal class structure stifling to individual industriousness. Agriculture was not impeded by serfdom nor did limited acreage, decreased by innumerable partitions among the peasantry, make survival precarious. America, in short, offered all those opportunities that Europe's peasantry could only dream of. "The Americans," Gordon S. Wood points out, "were not an oppressed people; they had no crushing imperial shackles to throw off. In fact, the Americans knew they were probably freer and less burdened with cumbersome feudal and monarchical restraints than any part of mankind in the eighteenth century."<sup>29</sup> To convince a predominantly farming populace that a two-penny tax levied on printed matter called for nothing less than armed resistance against Britain underscores the political irony of the Stamp Act of 1765 and its purpose of defraying the cost of maintaining troops for the colonists' own safety.

The rhetorical skills of the colonies' most important institution, the church, can largely be credited with achieving these ends. Church and state—despite their proverbial wall of separation—marvelously cooperated, dusted off the old-order jeremiad, and beat plows into swords so powerful as to defeat a superior army. "Independence was not the spoils of violence," Sacvan Bercovitch reminds us, "but the harvest of Puritanism."<sup>30</sup> The intellectual and political leaders were only too familiar with the power of religion in the lives of the people. If farmers were not willing to rise in armed resistance against British taxation that in no way impeded their lives close to the soil, perhaps they might be willing to sacrifice their lives in a holy war against God's enemies. To these ends, Whig ideology tinged with biblical rhetoric achieved wonders. When the House of Burgesses appointed June 1, 1774, as a Day of General Fasting and Prayer, Virginians were stunned to hear their ministers thunder apocalyptic messages from the pulpit seconded by invectives and diatribes in gazettes and on broadsides. Thomas Jefferson describes the effect of the fast day on the colony: "The people met generally with anxiety & alarm in their countenances, and the effect of the day thro' the whole colony was like a shock of electricity, arousing every man & placing him erect & solidly on his centre."<sup>31</sup> Ironically, most of the signers of the Declaration of Independence did not believe in the divine providence whose invocation they encouraged in a people who lived by it.<sup>32</sup> If the political cause of the colonies could only be merged with the cause of God, the church would become a powerful weapon against the British overlord, and thousands otherwise preoccupied with tilling their fields would take up arms in defense of God.<sup>33</sup> New England's own herald John Adams seconds the observations of his Virginian colleague:

When the clergy engage in political warfare, religion becomes a most powerful engine, either to support or overthrow the state. What effect must it have had upon the audience, to hear the same sentiments and principles, which they had before read in a newspaper, deliv-

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<sup>29</sup> "Rhetoric and Reality in the American Revolution," *William and Mary Quarterly* 23 (1966): 5.

<sup>30</sup> "How the Puritans won the American Revolution," *Massachusetts Review* 17 (1976): 602.

<sup>31</sup> *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*. Ed. by P. L. Ford (New York: 1892-99) 1: 11.

<sup>32</sup> See Perry Miller, "From the Covenant to the Revival," *The Shaping of American Religion*. Eds. James W. Smith and A. Leland Jamison. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1961. 1:324-42.

<sup>33</sup> See Philip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1941. 83.

ered on Sundays from the sacred desk, with a religious awe, and the most solemn appeals to Heaven, from lips, which they had been taught from their cradles, to believe could utter nothing but eternal truths.<sup>34</sup>

Pastors and preachers thus sharpened their quills and thundered from their pulpits during regular services and on significant occasions such as election days, annual muster days, on days of public thanksgiving and humiliation. These public discourses were particularly effective in disseminating patriotic piety because they were attended by larger-than-usual audiences receptive to messages whose significance was underscored by the solemnity of the occasion.

Voices of dissent, particularly from pacifist quarters—Quakers, Amish, Mennonites, and Moravians—were particularly troublesome and required a different course of action. Moreover, to remove any scruples about a minister of the prince of peace being enlisted in the service of Mars, god of war, the clergy had to do their utmost to justify their actions. For instance, John Carmichael (1728-85), Presbyterian clergyman and ardent supporter of Independence, justifies his fervent patriotism in *A Self-Defensive War Lawful* (1775), a sermon delivered to Captain Ross' militia in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. In these times of political upheaval, "it is but reasonable to suppose, that even the Minister of the *Prince of peace*, whose business for ordinary is, neither *war* or *politicks*, in such a situation, being member of civil society, and interested like other men, would improve the times, by adopting their public instructions, to the best service of the people, and not offensive or displeasing to God; whose holy word is a blessed director in every emergency" (5-6). Rarely were ministers at a loss to justify their actions if they had God and the Bible as their backing.

Covenant theology, which Separatists and Puritans alike had carried to New England more than a century and a half before Carmichael's militia sermon, equally informed Presbyterian self-perception in the eighteenth century. Through covenant theology, individuals knew their place in society, and while their federal covenant obligated them to fulfill their contractual agreement with God, it equally bound the Almighty to uphold his side of the bargain. Locating his typological parallel in the book of Esther, the Congregational clergyman Oliver Noble (1734-92) addresses his Newburyport parishioners on the fifth anniversary of the Boston Massacre, in his sermon *Some Strictures Upon the Sacred Story Recorded in the Book of Esther* (1775)L "Are not the people of *America*, also GOD's covenanted people? And is not the Lord of Hosts *their* covenant GOD? *God* is the *same yesterday, today, and forever!* He is as able and as ready to appear for his *distressed* covenant people now, as then; and they may hope for, and expect salvation in the same way" (20). God's eternal fiat never changes—no matter what the circumstances or who his people in a modern age. In the same way, the history of the Israelites were eternal types of endlessly recurring cycles of events that foreshadowed the future.

Noble affirms that the events of his day were nothing less than reiterating the incident typed out in Medo-Persia more than two millennia before. The biblical account of Esther relates how Haman, grand vizier of King Ahasuerus, deceives his liege and plots to massacre the Israelites of the eastern captivity for reasons of personal enrichment. However, faithful Mordecai and Queen Esther save their people from Haman's machinations. In Noble's adaptation of the story, King George III (Ahasuerus) is similarly deceived by the British Parliament (Haman), which tries to disenfranchise his majesty's faithful colonists (the Israelites) through the infamous Stamp Act (Haman's plot). With such obvious parallels from the Good Book, Noble decries Haman's greed but also prophesies that the present crisis will soon pass over and America be vindicated: "So in this way *we* also may hope that GOD will arise and plead *our* cause, and *his* OWN, against the oppressor—For the Cause of Liberty is the

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<sup>34</sup> *The Works of John Adams*. Boston: Little and Brown, 1851. 4: 55n

Cause of *GOD*; it is the *gift* of *GOD* to man in his very creation, and what he has fitted him for, as a *summary* of his *terrestrial* happiness” (20). Just like all Jews in Esther’s day were called upon to defend themselves against the machinations of their adversary, Noble calls on his audience of the militia to defend their patrimony from falling prey to the British Haman: “And whosoever gives it up, and tamely submits to *Slavery*, like a foolish wanton *Heir*, spends the *PATRIMONY* of his Heavenly Father’s *giving*, and is a *rebel* to *GOD* and *NATURE*” (20). In this manner, the colonists’ struggle for national freedom becomes holy warfare; patriotism suffused with piety toward God is transmuted into sacred service of all faithful guardians of God’s covenant. The charter between king and settlers, established by the first settlers in New England, bound all subjects to pay allegiance to their sovereign on condition that the English monarch protected them from their enemies. Since each party had voluntarily agreed to fulfill its side of the contract, any violation of it would automatically sever their ties and revoke all obligations. Noble lashes out against the British Haman who seizes the fruits of the American vine: “I consider the parliament of *Great Britain*, as (of *right*) having no kind of *dominion* over us, or concern with us, for they were no party in the Contract. . . . therefore instead of the *shocking Claim* to bind us, by their *Acts* in ALL CASES WHATSOEVER, they have no right to bind us in ANY CASE WHATSOEVER . . . and the moment the Charter Contract is violated on the other part, we are again in a state of *nature*, and have a right to set out anew” (22).

British atrocities notwithstanding, the ministers enlisted in the war effort found ample source materials in the Bible to justify their political activities. Zabdiel Adams (1739-1801), preaching in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, to a detached company of militia there, couches his text in the imagery of the Israelites’ settlement in the Land of Milk and Honey. Though war was considered a great judgment, Adams concedes in his sermon *The Grounds of Confidence and Success in War* (Boston, 1775), the cursed hunger for gold is the source of all warfare and of the English depredations of the colonies: “Still more to be lamented is it, that they, who far from disturbing others, desire only to sit under their own vine and fig-tree, enjoying the sweet industry, friendship and liberty, should be molested by the ambitious and tyrannical and forced to fly to arms in support of their inherited rights and privileges” (4-5). Consequently, all those who “breathe the pacific spirit of the gospel” have “to furnish themselves with the instruments of slaughter” to preserve “themselves and their property from the hands of violence. In this view therefore, war though connected with blood and carnage, is legitimate.” More yet, “the law of God demands it as a duty” (5). Adams, Noble, and Carmichael were only too familiar with pacifist scriptures that heed Christ’s exhortation to love thy enemies and to turn the other cheek. These pacifists, John Carmichael charged, “regard only such passages of holy scriptures as seem to favour their favourite opinion, let the language of other passages be what they will” (9). Yet in calling for toleration of all lovers of peace, Carmichael turns to his captive militia audience and encourages them to put on the uniform of Christian warfare and dismiss all scruples: “Every one that draws the sword, should be well satisfied, in his conscience, that he is called of God to do so” (16). Lunenburg’s own Zabdiel Adams was so zealous in his clarion call that he did not hesitate to turn Isaiah’s prospects of peace on its head: “*The husband-man will beat his plough-share into swords, and the wine-dresser his pruning hook into spears*” (9; Isaiah 2:4). The blue ribbon for subverting biblical maxims for the cause of patriotism surely belongs to the anonymous preacher whose *An Address to General St. Clair’s Brigade* (1777) turns Christ’s benedictions in the Sermon on the Mount into terrific curses at Ticonderoga:

Blessed be that man who is a friend to the United States of America; and let all the people say, *Amen*.

Blessed be that man who will use his utmost endeavour to oppose the tyranny of Great-Britain, and to vanquish all her forces invading North-America; and let all the people say, *Amen*. . . .

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Blessed be that man who in the present dispute esteems not his life too good to fall a sacrifice in defence of his country; —let his posterity, if any he has, be blessed with riches, honour, virtue and true religion; and let all the people say, *Amen*.

Up to this point, the application of Christ's peaceful blessings to the general's brigade might not have raised any eyebrows among the assembled troops readying themselves for the imminent battle at Ticonderoga. But the American minutemen must certainly have seen the handwriting on the wall, when their zealous preacher turned Christ's message upside down:

... let all these blessings be turned into curses to him who deserts the noble cause in which we are engaged; and turns his back to the enemy before he receives proper orders to retreat; and let all the people say, *Amen*. . . .

Let him be accursed in his outgoing, and cursed in his incoming; cursed in lying down, and cursed in uprising; cursed in basket, and cursed in store.

Let him be cursed in all his *connexions*, 'till his *wretched* head with dishonour is laid low in the dust; and let all the soldiers say, *Amen*. (4)

By drawing on all the familiar scriptures that devout churchgoers would relish, the clerical regiment lifted the action of the moment to the level of cosmic significance, in which prophetic history was accomplished in front of their very eyes. More so, American minutemen rushing to arms could see themselves as taking an active part in the fulfillment of scripture prophecy in America's War of Independence. If that did not make them cock their rifles, then lurid pictures of Redcoats raping wives and daughters and pillaging the countryside would: "See, oh! see the dear wives of your bosoms forced from their peaceful habitations, and perhaps used with such indecency that modesty would forbid the description. Behold the fair virgins of your land" who will have to endure "such insults and abuses that would induce their tender hearts to pray for the shades of death" (*An Address* 2). Indeed, no icon of domestic bliss was too sacred to the clergy to be employed in the service of Mars.

With the fourth of July drawing ever closer, the arms of the pulpit regiment became increasingly pointed. New England's Calvinist churches played a particular role in the use of revolutionary rhetoric with its roots in apocalyptic imagery of the Woman's fight with the Dragon. Samuel Sherwood's famous *The Church's Flight into the Wilderness* (New York, 1776) is an exemplary application of prophecy to the American colonies. A Congregational clergyman from Weston, Connecticut, Sherwood (1730-83) freely minces millenarian metaphors and political ideology by invoking the mythology of New England's past to suit his present purpose. The apocalyptic flight of the Woman into the howling wilderness of America a century and a half earlier was now reaching its climax in the cosmic battle against the British dragon. In this final stand against the English Gog of Magog, Sherwood invokes the Spirit of his Puritan ancestors and calls on all true Americans to rise in defense of their Church: freedom of religion, liberty, and the pursuit of property. The true church "was supported and carried, as it were, on eagles wings, to a distant remote wilderness, for safety and protection. . . . The woman, the church of Christ, has such a gift and grant from Heaven, of this part of God's world, for the quiet enjoyment of her liberties and privileges, that no power on earth can have any right to invade, much less to dispossess her of them. And every attempt of this kind to oppress and enslave her, must be absolutely unrighteous, and a gross violation of justice and truth" (23, 25). Indeed, Sherwood unflinchingly blends ideals of America's fledgling democracy with apocalyptic images of Christ's coming in the clouds of fire. Sherwood thus elevates contemporary events to the level of an eschatological battle of good and evil in which the Revolution is the

prolegomena to the halcyon days promised in the Bible: “These violent attacks upon the woman in the wilderness, may possibly be some of the last efforts, and dying struggles of the man of sin. These commotions and convulsions in the British empire, may be leading to the fulfilment of such prophecies as relate to his downfall and overthrow, and to the future glory and prosperity of Christ’s church. It will soon be said and acknowledged, that the kingdoms of this world, are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ” (49). Certainly, ancient prophecy applied to colonial politics is a commonplace in the sermon literature of the colonial period. However, the degree to which the colonial clergy would unleash its full repertoire of homiletic invention is truly remarkable. Days of Humiliation were particularly suitable for linking self-abnegation with success in warfare. Thomas Coombe (1747-1822), preaching at Christ Church and St. Peter’s in Philadelphia on July 20, 1775, was so effective that his sermon was reprinted in Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Newport in the same year. God is not to be mocked with impunity, Coombe warns his Anglican hearers, since past days of self-abasement have been little more than empty rites of hypocrisy. Jehovah of old has blessed the colonies with liberty and prosperity, Coombe intones his jeremiad *A Sermon preached before the Congregation* (Philadelphia, 1775), but God will remove his protective hand if his American Israel does not repent of her transgression in all sincerity: “Should this be the case, farewell all hopes of succor from on high—farewell public and domestic happiness—farewell liberty, sweet child of heaven—and farewell the mild and uncorrupted gospel of Jesus, the Redeemer. These, being radically struck at by that bloody code, framed for our government, can only be supported by the virtues of the community at large, and by a timely and universal repentance of its members—a repentance, evidenced on *our particular part*, by the correction of those sins, against which, under a deep sense of duty, I have been led to bear my testimony, in much affection and plainness” (18). Churchgoers of the period, only too familiar with the snare of unrestrained pursuit of riches, eyed affluence and sumptuous living with suspicion. Self-discipline in the face of adversity was therefore an appropriate response to the temptations of the flesh. Affliction was a sign of God’s displeasure and required repentance, and repentance accompanied by fasting and humiliation appeased an angry God. At the same time, repentance implied a return to the old virtues of frugality, sobriety, and industry—precisely the type of belt-tightening work ethic that safeguarded the principles of their success.

Thus equipped with the punishing rod of an angry Jehovah, the ministers ascended the pulpit and delivered their directives of war and peace. Jonathan Bascom (1740-1807), pastor of Eastham, Massachusetts, could improve his thanksgiving sermon of December 15 with words of warning: “MANY glorious kingdoms have been smothered and died in the downy bed of prosperity; while others, the more they are afflicted, the more they grew and increased. The more God prospers us, the greater reason we have to love and serve him. But God knows that such is the nature of man, that a long series of prosperity has a tendency to alienate, rather than secure his affections. . . . And he leads with the bands of love, so far as we will follow: when this method fails, he brings the rod over us.”<sup>35</sup> No one could deny that the rod of God’s chastisement could be felt all over the colonies and required an immediate response. Merging repentance with self-disciplined consumption and injunctions against foreign imports with praise of the products of homespun industry, Zabdiel Adams calls on the soldiers of the militia to reform “your extravagancies, and mortify your pride: renounce foreign superfluities, and live contentedly, *in compliance with the recommendation of the Continental Congress*, on the produce of your own bleating flocks and fertile fields.”<sup>36</sup> In this respect, the jeremiad of ’76 hardly differed from that of a century earlier. It turned the Word of God into a potent weapon; it curbed indifference toward communal affairs by weaving a diverse lot of colonists into a

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<sup>35</sup> *A Sermon Preached at Eastham* (Boston, 1775) 12.

<sup>36</sup> *The Grounds of Confidence and Success in War* (Boston, 1775) 29.



single American tapestry. When the drums of war were sounded, the pulpit could unify the colonies under one banner and exhort the combatants to consecrate their land with their own blood. In war as in peace, the jeremiad as a homiletic genre proved so adaptable to the needs of the time that it could even mobilize a people to experiment with a republican form of government that became the envy of Europe.

### *Visions and Voices of Progress*

The year after the revolutionary war had ended, Ezra Stiles (1727-1795), president of Yale College and grandson of the metaphysical poet of Westfield, Edward Taylor, delivered his election sermon to the Connecticut legislature in Hartford. True to the spirit of his Puritan forebears, Stiles sounds a number of time-honored American themes newly adapted to the rising prospects of the young United States of America. What was once a tribal “Errand into the Wilderness” of New England, Stiles now translates into God’s federal covenant with all citizens of the United States—no matter what their parochial creed or particular denomination: “The political welfare of God’s American Israel,” Stiles divines in his election sermon *The United States Elevated to Glory and Honor* (1783) is “allusively prophetic of the future prosperity and splendour of the United States.” And in the persona of the Hebrew lawgiver surveying the Promised Land from Mount Pisgah, Stiles predicts that “the States may prosper and flourish into a great American Republic; and ascend into high and distinguished honor among the nations of the earth.” If conversion, spiritual purity, and church discipline were of utmost importance to his Puritan forebears, post-revolutionary clergymen like Stiles are more concerned with freedom of religion for all, democratically elected governments, westward expansion, and scientific discoveries that hailed the “inevitable perfectibility of man and of his political institutions begun in America.” Her “civil constitutions” conquer the impediments “which obstruct the progress of society towards perfection,” while spreading the seeds of liberty like grace of the political messiah through the rest of the habitable world (7-10). This civil millennium just begun in the young nation, however, does not belie Stiles’ abiding belief in the fall of Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, their return to the Holy Land, and the Second Coming of Christ at the end of a thousand-year period of unprecedented bliss just looming on the horizon. In short, for Ezra Stiles, latter-day Puritan that he was, the progressively unfolding future of America is ultimately circumscribed by a cyclical return to the golden (albeit static) age invariably located in an prelapsarian Eden of immutability. Every forward movement of history is ultimately an eternal return to the very cradle of civilization.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps not quite linearly progressing toward a breathtaking future of untried things as the nineteenth-century apostles of progress would describe the flow of time, the avant-garde embraced as their ideological manifesto George Herbert’s “The Church Militant” (1633) and its notion of westward movement:

But as the Sunne still goes both west and east;  
So also did the church by going west  
Still eastward go; because it drew more heare  
To time and place, where judgement shall appeare.  
(ll. 274-77)

According to this Renaissance concept, the Western European nations had become heir to the aggregate knowledge and culture for the time being. With the discovery of America and religious strife

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<sup>37</sup> See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To Live Ancient Lives: the Primitivist Dimension in Puritanism*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1988.

tearing apart Protestant Europe, the course of civilization was about to take another leap. This time across the Atlantic to the “American Strand.” Yet even Herbert’s poem reveals a circularity of movement within civilization’s inexorable advance toward the end of time in a Christian universe. More than a hundred years later, George Berkeley’s much-touted “On the Prospect of Planting Arts and Learning in America” (1752) does not escape its eschatological closure either. Its stage props borrowed from Daniel’s succession of empires embodied in Nebuchadnezzar’s statue in the plains of Dura, and its dramatic plot in five acts derived from the outline of its divine original (Dan. 2: 31-45), Berkeley constructs space and time not quite linearly but as an upward spiraling gyre that reaches toward a New Jerusalem:

Westward the Course of Empire takes its Way;  
The four first Acts already past,  
A fifth shall close the Drama with the Day;  
Time’s noblest Offspring is the last<sup>38</sup>

Even postmillennialist visions of mankind’s perfectibility are after all tragicomedies which climax at Doomsday. Put in another way, the westward course of empire—like Ezekiel’s ever-churning wheels (1:15-21)—invariably turns in upon itself: Alpha and Omega becoming one.

America’s poets of the revolutionary period did not rest on the sidelines, but like their black-robed colleagues whose sacred office they frequently shared, they invoked Calliopé for inspiration. The muse did not always heed her summons, however. A new age and a new nation demanded a pantheon of new heroes worthy of a national epic with a democratic ideology in the making. If Homeric exemplars were endowed with superhuman prowess, courted by a pantheon of immortals in human shape, and assailed by monsters of fabular size and strength, America’s epic heroes are subservient to the laws of verisimilitude, their supernatural protectors to Christian providence, and their Scylla and Charybdis to the internal monsters of the human will struggling to control the mainspring of action. As the Transcendentalist Jones Very put the issue squarely in his essay “Epic Poetry” (1839), “The effect of Christianity was to make the individual mind the great object of regard, the centre of eternal interest, and transferring the scene of action from the outward world to the world within, to give to all modern literature the dramatic tendency,—and as the mind of Homer led him to sing of the physical conflicts of his heroes with *visible* gods *without*; so the soul of the modern poet, feeling itself contending with motives of godlike power *within*, must express that conflict in the dramatic form, in the poetry of sentiment.”<sup>39</sup> In short, the modern age is hostile to the display of mere physical prowess so appealing in the infancy of civilization. The bloody exploits of a Hector or of an Achilles, when glorified by modern poets, are shocking and obscene to modern sensibilities. The civilized hero of a democratic age is the representative of the common people—a *primus inter pares*, whose greatest battle consists of conquering his internal demons. His middle-class aspirations are downright subversive to the aristocratic ideals of Homer’s mythic past, and his golden age lies not in the dawn of obscure antiquity, but somewhere in a not-too-distant future of scientific progress and the perfectibility of mankind. No wonder, then, America’s epic bards of the period failed in writing a national epic that appealed to the tastes even of their contemporaries. Perhaps this is why Joel Barlow’s proud Genoese in *The Vision of Columbus* (1787) and in its later revision *The Columbiad* (1807) is condemned to passivity as Hesper comforts the dying prisoner with visions of America’s

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<sup>38</sup> In George Berkeley’s *A Miscellany, Containing Several Tracts on Various Subjects* (London, 1752).

<sup>39</sup> Jones Very, *Essays and Poems*. Ed. by Ralph Waldo Emerson. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1839. 20.

glorious future. Perhaps this is why Timothy Dwight is forced to employ a plenitude of pedestrian heroes in *Greenfield Hill* (1794), whose Aeolian bags of treasures consist of middling farms on the fertile banks of the Connecticut River. Or perhaps this is why the real hero of their epics was not a human being at all but a personification of an abstraction: young America questing for independence and a place of prominence among the empires of the world. Although the strictures of Aristotle's *Ars Poetica* still applied, the epic genre with all its heroic trappings seemed to have outlived its time.

Among the earliest poets to give America epic stature are Philip Freneau (1752-1832) and Hugh Henry Brackenridge (1748-1816), whose collaborative Princeton commencement exercise celebrates *The Rising Glory of America* (1771). The poem is an early elucidation of the idea of progress in the context of America's quest for liberty and future happiness, yet still relies for closure on an eschatological ending gleaned from the pages of Thomas Burnet's *Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684) or William Whiston's *New Theory of the Earth* (1696):

Hail happy land  
The seat of empire the abode of kings,  
The final stage where time shall introduce  
Renowned characters, and glorious works  
Of high invention and of wond'rous art,  
Which not the ravages of time shall waste  
Till all those glorious orbs of light on high  
The rolling wonders that surround the ball,  
Drop from their spheres extinguish'd and consum'd;  
When final ruin with her fiery car  
Rides o'er creation, and all nature's works  
Are lost in chaos and the womb of night.

*(The Rising Glory of America [1771 ed] 26-27)*

Interestingly, the revised version of 1794 does not end on the Miltonic chaos of the celestial spheres but on Isaiah's happy vision of "A new Jerusalem, sent down from heaven" upon an earth "Whose ample bosom shall receive, tho' late, / Myriads of saints, with their immortal king, / To live and reign on earth a thousand years" ([1795 ed.] ll. 437-40). If the carnal pleasures of Freneau's subsequent millennium still echo the nomenclature of Princeton's Jonathan Edwards, then the poet's later works reveal a decidedly deistic outlook that leaves no room for providential interventions. Among the best examples of Freneau's mature deism are "Reflections on the Constitution, or Frame of Nature" and "On the Uniformity and Perfection of Nature" (1815). Here the poet has made a clean break from the old ideology of fallen nature, the lawless wilderness and place of temptation into which Nathaniel Hawthorne would initiate his hero Young Goodman Brown. Instead, Freneau celebrates with Alexander Pope's *Essay on Man* (1733-34) the perfection of nature's laws that requires no periodic readjustment: "No imperfection can be found/ In all that is, above around,— / All, nature made, in reason's sight / Is order all, and *all is right*" ("On the Uniformity" 21-24).

Not far behind the muse of Philip Freneau is the poetry of David Humphreys (1752-1818), a scriblierian member of the Connecticut Wits and former aide-de-camp of George Washington. Humphreys' *A Poem on the Future Glory of the United States* (1790) is a vision poem that views in a glass darkly the grandeur of things to come. Here, the narrator assumes the double mask of a poet-seer who prophesies America's "large and rapid strides towards the summit of national aggrandisement." Perhaps not quite trusting his own imagination kindled by a fiery coal snatched from the prophet's altar, Humphreys grounds his vision on statistical tables anchored in the bedrock

of verifiable evidence. Notwithstanding the mathematical influence of an Adam Smith, Malthus, Turgot, or Richard Price, *A Poem on the Future Glory* just like its twin *A Poem on the Industry of the United States* (1794) ends on Humphreys' deist vision of peace and plenty in an agricultural lubberland anticipating the consummation of all things.

Closely related to Humphreys' halcyon vision of America is John Trumbull's Yale commencement exercise, "An Essay on the Use and Advantages of Fine Arts" (1770), which demonstrates the young graduate's academic mastery of the heroic couplet. In the essay that precedes his poem, Trumbull (1750-1831) traces the rise and progress of the arts and literature from their ancient beginnings in Greece and Rome to their eclipse in Augustan England under the auspices of Addison, Swift, Pope, and others. Young Turk that he is, Trumbull detects the decline of English letters in the very authors he so admires: "They sacrifice ease and elegance to the affection of classic correctness, fetter the fancy with the rules of method, and damp all the ardour of aspiring invention." He therefore calls on his fellow men of genius to cast off the chains of slavish imitation and to liberate the colonies from the yoke of British letters by cultivating an indigenous American literature. Ironically, Trumbull's concluding poem in heroic couplets traces the westward movement of literature and culture in precisely those classical conventions he seeks to abolish. This half-heartedness is certainly pardonable if we remember Trumbull's exercise called for practical affirmation of classical conventions, not their subversion. His cosmology is similarly determined by classical protocol and theological cant of proud Yalensia. Characteristic of his poems of the period is a central vision that announces "for ages without end, / the glories of the western world ascend"; these arise "from dead slumbers of six thousand years" (17-18, 20). This western world—suggesting at once the American continent, but also hinting at America's western frontier beyond the Ohio River—does not admit intruders without a struggle. While Trumbull may glamorize his heroes' wars of aggression against the eastern and plains Indians ("Blood stains their steps; and o'er the conquering plain, / 'Mid fighting thousands and 'mid thousands slain"), the progress of "Commerce" and the rise of all its sister arts is ultimately curtailed by a God whose judgment day is anticipated in the carnage of the bloody plains. The poem ends on the poet's laudatio of Yale, its teachers, and graduates, whose "fame immortal" will not cease "Till Nature hear the great Archangel's call" and "the last flames involve the smoking ball." This closure reveals as much about Trumbull's post-millennial vistas as it does about the conventional ascent of Yale's "fair Sons to happier climes . . . / Where Glory never fades, and Joys shall never end" (114-17).

Next in line among the Hartford Wits is Timothy Dwight (1752-1817), whose "America: Or, a Poem on the Settlement of the British Colonies" (1780) was extremely popular in its time. Written many years before its publication, the poem contains all the major themes Dwight would embellish in his *Greenfield Hill: A Poem in Seven Parts* (1794). The precursor of the latter work depicts the rising glory of America culminating in a period of unprecedented progress and transmuted into ethereal bliss. "America" has all the cherished themes of its time: the westward movement of religion and civilization through the light of knowledge, the inevitable vanishing of the effete Indian populations, the metamorphosis of the dark wilderness into straight rows of arable land, and the rise of golden cities in the Western plains<sup>40</sup>: "Where once dark Superstition fix'd her throne; / Where soul-exalting science never shone; / Where every social joy was drown'd in blood / . . . / Celestial science, raptur'd we descry / Refulgent beaming o'er the western sky; / . . . / Hail Land of light and joy! thy power shall grow / Far as the seas, which round thy regions flow; / Through earth's wide realms thy glory shall extend, / And savage nations at thy scepter bend." ("America" 9, 11). Clearly, Dwight's poem

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<sup>40</sup> Klaus Lubbers has examined these themes in *Born for the Shade: Stereotypes of the Native American in United States Literature and the Visual Arts, 1776-1894*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1994.

employs all the popular themes and images that inflamed the contemporary imagination. A new age had dawned. Like a Fifth Monarchist fetching New Jerusalem down from heaven, Dwight envisions a time of endless peace on earth, until the resurrection of the dead and the ascent of “God’s happy children” to the celestial city draw the curtain on time itself. After all, Dwight’s ideals were deeply rooted in his Puritan beliefs.

Joel Barlow (1754-1812), whom Timothy Dwight tutored at Yale, is considered the most successful if radical of the Hartford Wits. Late in 1787, Barlow published his famous *The Vision of Columbus* (1787), a vision poem that was more than eight years in the making. This epic of more than 5,000 lines in heroic couplets has its roots equally in Cotton Mather’s providence books as in the epics of Homer and Virgil. Characteristic of the poems of his time, Barlow’s epic *Vision* celebrates the discovery, settlement, and prosperous future of the New World, but unlike its classical exemplars, it looks forward to the golden future of untried things, not to an obscure mythical past. In many respects, Barlow’s poem reveals the lasting impact of his tutor’s theology, for *The Vision of Columbus* is more in line with the prophetic books of the Old Testament than with the *Odyssey*, *Iliad*, or *Aeneid*. Like Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel of the Bible, Barlow’s hero is essentially an amanuensis of a higher power, a mirror of things to come. Not Columbus’ heroic conquest takes center stage, but the unfolding glory of God’s providence, in which the Genoese discoverer is merely a tiny spoke in the wheels of fate. Not the messenger but the message, not the action but the issue is the vehicle of the plot. Evidently never quite satisfied with his *Vision*, Barlow kept revising his poem. In 1807, he published his *Columbiad* and its next revision in 1825. The fundamental difference between his earlier *Vision* and the two versions of the *The Columbiad* is Barlow’s noticeable secularization of his imagination. His Enlightenment optimism increasingly replaces his millenarian vistas: linear history progresses ever forward and upward and supplants the cycles of eternal repetition. After all, the golden age of the Enlightenment philosopher is located in some distant future of economic, scientific, and cultural perfection rather than in the static paragon of a prelapsarian Eden.

The millennial impulse in early American literature began pervading popular culture almost from the moment that the Peace Treaty of Paris (1783) settled the conflict between the United States and Great Britain in America’s favor. Hopes for the coming millennium continued to flourish in ever widening circles, paving the way for the Second Great Awakening (1790s - 1830s), but taking on different shapes and forms from what the first generation of settlers imagined in their Fifth Monarchist fervor. For instance, Anne Bradstreet’s massive *The Four Monarchies* (1650) is a testimony to her fascination with Daniel’s prophetic empires and the “Kingdom of the Stone.” In her “Dialogue between Old England and New; Concerning their present Troubles, Anno, 1642,” Bradstreet calls on Mother England “with brandish’d swords to *Turky* go, / . . . / And lay her wast, for so’s the sacred doom, / And do to *Gog*, as thou hast done to *Rome*” (179-82). Her millenarian call for armed conquest of the Holy Land and its liberation from the Ottoman overlord, the destruction of Antichrist, and the conversion of the Jews are all expressions of counter-cultural sectarianism rampant in both Old and New England. Before the second edition of Bradstreet’s *Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* appeared in 1678, the doomsday poet of Malden, Michael Wigglesworth (1631-1705) published his best-selling poem *The Day of Doom* (1662) that would make the flames of the Second Coming and the wrath of God’s judgment palpable even to the youngest Puritan eagerly memorizing all of its 224 stanzas in ballad meter. If seventeenth-century millennialists constructed their eschatologies in such militant terms, their early nineteenth-century descendants were no less active in bringing about the Second Coming. However, their weapons were of a decidedly different metal: moral crusades, temperance movements, abolitionism, public education, and foreign missions to the world. Thousands of missionary college graduates would be sent abroad each year to preach the

kingdom of God on earth and the gospel of America's success. Both sent and chosen, they were the next great army of the Church Militant to complete the circle of religion and civilization beyond Asia and back to its cradle in the Middle East. Those who stayed at home founded Owenite communities like New Harmony, Indiana, or Shaker Villages like White-water, Ohio, or Fourierist Phalanxes, like Brook Farm. If driven by more immediate expectations of the Second Coming, they might join the Millerites on hills and mountains waiting for the rapture, or turn to one of the innumerable reform societies and backwoods utopias that looked for the Christ within.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> See for instance, Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829*. Second enlarged edition. Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1970; William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Missions*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987; James M. Moorhead. *The American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestantism and the Civil War, 1860-69*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1978; and *The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth Century*. Ed. by Ronald L. Numbers and Jonathan M. Butler. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1993.