

THE APOCALYPTIC INTERPRETATION OF THOMAS BRIGHTMAN AND JOSEPH MEDE

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Through the centuries of the Christian era many individuals have clung to a belief in a literal kingdom of Christ which should be established upon this earth, a view which has been called millenarianism or chiliasm. Though this interpretation has persisted, it has rarely been the prevailing opinion. There are at least two periods in the history of the age, however, when millennial teaching has been widely believed by Christians. In the first of these, the first through the third centuries, great numbers of Christians were convinced that Christ would soon return in power and majesty and that when He did, it would be to establish a thousand year reign of peace on earth. These early Christians suffered great persecution and many of them responded to this by vigorously affirming their faith in this coming age when there would be no wrongs done by man to man. From one of these early believers, the Apostle John, came the inspired apocalypse known as the Book of Revelation. This book, an eschatological prophecy of peculiar poetic power, has been the object of intensive study by those who are interested in this kingdom of Christ.

An example of early prophetic enthusiasm is seen in the movement known as Montanism. Montanus lived in Phrygia, and in A.D. 156 he declared himself to be the incarnation of the Holy Spirit who was to reveal things to come. The great theme of the future as presented by him was the imminent coming of the kingdom of God to Phrygian soil where all the saints were to live. The Montanists spread their teachings throughout the Roman world and since they gloried in martyrdom, the persecution of the Christians from A.D. 177 onwards favored the spread of their movement. Tertullian joined this movement in the third century and though they had ceased to look for the New Jerusalem to be established in Phrygia they still believed in the coming kingdom. In fact the expectation of the appearance of Christ was so vivid that some believed the New Jerusalem seemed already hovering over the earth in readiness for its descent, and Tertullian records how the soldiers of Severus' army had seen its walls on the horizon, shining in the light of dawn, for forty days, as they marched through Palestine. One should not think that all of these millenarians of the early ages were Montanists, however. Justin Martyr, Papias Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Lactantius are all examples of orthodox writers who held to the view of a literal kingdom of Christ on earth.¹

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1. John Norman Davidson Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*. (New York, Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 465 ff. Also James Franklin Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*. (London: Methuen & Co., 1923), pp. 68 ff.

In the third century, Origen began to discredit chiliastic teaching. He believed that the kingdom was not an event which took place in space and time but a happening in the soul of the believer. This shift in thinking admirably suited the organized church which had come to enjoy peace and a significant position in the world. When in the fourth century, Christianity attained a position of supremacy in the world and became the official religion, the church disapproved emphatically of Chiliasm. Early in the fifth century, Augustine propounded the doctrine demanded by the new conditions. He taught that the Book of Revelation was to be understood as an allegory and the millennium was realized in the church. This doctrine was so fully accepted that at the Council of Ephesus in 431, belief in the millennium was condemned as superstition. "Nevertheless the importance of the apocalyptic tradition should not be underestimated; even though official doctrine no longer had any place for it, it persisted in the obscure underworld of popular religion... The institutionalized Church did indeed show the utmost skill in controlling and canalising the emotional energies of the faithful, and particularly in directing hopes and fears away from this life and towards the next. But although its efforts were normally successful, they were not invariably so. Particularly at times of general uncertainty or excitement people were always apt to turn to the Book of Revelation and the innumerable commentaries upon it..."²

At the time of the Reformers of the sixteenth century most interpreters still accepted the Augustinian view of the Apocalypse. They began to alter it in some details, however, which were to make possible the second great period of millennial teaching, the period of the seventeenth century. Luther and some of the other reformers identified the Pope with antichrist and attempted to find a prediction of the Reformation in the Apocalypse, thus putting some of the Augustinian teaching in doubt. The expositors of the seventeenth century further modified their views of the Apocalypse until many of them became millenarian. Especially in England we have a large group of thinkers who believed in the millennium, a group so numerous that one could call it an age of revival of the teaching of the kingdom of God that rivals that of the first through the third centuries. Political leaders such as Oliver Cromwell, scientists such as Isaac Newton and ministers from all protestant groups became interested in this teaching. The importance of millennial teaching died with the century, due in part to the influential writings of Daniel Whitby who lived at the close of the century and propounded a view that became immensely popular. According to Whitby the world is to be converted to Christ and then the millennium will occur. At the close of the millennium Christ will come for a final judgment. This view which made the conversion of the world and not the millennium the important eschatological event, was accepted by most of the commen-

2. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*. (London: Mercury Books, 1962), pp. 14 f.

tators on the Apocalypse of the eighteenth century and it affected all church groups to the extent that the seventeenth century premillennial teaching became an isolated phenomenon.

Two of the commentators who helped to fan the seventeenth century interest in the coming of the kingdom of God to earth were Thomas Brightman and Joseph Mede. In the following pages, I wish to compare the comments of these two men on the Book of Revelation and show that the decisive break in their thinking is found in their interpretation of the thousand years of Revelation twenty. Although Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) preceded Mede in time, his work was influential throughout the seventeenth century along with that of Mede's. Brightman was a late Elizabethan Puritan born in Nottingham and educated at Cambridge. He received the B.A.; M.A. and B.D. degrees and became rector of Hawnes in 1592. A diligent scholar, he carried his Greek New Testament with him at all times, reading it through every two weeks. He even read while riding so that he would never waste his time. Brightman's most famous work was his lengthy commentary on the Apocalypse³ which he believed was written under direct divine inspiration. He wrote this to refute Jesuit interpreters who were trying to cast the entire fulfillment of the Revelation into the future. Brightman comments on the whole book but I will limit myself to those interpretations which he gives that parallel those of Joseph Mede who does not explain all the Revelation. Brightman has no novel schemes to explain the prophecies such as the synchronisms of Mede, but he plods from verse to verse in a dogged fashion.

The seven seals are all fulfilled, according to Brightman, by the time of Constantine, and the peace procured by Constantine is the "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" of Revelation 8:1. The first seal is the triumph of truth when the emperor being overcome (by the petition of Quadratus, bishop of Athens and Aristides the Philosopher) "...and battered downe with the Oration of the godly men, did ordaine, that no Christian should be condemned, unlesse he were

3. *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos...et Refutatio Rob. Bellarmini de Antichristo Libro Tertio de Romano Pontifice* (A Revelation of the Revelation...and Refutation of Robert Bellarmine Concerning Antichrist in Book Three Concerning the Roman Pontiff). Originally written about 1600, before Queen Elizabeth's death, it was first printed at Frankfurt (1609), then Heidelberg (1612), with English editions at Amsterdam (1615) and Leyden (1616). It was issued in his collected *Workes* at London (1644). LeRoy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers*. (Washington: Review and Herald, 1946-54), II, 612. Brightman's commentary was probably printed in its earlier editions on the Continent because of his attitude toward the Church of England which he thought was the Laodicean Church of Rev. 3:14-21. The Laodicean Church was the lukewarm church which Christ said he would spew out of his mouth. The sign of this lukewarmness on the part of the English church was the retention of popish practices. As Brightman put it: "The most mighty King Henry...had cast out the Pope, but hee retayned the Popish Superstition." Thomas Brightman, *The Revelation of St. John With an Analysis and Scholion in The Workes of that Famous, Reverend, and Learned Divine, Mr. Tho. Brightman...* (London: Samuel Cartwright, 1644), p. 125.

found guilty of some crime punishable by the civil lawes.”⁴ Justin Martyr also helped in presenting the case of the truth so as to lead to this triumph. The second seal brings war to Rome because it again began persecuting Christians. The war consisted of revolts by the Parthians and the Marcomannes in Bohemia. The third seal is famine and during this period of Roman rule, Tertullian tries to explain to the government that the people were in want because of neglecting spiritual food. The fourth seal brings more death upon the Romans because Decius persecutes the Christians. Besides the usual war and famine the Empire suffered from a pestilence which began in Ethiopia and spread to all parts of the Empire lasting for fifteen years.

The fifth seal marks a pause in the persecution experienced under Claudius, Quintilius, Aurelian, Tacitus, Florianus, Probus, Carus and his sons and during part of the reign of Diocletian. The sixth seal brings a resumption of the persecution of the Christians under Diocletian and Maximian Hersulius while the last seal brings peace to the church through the efforts of Constantine.

Brightman expounds the early trumpets as the great heresies that befell the Christian church. Among these are Arianism and the creation of bishops over certain groups of churches. The fourth trumpet is the invasion of Africa by the Vandals and its loss to the church. The fifth trumpet with its locusts refers to the Saracens in the east and the religious orders in the west. He gives a number of dates for the Saracenic invasion but feels that the dates 830-980, the time of their invasion of Italy, best fulfill the Scriptural prophecy.⁵

The invasion of the Turks fulfills the prophecy of the sixth trumpet. Brightman dates this in the year 1300 because of the Turkish revival under the Ottomans. The last trump (Rev. 11:15) sounded when Elizabeth gained the English throne in 1558 because “...she againe gave her self, and her Kingdom to Christ by way of thankfulnessse, which she shewed, by rooting out the Romish superstitions...”⁶ This action of Elizabeth added great and populous kingdoms to the Christian Empire. The two beasts of Revelation 13 represent the papacy in its two successive phases. The first, beginning with Constantine, was wounded by the Goths but healed by Justinian and Phocas; the second was from the time of Pepin and Charlemagne. This second beast is more powerful than the first because it controls the Imperial power in addition to its spiritual authority. “But this doth more evidently shew it selfe in Leo the third. Who transferred the Empire from the Grecians to the Germans, and anointed Charles the great to be Emperour; what more evident argument can there be of having the highest power upon earth, than for a man to take away the Empire for whom he list, and to confer it again

4. Brightman, *Ibid.*, p. 210.

5. This refers to five months of Revelation 9:10. They equal 150 years according to the year-day prophetic interpretation principle which Brightman accepted.

6. Brightman, *op. cit.*, p. 381.

on whom it pleaseth him. The Popes that succeeded trod in the same steps, tossing the Emperours like Tennis-balls, putting them down and setting them up at their pleasure."⁷

The seven vials of chapter 16 are the judgments or retributions upon the Papacy, begun by the Reformation. The vials begin by the action of Queen Elizabeth who in 1560 cast out of their ecclesiastical livings those who were still true to the Roman Beast. "Among these were the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of London, Eli and fourteen others, besides men of a lower ranke, Deanes, Archdeacons, Parsons, Vicars and the like."⁸ This treatment caused these men to react with envy and spite, many of them leaving England. Martin Chemnitius was the second angel who poured out his vial upon the sea of Papal errors of the Council of Trent. He found that the doctrines propounded by the divines at Trent were a "horrible chaos of many monstrous opinions." The attempted defense of Trent only serves to make the sea of papal doctrine rotten and full of carrion. The laws of England against the Jesuits were a fulfillment of the third vial. This was the work of William Cecil, a man "most honourable" and of "happy memory."⁹

After finishing his comment on the third vial, Brightman informs his readers that the course of history has run up to the fourth vial, "... The other four are to be expected by us; and therefore the searching of them out is so much the more difficult."¹⁰ The following vials show in turn: a greater understanding of scripture to the further injury of the Papacy, the destruction of the city of Rome, the restoration and conversion of the Jews, and the destruction of all the enemies of the Gospel.

When commenting on the millennial prophecies of Revelation 20, Brightman accepts a view which is similar to that of Augustine. He believes that the thousand years mentioned in 20:2 began in the fourth century when Constantine gave the churches a more favorable place in the Roman World. At the end of this time the devil was loosed in the sense that the Turks began to make remarkable advances. The first resurrection occurred at the close of these thousand years in the fourteenth century and is to be understood spiritually as a revival of true Reformed preaching under men like Marsiglio of Padua, John of Jandun and John Wiclif. The first resurrection began the millennium so Brightman dated it in the year 1300. As he stated: "These thousand years begin, where the former ended, that is in the year 1300. Whereby continuance of the truth is promised for a thousand years, from the restoring thereof (of which we have already spoken) in these our Nations of Europe, to which also this first resurrection belongeth,...and...the truth doth get ground and strength every day more, blessed be God for it.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 447.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 524.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 532.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 563.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 824.

We must also wait for some time longer, before our brethren of the Jews shall be converted to the faith. But...they shall come in..."¹¹ This conversion of the Jews is the second resurrection. After the year 2300 there is to be some sort of final trouble with those whose hearts have grown colder during the millennium and then the eternal state will be established. Brightman's commentary for all its erudition was destined to be eclipsed by the work of Joseph Mede, the second of the apocalyptic theorists with which I shall deal.

Mede (1586-1638), professor of Greek at Cambridge, was born in Essex and educated at Christ's College, Cambridge, from which he graduated M.A. (1610) and B.D. (1618). Mede was master of such eminent Cambridge Platonists as Whichcote, More and Cudworth. "He was one of the greatest Biblical scholars the English Church has produced...a man of catholic interests...a philosopher...an amateur botanist, a student of astronomical theories, and a pioneer orientalist."¹² Mede twice refused the provostship of Trinity College, Dublin, preferring to teach. His expository fame rests chiefly on his *Clavis Apocalypticae* (*The Key of the Revelation*).¹³ Mede considered that his great advance in the interpretation of the Apocalypse was his discovery of the synchronism of prophecies. He explains this principle this way: "By a Synchronisme of prophecies I mean, when the things therein designed, run along in the same time; as if thou shouldest call it an agreement in time or age..."¹⁴ This means that much of the prophetic teaching of the Book of Revelation applies to the same time period and describes different beings or events during this period. Mede believed that there are really three divisions to the Apocalypse. Each of these divisions is begun by a voice sounding forth as a trumpet from heaven to the Apostle John. The first of these, beginning in Rev. 1:10 is the message to the seven churches; the next which begins with Rev. 4:1 is the vision of the seals and the last division is that of the opened book beginning in 10:8. Mede does not explain the message to the churches but he does show the relationship of the rest of the events of the prophecy. The events recorded

12. Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), p. 76. Tuveson has an interesting thesis in this book: "Anyone who compares the ideas of Hakewell with those of the nineteenth-century progressivists—whether positivists, Hegelians, Marxists, or what not—will recognize at once that it was not the Renaissance conception of progress as a possibility that triumphed. The notion of history as a process generally moving upwards by a series of majestic stages, culminating inevitably in some great, transforming event which is to solve the dilemmas of society—that is the concept destined to dominate 'modern' thought. Its forebears, I believe, are to be found in seventeenth-century apocalyptic theorists, not in the Renaissance cyclical historiographers." p. 75.

13. This was first published in 1627 and later reprinted in 1632 and 1642. It was translated into English by Richard More and published in 1643.

The latter three editions had an historical application of the Revelation as well as the structural outline which composed the 1627 edition of the *Clavis*. LeRoy Edwin Froom, *op. cit.*, II, 542.

14. Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*...trans. Richard More. (London: Philemon Stephens, 1650), part 1, p. 1.

in the second division of the prophecy occur at the same time as those in the third. Each of these latter two divisions was divided into seven synchronisms, seven groups of events that happen at the same time. To determine the relationships between the various parts of the Apocalypse, Mede believed that one should depend on internal evidence apart from the interpretation of the meaning of the visions.¹⁵

The first synchronism that Mede established was that of "a noble quaternion of prophecies," remarkable because of their equal timing. These prophecies were: the three and a half times, or 1260 days, of the woman in the wilderness; the forty-two months of the domination of the beast; the forty-two months of the treading under foot of the court of the temple; and the 1260 days of the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth. Mede contended that not only are these times equal in length, but they begin at the same time and end together, and must therefore synchronize throughout their entire course. To illustrate further Mede's idea of synchronism, it might be useful to show how he thought these four events would occur at the same time. The Revelation describes a beast who gets dominion for forty-two months (13:5) and a woman who flees for safety to a wilderness for 1260 days (12:6). Using a thirty day month, as Mede did, these time periods are equal and they both seem to begin when the Red Dragon is cast from heaven to earth. Mede proves this by a tortuous exposition of Rev. 12:6, 14; 13:1, 2. Since the time periods for these two events are equal in length and they begin at the same time they are said to synchronize; i.e., the Beast holds power while the woman hides in the wilderness. Thus, when the Beast's power collapses the woman may safely return from her hiding place and we may be sure that these two events will be simultaneous.

Furthermore, two witnesses testify against the activity of the beast. These witnesses are said to testify 1260 days (11:3) and their period of witnessing ends with their death and resurrection at the end of the sixth trumpet. Since the end of the dominion of the beast comes at the end of the sixth trumpet the activities of these individuals synchronize as to time. Rev. 11:2 predicts that the outer court of the temple shall be occupied by the gentiles for forty-two months. Mede, by an ingenious exposition of 11:18 demonstrates that the gentiles shall be judged and removed from the court at the sound of the sixth trumpet. Thus all of these things happen at the same time: the gentiles control of the outer court ceases, the dominion of the beast is crushed, the testimony of the witnesses stops and the woman in the wilderness is saved. Hence, according to Mede, this 1260 day period becomes the most important part of the prophecy of the Revelation. Mede then traced the remaining visions of the Apocalypse as they are related to these central visions, seeking to establish the connection of the entire series of visions—apart from the

15. For a thoughtful contemporary analysis which seems to use this same principle see Austin Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images, The Making of St. John's Apocalypse*. (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949.)

question of interpretation. The other events of the Apocalypse, generally speaking, parallel the first six seals, or the first six trumpets, or the seventh trumpet. Mede has inserted a chart into his work which explains this idea of synchronism.¹⁶

Mede then has an historical application that begins with the seals which he felt explained the destinies of the Roman Empire.¹⁷ The first seal represented the beginning of the spread of the Gospel in the Roman world and extended until the death of the Apostle John.¹⁸ The next seal pictures the period of time from Trajan to Commodus and illustrates the murders perpetrated by both Jews and Romans at this time. The third seal begins with the time of Septimius Severus and stands for the severity of justice administered in his reign. The fourth seal commences during the time of Maximinus, the Thracian, and represents death which came upon both rulers and people in abundance for the thirty-three year period beginning with the Thracian. The fifth seal refers to the persecution of the Christians by Aurelianus and Diocletian (268). The sixth seal begins in the year 311 and pictures the conversion of Constantine "... whereby suppose all the heathen gods shaken out of their heaven, the Bishops and priests degraded..."¹⁹ Thus Mede limits the application of the six seals to pagan Rome.

The trumpets arise out of the seventh seal and Mede applies the first of these trumpets to the Barbarian invasion in A.D. 395. "For this very year Alaricus first brake in, out of Thracia, upon Macedonia with a hugh Army of Gothes and other Barbarians, sparing neither town nor men."²⁰ The dividing of Rome into ten kingdoms is represented by the second trumpet. These ten kingdoms were those of the Britains, Saxons, Frankes, Burgundrans, Visigoths, Swedes and Alanes, Vandales, Alemanes, Ostrogoths and Grecians. The third trumpet predicts the extinction of the

16. Mede, *op. cit.*, I, chart inserted between pp. 26-27 of Mede's work.

17. Both Mede and Brightman show considerable knowledge of Roman times and of periodization. The sources of this information are mentioned occasionally by both of them and include Matthias Flacius, et. al., *Ecclesiastica Historia...* (Magdeburg Centuries), (Basileae: Ioannem Oportium, 1562-1574). For an interesting account of this work see James Westfall Thompson, *A History of Historical Writing* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1942), I, 529 ff. The famous work of John Fox, *Acts and Monuments*, is also cited along with Hugh Broughton, *A Conent of Scripture* (London, 1590) and Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*. An informative resume of the life and writings of Eusebius may be found in Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1895), III, 871 ff.

Other sources that they use are Flavius Josephus, *History of the Jewish War and Antiquities*; Josias Simler, *De Republica Helvetiorum*; and Johannes Zonaras, *Epitome historion*. Zonaras was a Byzantine historian of the late eleventh century. Still other writers that they mention are Emanuel Tremellius, Franciscus Junius, Moses Maimonides, John Sleiden and Gaspar Peucer. Mede obtains some of his scientific data from Isidore of Seville, and Brightman quotes one of the prophecies of Hildegard. Both writers show familiarity with Latin authors such as Virgil, Ovid and Cicero, but they rely more heavily upon church fathers among which are Jerome, Augustine, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Chrysostom.

18. The six seals are found in Revelation 6. The first four of them release each in turn the four horsemen of the Apocalypse.

19. Mede, *op. cit.*, I, 54. This fall of the heathen gods and priests from their high position is supposed to agree with the astronomical details of the sixth seal.

20. *Ibid.*, I, 85. The trumpets are found in Revelation, chapters 8, 9, and 11:15.

western emperor in A.D. 476. The Ostrogothian wars with Byzantium caused the blast of the fourth trumpet and it consisted of the removal of the consulship of Rome. As Mede explains: "The sun of Rome shone, as long as she enjoyed the Consular dignity, and her reign over other cities and provinces. The Moon and Stars there gave light, as long as the ancient authority of the Senate and other Magistrates there yet remained. But these being all taken away (which came to passe under this trumpet) what was there but darkness, and a total eclipse of the light, as well of the day, as of the night? to wit, which appertained to her, to whom the third part of the light of heaven was due?"²¹

The fifth trumpet pours smoke and locusts out upon the earth. The smoke of the infernal pit, Mede explains, is Mohammedanism because it obscures Christian doctrine from the world. The locusts represent the Arabians or Saracens who spread the Islamic teaching especially in the years 830-980. The Turks are called upon the world by the sixth trumpet and this occurred about the year 1300. The vast hosts of their armies are described and also their munitions are predicted.²² The seventh trumpet will be explained a little later in our discussion.

Mede describes some of the events occurring at the same time as these trumpets. One of the most interesting passages that he deals with is Revelation 13 which tells the story of two beasts. One of these beasts has ten horns and the other is a lamblike beast with two horns. These continue in power 1260 days which Mede interprets as 1260 years through the use of the principal that a day in prophecy equals a year. Both of these beasts represent Papal Rome with the ten horned beast representing the papal secular power and the two horned beast the religious power. The secular papal power has ten horns because it represents the ten kingdoms into which Rome was divided by the barbarian hosts.

At the same time the sixth trumpet is being sounded, six vials of judgment are poured out upon the antichristian world.²³ The first vial was fulfilled when the Waldenses, Albigensians, Wickliffites and Hussites began to identify the Pope with Antichrist, and Rome with Apocalyptic Babylon. The next vial, which turns the sea into the blood of a dead man, refers to the action of Luther in destroying the authority of the church over large areas of Europe. The third vial turns the rivers into blood. This was fulfilled when the representatives of Rome were killed by reforming princes as the Romanists had killed others. These three vials had been poured out by Mede's time but there were still four vials remaining to be emptied upon Papal Rome. These would destroy the

21. *Ibid.*, I, 97 f.

22. Rev. 9:16 says, "And the number of the army of the horsemen were two hundred thousand thousand: and I heard the number of them." This suggests the vastness of their armies and 9:18 speaks of their munitions under the figures fire, smoke and brimstone.

23. These vials are found in Revelation 16. They are said to be poured upon the earth. Mede explains the term earth for us: "The Earth in the Antichristian universe doth signifie the people, or the common sort of Christians, the footstool (the more the shame) of Antichrist; upon which as the basis that vast structure of Papall Heirarchie being built, like the Tower of Babel—reacheth to the very skies." Mede, *op cit.*, II, 114.

House of Austria, the city of Rome, send the Jews to attack the Papacy and prepare the nations for the Battle of Armageddon.

At the Battle of Armageddon the seventh trumpet begins. This battle destroys the Papacy and all other enemies of the church and prepares the earth for the thousand year reign of Christ through His saints. A literal resurrection of the dead martyrs accompanies the setting up of this kingdom. Mede summarizes his view of the kingdom for us with these words:

The seventh Trumpet, with the whole space of 1000 years thereto appertaining, signifying the great Day of Judgment, circumscribed within two resurrections, beginning at the judgment of Antichrist, as the morning of that day, and continuing during the space of 1000 years granted to new Jerusalem, (the Spouse of Christ) upon this Earth, till the universal resurrection and judgment of all the dead, when the wicked shall be cast into Hell to be tormented for ever, and the Saints translated into Heaven, to live with Christ for ever.²⁴

As we close our study perhaps it would be of value to compare the views of our Apocalyptic commentators. They differ slightly in the precise instances recorded in the seals but it is noteworthy that they both place them during or prior to the time of Constantine. Mede, because of his synchronistic scheme, makes the seventh seal open into the seven trumpets. The first three trumpets are applied by Brightman to heresy, while Mede applies them to the Barbarian invasion of Rome. Two of the final trumpets, six and seven, are accepted by both interpreters as predicting the Saracens and the Turks. They both emphasize the fact that the Saracens reached a height of power for one hundred and fifty years, from 830-980 and that the Turks came into prominence in the year 1300. Each of them accepts the year-day principle for the interpretation of the numerology of the Revelation.

The beasts of Revelation 13 are applied to the Papacy in both commentaries, although Mede makes a clearer distinction between the political and ecclesiastical foundation of papal power in his explanation. Three vials, they agreed, had already been poured out by their day, and four remaining ones included the destruction of Rome, the conversion and restoration of the Jews, and the defeat of the enemies of the Gospel.

The most radically different point of their interpretations seems to be the millennium and the events that cluster around it. Brightman spiritualized both the first and the second resurrections of Revelation 20 while Mede took them to be literal. Again, according to Brightman, the thousand year reign of Christ had already begun while to Mede it was still in the future. Thus Mede marks a more radical break with sixteenth century millenarian writers and helps to make the millennium a more important aspect of seventeenth century thought. Mede's work became very popular in England and he can be credited with the revival of premillennial studies in the English speaking world. Other expositors were to alter his approach but he reestablished and popularized the study of the literal kingdom of God in modern thought.

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