

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.i THE HISTORY OF BRITISH APOCALYPTIC THOUGHT

The study of early modern Britain between the Reformation of the 1530s and the Wars of the Three Kingdoms of the 1640s has undergone a series of historiographical revisions. The dramatic events during that century were marked by a religious struggle that produced a Protestant nation, divided internally, yet clearly opposed to Rome. Likewise the political environment instilled a sense of responsible awareness regarding the administration of the realm and the defense of constitutional liberty.¹ Whig Historians from the nineteenth century described these changes as a “Puritan Revolution.”² Essentially this was England’s inevitable march towards enlightenment as a result of religious and political maturation.³ Subsequent Marxist historians attributed these radical changes to socio-economic factors.⁴ Britain was witnessing the decline of the medieval feudal system and the rise of a new capitalist class. Both of these early views claimed that brewing social, political and economic unrest culminated in extreme radical action.

More recently, beginning in the 1980s, new studies appeared that began to challenge these old assumptions. Relying on careful archival research, many of these studies discarded the former conception of this period as “revolutionary”, instead arguing that the Reformation was in fact a gradual and unpopular process.⁵ In

¹ Margo Todd (ed.) *Reformation to Revolution: Politics and Religion in Early Modern England* (London and New York, 1995), p. 1.

² S. R. Gardiner, *The First Two Stuarts and the Puritan Revolution* (London, 1876).

³ Todd, *Reformation and Revolution*, p. 1.

⁴ Christopher Hill, “A Bourgeois Revolution?”, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, vol. III (Brighton, 1986), pp. 94-125.

⁵ Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants* (Oxford, 1983); J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English*

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addition scholars revised the history of the 1640s with a greater emphasis on the religious divisions within the Church compounding in war.⁶ Instead of portraying radical puritans versus conservative Anglicans, some revisionists claimed that the disruption of a Calvinist consensus by Arminians, and the re-imposition of popish ceremonies by Archbishop Laud during the reign of Charles I, pushed the nation to war.⁷ These new studies continue to be expanded and challenged, but what is unanimously clear is that the old paradigm of a radical revolution is no longer acceptable.⁸ Margo Todd summarizes this new approach: “the revisionists do not necessarily agree with each other, except in dismissing absolutely the old ‘Puritan Revolution’ as a struggle of the godly reformed against the resurgent popery in Laudian guise.”⁹

While revisionist and now some counter-revisionist studies are continuing to rewrite the social, political and economic history of early modern Britain, one area of study has yet to be thoroughly re-examined and re-evaluated: the apocalyptic tradition in Britain.¹⁰ The history of British apocalyptic thought was a topic of great

Reformation Revised (Cambridge, 1987); idem, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400-c.1580* (New Haven, 1992).

⁶ Ken Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church 1603-1640* (London, 1993). It should be noted that focusing on religion did not exclude revisionist studies of the political climate as well. See Anthony Fletcher, *The Outbreak of the English Civil War* (London, 1981); J. P. Sommerville, *Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640* (Harlow, Essex, 1986); Conrad Russell, *The Causes of the English Civil War* (Oxford, 1990); idem, *Unrevolutionary England* (London, 1990); John Morrill, *The Revolt of the Provinces: Conservatives and Radicals in the English Civil War, 1630-1640* (London, 1980, 2nd edition); idem, *The Nature of the English Revolution: Essays by John Morrill* (London and New York, 1993). It is interesting to point out that Morrill, a political revisionist, gives more weight to religious factors during the early seventeenth century. See: Morrill, “The Religious Context of the English Civil War”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th series, 34 (1984), pp. 155-178.

⁷ Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism c.1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987).

⁸ Tyacke’s revisions have been challenged by Peter White and Kevin Sharpe. See Peter White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1992); Kevin Sharpe, *The Personal Rule of Charles I* (New Haven, 1993).

⁹ Todd, *Reformation to Revolution*, p. 3.

¹⁰ Counter-revisionist studies are now reacting against some of the first revisionists. See: A.G. Dickens, *The English Reformation* (University Park, PA, 1989, 2nd edition); Peter Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church* (Cambridge, 1982); idem, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London, 1988); David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion: Popular Politics and Culture in England 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987). In addition to these revisions and counter-revisions, other scholars have attempted to move beyond an Anglo-centric approach by incorporating Scottish and Irish interactions. See: Jane Ohlmeyer, *Civil War and Restoration in the Three Stuart Kingdoms: the political career of Randal MacDonnell first marquis of Antrim, 1609-83* (Cambridge, 1993); Allan Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996); Allan Macinnes and Jane Ohlmeyer (eds.), *The Stuart Kingdoms in the Seventeenth Century: Awkward Neighbours* (Dublin, 2001); David Armitage and Michael Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800* (New York, 2002).

interest in the 1970s. All the major surveys of apocalypticism during the sixteenth and seventeenth century were published during that decade.¹¹ Consequently all of these studies promoted the conclusions of either the previous Whig or Marxist historiographies. Apocalyptic thought, and especially millenarianism, became a convenient theological rationale which supported a revolutionary agenda in early modern England. The visions of the Apocalypse prophesied the final defeat of the Antichrist and the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom on earth. As a result, according to these earlier studies, interest in the Apocalypse helped to fuel the fire of revolution, since revolt could be justified now by divine mandate and framed within an apocalyptic timeline. The forces of Satan (represented by Charles I and his crypto-papist Archbishop) had to be defeated in anticipation of the end of human history and the inauguration of the millennial kingdom of Christ. Thus, these surveys neatly aligned the rise of apocalyptic interest and the popularity of millenarianism with the chaotic years of war and devastation in the early seventeenth century. Apocalyptic and millenarian thought was equated precisely with revolution.

Since the publication of these surveys there has been a surprising silence from historians regarding the study of early modern British apocalyptic thought. The 1980s added only a few publications of collected essays to the standing literature on the subject.¹² With the dawn of a new millennium, conveniently interest in the history of apocalypticism was revived, especially in more popular publications.¹³ Only one academic monograph appeared in 2000 focusing again on early modern British apocalyptic interest, but it still perpetuates the historiographical approach of the 1970s.¹⁴ Crawford Gribben's study of British

¹¹ Surveys include: Peter Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge and London, 1970); Bryan W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden, 1975); Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse: Sixteenth Century Apocalypticism, Millenarianism and the English Reformation* (Oxford, 1978); Paul Christianson, *Reformers in Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the reformations to the eve of the civil war* (Toronto, 1978); Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1972); Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1634* (Oxford, 1979).

¹² Essay collections include: C.A. Patrides and Joseph Wittreich (eds.), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance thought and literature* (Manchester, 1984); Richard H. Popkin (ed.), *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought 1650-1800* (Leiden, 1988).

¹³ Popular surveys published on the eve of and after 2000 include: David Katz and Richard H. Popkin, *Messianic Revolution: Radical Religious Politics to the End of the Second Millennium* (New York, 1998); Frederic Baumgartner, *Longing for the End: A History of Millennialism in Western Civilization* (New York, 1999); Robert Clouse, Robert Hosack and Richard Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual: A Once and Future Guide* (Grand Rapids, 1999); Eugene Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults and Millennial Beliefs Through the Ages* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000).

¹⁴ Crawford Gribben's *The Puritan Millennium: Literature & Theology 1550-1682* (Dublin, 2000), is the most recent monograph. In addition Richard Popkin (along with others) has published three of a four volume collection of essay focusing primarily on continental millenarianism: M. Goldish & R. H. Popkin (eds.), *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture, vol. I: Jewish Messianism in the Early Modern World* (Dordrecht, 2001); J. E. Force & R. H. Popkin (eds.), *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture, vol. III: The*

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millenarianism claims that the prime motivation for executing Charles I was a radical millenarian eschatology.

The Stuarts had promoted their dynasty on the premise that they were rulers by divine right - God's representatives on earth. The regicides, fuelled by millenarian fervour, took advantage of this to argue that this was all the more reason for replacing the royal dynasty with the one they represented. Theregicide was nothing less than a clearing of the way for the second coming of Christ, England's rightful king.¹⁵

In thirty years of historical research very little has changed. A revision of the history of British apocalyptic thought is long overdue.

1.ii JOSEPH MEDE AND ENGLISH MILLENARIANISM

By the mid-seventeenth century the most popular eschatological position in England was millenarianism. It was repudiated previously in the Forty-Two Articles of Religion of 1552, but reintroduced in the seventeenth century. What accounted for this reintroduction of a controversial eschatology? On the continent Johann Heinrich Alsted published his *Diatribes de mille annos* in 1627, and others like Carolus Gallus, Calvin's former student, and Johannes Piscator, Alsted's colleague in Herborn, previously had held to a millenarian position.¹⁶ Yet the revival of this position in England was not without an indigenous contributor. Joseph Mede published his *Clavis Apocalyptica* the same year as Alsted's book. His interpretations would prove to have a sustained influence. Mede gained millenarian disciples in England, the continent and North America, including notable scholars like John Milton, Henry More, and Isaac Newton; and his apocalyptic conclusions would continue to be discussed well into the eighteenth century.¹⁷

Millenarian Turn: Millenarian Context of Science, Politics and Everyday Anglo-American Life in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries (Dordrecht, 2001); J. C. Laursen & R. H. Popkin (eds.), *Millenarianism and Messianism in Early Modern European Culture, vol. IV: Continental Millenarians: Protestants, Catholics and Heretics* (Dordrecht, 2001).

¹⁵ Gribben, *The Puritan Millennium*, p. 196.

¹⁶ Carolus Gallus, *Clavis prophetica* (Antwerp, 1592); Johannes Piscator, *In Apocalypsin Johannis Commentarius* (Herborn, 1613, 1621, 2nd edition); idem, *Johannis Piscatoris Commentarii in omnes labores Noui Testamenti*, 2 volumes, (Herborn, 1621); also see: Howard B. Hotson, *Paradise Postponed: Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism* (Dordrecht, 2000), pp. 109-115.

¹⁷ W.H. Oliver discusses eighteenth century millenarianism in: W. H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 55-56. Also consult: Leroy Edwin Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, vols. 3 & 4, (Washington D.C., 1946); James H. Moorhead, "Apocalypticism in Mainstream Protestantism, 1800 to the Present", in Stephen

The first publication of the *Clavis Apocalyptica* proposed Mede's unique chronological sequence for the visions of the Apocalypse. This provided a creative "key" to unlocking the meaning of this prophetic book. The *Clavis* was republished in 1632 with a commentary on the text of the Apocalypse. In addition to this monograph, Mede wrote further comments in short treatises and numerous private letters. Besides these treatises and letters the only other significant study was a series of sermons on I Timothy 4 given at the university chapel, which was published posthumously in 1641. All of these works were focused primarily on apocalyptic passages in the Bible.

Consequently, the person and writings of Joseph Mede provide a unique source in which to observe the emergence and influence of millenarianism in the English apocalyptic tradition. Examining Mede and his writings within the context of the seventeenth century will contribute to a more accurate picture of English millenarianism. The premature application of social scientific formulations to early modern millenarianism by scholars in the 1970s has led into a historiographical cul-de-sac, which could not account for disparate variations of millenarianism. It is important to produce a conception which Mede himself would recognize, without rashly superimposing modern or postmodern configurations.¹⁸ Additionally Mede's writings will reveal the specific sources that contributed to a comprehensive millenarian eschatology. Furthermore Mede's interpretations provide a good starting point for tracing the legacy of English millenarianism as it continued after his death in 1638. The indebtedness to Mede of other commentators will help to determine the nature, shape and influence of millenarianism in various contexts beyond the 1640s.

1.iii LEADING QUESTIONS

The comparatively limited sources – outside of his apocalyptic writings - make it difficult to study extensively the political, philosophical, social and theological thought of Joseph Mede. Nevertheless it is important to place Mede and his apocalyptic writings within the context of the early seventeenth century in order to answer the most significant and fundamental question: did Mede consider millenarianism a theological and biblical motivation for radical activism resulting in revolution? In the years that Mede lived, leading up to the outbreak of war, partisan groups were divided over heated political and theological issues. Determining

J. Stein (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism, Volume 3: Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age* (New York, 1998), pp. 72-107.

¹⁸ This is an approach that Brad Gregory advocates in his study of early modern martyrdom. Gregory argues that historians should seek to define early modern figures in such a way that they "would have recognized themselves, [and] not puzzled over modern or postmodern reconfigurations of who they were." Brad S. Gregory, *Salvation at Stake: Christian Martyrdom in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1999), p. 11.

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Mede's attitudes and positions within such a volatile climate will shed light on how he viewed the application of millenarianism in his current environment.

It is also important to ask when and why Mede became a millenarian? As previously stated, the Church of England in the sixteenth century had ruled that millenarianism was outside the bounds of orthodoxy. Yet the seventeenth century would witness the proliferation of this previously heretical doctrine from Mede onward. Dating his millenarian conversion will help to locate historically the rebirth of millenarianism and also open the possibility of identifying a *pre* or non-millenarian Mede. Then it can be asked, what were the events and factors that led to the reintroduction of millenarianism in the mind of Mede?

Nearly as provocative as Mede's own eschatology is the study of his millenarian legacy that continued into the eighteenth century. While it is important to examine this legacy chronologically, especially its sustained popularity during less explosive years, it is also vital to map out Mede's legacy geographically. What was the reception and influence of Mede beyond England and the British Isles? Issues and events on the continent and in North America sometimes paralleled but often differed from those in Britain. What form did apocalyptic thought take and to what extent did millenarianism in these foreign contexts maintain Mede's distinct conclusions? The crucial task will be to answer these questions and produce a more accurate understanding of seventeenth-century millenarianism.

CHAPTER TWO

Biography

2.i JOSEPH MEDE: A BIOGRAPHY

Lost among the catalogue of seventeenth-century English Divines is the name Joseph Mede. While current scholarship on early modern Britain continues to produce voluminous studies on more recognizable figures like John Owen or Richard Baxter, individuals like Mede have been relegated to the margins and reduced to historical anonymity. However the seventeenth century paints a different portrait of Mede and his place within the religious history of Britain.

2.ii EARLY YEARS (1586-1602)

Little is written on Joseph Mede's early years. All previous biographical summaries are based, almost entirely, on the account of his life found in the edited volumes of his works.¹ This preface gives the most extensive details of Mede's life ever published. Speculation surrounds the anonymous authors of this biography. John Worthington, the editor of Mede's collective works, describes the first part of the biography as "written by some of great acquaintance with him, and that always had a just esteem for him."² Likewise the second part was sent by another, "Doctor anciently of the same University, one who frequently resorted to Mr. Mede, and thought himself richly rewarded by his discourse for every journey he made to his Chamber."³ It is commonly assumed that Worthington himself is one of the two authors, while the identity of the other

¹ "The Life of the Reverend and most Learned Joseph Mede, B. D." and "An Appendix to the foregoing History", in Joseph Mede, *Works*, pp. I-XLV.

² "General Preface", in Mede, *Works*.

³ *Ibid.*

may be John Alsop.⁴ Drawing from this earliest biography, supplemented by additional archival sources, this biographical sketch will attempt to introduce the details and significance of the life of Joseph Mede.

Joseph Mede was born in 1586 at Breden in Essex. His parents were described as individuals of “honest rank,” and distant relatives to Sir John Mede of Wendon Lofts in Essex. Sir John would later serve as a valuable patron during Mede’s career at Cambridge. Little is known of Mede’s childhood, other than the fact that at ten years of age both he and his father fell ill from smallpox. His father never recovered and his mother remarried a certain Mr. Gower from Nasing. Mede had two sisters, Rebecca and “Sister Casse.” John Alsop recorded in his account of Mede’s estate specific amounts of money left to the children of each of his two sisters.⁵

Mede’s education was a high priority for his parents. His stepfather sent him to school in Hoddleden, and then to Wethersfield in Essex. A popular story was told about Mede that during his early school days he purchased a copy of Robert Bellarmine’s Hebrew grammar and proceeded to teach himself the rudimentary principles of that ancient language, spurning the discouragement of his teacher.⁶ In Wethersfield it was likely that he studied under the puritan non-conformist Richard Rogers.⁷ Rogers was appointed lecturer in Wethersfield in 1573 and was an active supporter for non-conformity during the Elizabethan reforms.⁸ He objected to Bishop Whitgift’s Three Articles, and in 1588 he was involved in the signing of a proto-congregationalist covenant (with twenty others) in Wethersfield.⁹ The covenant effectively established an independent gathering “for the continuance of love and for the edifying one of another, after some bodily repast and refreshing.”¹⁰ From Rogers, at an early age, Mede must have gained first-hand knowledge of the conflicts and tensions brewing in the Church of England, particularly from the puritan vantage point. This partially explains why Mede was so reluctant to engage

⁴ Alsop was a former student and close friend. He was named the executor of Mede’s will and preached the sermon at Mede’s funeral.

⁵ Mede’s will is found in Christ’s College Archives, Box M72 (F). The children of Rebecca were Joseph, Rebecca, Samuel and Sarah; the children of his other sister were Joseph, Elizabeth, Anna, Mary, Rebecca and Henry. Mede bequeathed £40 to each of his two godsons (the two Josephs), and £20 to each of the other nephews and nieces. CCA, Box M72 (G) folio 1r; David Cockburn, *A critical edition of the letters of the Reverend Joseph Mead, 1626-1627, contained in the British Library Harleian MS.390* (University of Cambridge, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1994), p. 29.

⁶ Mede, *Works*, I.

⁷ John Peile, *Biographical Register of Christ’s College 1505-1905 and of the earlier foundation, God’s House 1448-1505, Vol. I, 1448-1665* (Cambridge, 1910), p. 245.

⁸ “Rogers, Richard”, *DNB*, vol. XVII, p. 138.

⁹ Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford, 1967, reprinted 1998), pp. 264, 382; idem, *The Religion of Protestants*, pp. 269-271.

¹⁰ Richard Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, p. 497; Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, p. 382.

in the political debates of his own generation. Due to his outspokenness, Rogers was twice suspended from his ministerial duties, the last time in 1607, prior to Mede completing his studies in Wethersfield.¹¹

Another possible influence on Mede was Rogers' theological emphasis on practical Christian conduct. In 1603 Rogers' published *Seaven Treatises containing such directions as is gathered out of the Holie Scriptures*.¹² The intention of this book was to set forth a practical divinity to instruct Christians in their daily lives. In the preface Rogers reveals his intention,

that the Christian man, and he who is faithfull indeede, may so carrie himselfe in his course, as he may have no thought or purpose to revolt and turne from this hope which is set before him, but be perswaded that he is infinitely encouraged, to hold out constantly therein, against all that might come in his way contrarie.¹³

His emphasis was not on precise doctrine, although Rogers did not neglect that aspect, but on practical living. Likewise for Mede, in his own life and his wider theology, the priority of godly living often eclipsed the substantive doctrines being debated in the seventeenth century.¹⁴

2.iii UNIVERSITY YEARS (1602-1610)

In 1602 Mede enrolled at Richard Rogers' alma mater, Christ's College at the University of Cambridge. This was an obvious choice in many ways. Samuel Ward, Rogers' stepson, had also attended Christ's from 1588 to 1596, and would later serve as Master of the new Sidney Sussex College.¹⁵ Still more significantly, Daniel Rogers, Richard's eldest son, was a fellow at Christ's and assigned to be Mede's tutor. Cambridge in the early 1600s was a citadel of puritanism. Mede enrolled the year of William Perkins' death, nevertheless Perkin's tremendous influence continued at Christ's and throughout the

¹¹ "Rogers", *DNB*, vol. XVII, pp. 137-138.

¹² The full title is, *Seaven Treatises containing such directions as is gathered out of the Holie Scriptures, leading and guiding to true happiness, both in this life, and in the life to come: and may be called the practice of christianite* (London, 1603).

¹³ Rogers, *Seaven Treatises*, Preface, A6.

¹⁴ It is not inconceivable that Mede was aware of Rogers' book. The *Seaven Treatises* were republished four times in 1604, 1605, 1612 and 1620. In addition an abridgment was also published in 1618 which also saw four republications in 1619, 1623, 1624 and 1635. *STC*, p. 284.

¹⁵ Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants*, p. 175; "Ward, Samuel", *DNB*, vol. XX, p. 792.

University.¹⁶ At Christ's, Mede was exposed to such notable puritan scholars as William Ames and Thomas Bainbridge.¹⁷ The younger Rogers bore a number of similarities to his father, especially a staunch commitment to defending the puritan cause.¹⁸ Daniel was considered suspect under the Laudian regime for condemning Arminianism along with practices within the Church of England that resembled popish ceremonies.¹⁹ After only three years as Mede's tutor he left Cambridge to serve as the minister at Haversham in Buckinghamshire; after some time in Haversham he moved back home to Wethersfield to follow in his father's footsteps as lecturer.²⁰ Daniel Roger's theological sympathies had little formative influence on Mede, except to distinguish a brand of radical puritanism that Mede rejected. In many ways Mede's early education - steeped in puritanism - would prove invaluable for navigating the treacherous theological waters of seventeenth-century England.

Following Daniel Rogers' departure, William Addison replaced him as Mede's tutor. Mede found Addison's ecclesiastical position much more congenial to that of his previous tutor. Addison was sympathetic towards continual reforms, without however advocating any radical changes. Throughout his career Addison remained a loyal cleric within the Church of England, being appointed rector of Brampton St. Mary, Northamptonshire, and later rector of Whitfield in Northumberland.²¹ The closeness between Addison and Mede was evident in 1610 when Addison was appointed as a Junior Proctor. It was the tradition that all new Junior Proctors participate in a scholastic disputation. Addison asked Mede to serve as moderator of his disputation.²²

Undergraduate education at Cambridge in the early seventeenth century began with a broad foundation. Aspects of humanism and scholasticism formed the core curriculum.²³ Logic, rhetoric, ethics, metaphysics, physics, mathematics,

¹⁶ Paul R. Schaefer, Jr., *The Spiritual Brotherhood on the Habits of the Heart: Cambridge Protestants and the Doctrine of Sanctification: From William Perkins to Thomas Shepherd* (University of Oxford, DPhil. Dissertation, 1994).

¹⁷ William Ames was a fellow at Christ's from 1601-1610, and Thomas Bainbridge was a fellow from 1599 to 1622, and then as the Master from 1622-1646. John Peile, *A History of Christ's College* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 207, 211.

¹⁸ "Rogers, Daniel", *DNB*, vol. XVII, pp. 117-118.

¹⁹ Benjamin Brooks, *The Lives of the Puritans*, vol. 3 (London, 1813; republished Morgan, PA, 1996), pp. 149-150.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 149.

²¹ Peile, *Biographical Register*, p. 225.

²² Peile records that Mede moderated at Addison's "Disses." Peile, *Biographical Register*, p. 225. It is likely that this was an abbreviation for the dismissal address given by the moderator to conclude a disputation. William T. Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum at Early Seventeenth-Century Cambridge* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 24.

²³ Undergraduate education still included the Scholastic lecture, disputations and declamations, along with Humanist elements like the study of classical texts and languages. John Morgan, *Godly*

and cosmography were all required subjects.²⁴ Mastery of this material provided the foundation for advanced studies in medicine, law, music or theology. For those, like Mede, who continued in theology, additional study in near-eastern biblical languages proved to be an invaluable asset. Under Addison's tutelage Mede distinguished himself, and in 1610 he received his Master of Arts degree. Such early recognition marked the beginning of Mede's academic career.

2.iv FELLOW AT CHRIST'S COLLEGE (1610-1638)

The events that surrounded Mede's election to Fellow at Christ's were indicative of the political and ecclesiastical debates that entangled the early Stuart Church. The first attempt to elect Mede to the King Edward fellowship was unsuccessful because the Master of Christ's College, Valentine Cary, suspected that Mede "looked too much towards Geneva" – an unsubstantiated accusation that Mede supported the puritan agenda.²⁵ Cary perceived that Mede was sympathetic toward the faction within Christ's that had opposed his own election to Master in 1609.²⁶ This group included Mede's former tutors Rogers and Addison.²⁷ Consequently, support from outside the University was needed to secure Mede's election; so Lancelot Andrewes (then Bishop of Ely and later Bishop of Winchester) intervened on Mede's behalf. Additionally it has been suggested that Sir Martin Stuteville, with whom Mede would have regular correspondence, also aided during the election.²⁸ Finally in 1613 Mede's election was completed and he began fulfilling his duties as a fellow and tutor.

Shortly after his election, Mede was made Reader of the Greek Lecture of Sir Walter Mildmay's foundation. He devoutly performed his duties as a tutor

Learning: Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640. (Cambridge, 1986), p. 228; more specifics on scholasticism in Cambridge can be found in, Costello, *The Scholastic Curriculum*, pp. 7-35.

²⁴ Ibid. 36-106.

²⁵ Ibid. XXXVI.

²⁶ More details about Cary's election can be found in, Stephen A. Bondos-Greene, "The End of an Era: Cambridge Puritanism and the Christ's College Election of 1609", *The Historical Journal*, 25, I (1982), pp. 197-208.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Cockburn identified the close tie between Cary and Stuteville; Cary was the godfather of one of Stuteville's daughters, and included Stuteville in his will. Cockburn, *A Critical Edition*, p. 31. Also see Peile, *Biographical Register*, pp. 245-26; J. B. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge, Volume III: From the Election of Buckingham to the Chancellorship in 1626 to the Decline of the Platonist Movement* (Cambridge, 1911), pp. 17-18. Likewise Stuteville became so impressed with Mede that he sent his two sons to Christ's, along with his brother-in-law's son, Justinian Isham, and three other relatives. Peile, *Biographical Register*, i. 387; Sir G. Isham (ed.), *The correspondences of Bishop Brian Duppa and Sir Justinian Isham 1650-1660* (Lampport, Northants., 1954), pp. xxxiii-iv; Cockburn, *A Critical Edition*, pp. 32-33.

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with both academic rigor and pastoral compassion. Mede conducted individual lectures which he tailored to the specific needs of each student.²⁹ The basic Cambridge University core curriculum that Mede had completed in his own student days was covered. Mede incorporated the latest pedagogical resources including the innovative works of Bartholomew Keckermann and Johann Heinrich Alsted.³⁰ Emphasis was placed on the study of philosophy, theology and the classical languages of Greek and Latin.³¹

While the standards of academic excellence were high, Mede never disregarded lessons in practical divinity for his students. In the course of their studies, Mede emphasized three maxims for scholarship: first, obtain an understanding of the universal Christian truths; second, in all things demonstrate charity; and finally, third, in presenting one's position, always proceed "Socratically," or by building a mountain of postulations – one on top of the other.³² Here Mede sought to combine the best of scholarly pursuits with an impeccable Christian attitude. Such attention and concern would attract a variety of students who studied at Christ's College in the early seventeenth century, including such prominent figures as Henry More, Thomas Goodwin and John Milton.³³

2.v THE SCHOLAR

The corpus of Mede's writings can be divided into three sections. The first were fifty-three short discourses preached in Cambridge.³⁴ These covered a variety of topics and give added insight to Mede's theology beyond the other two more

²⁹ John Morgan commented that Mede recognized a division in his students between those pursuing secular versus ministerial careers. He would begin all students with the same academic foundation, but would later focus on specific disciplines depending upon the student. The foundation was logic, religion, and the classical languages – Latin and Greek. Books on these topics were the most frequently purchased for his students. John Morgan, *Godly Learning*, p. 283. Mede's book purchases for his students can be found in the *Account Books of Joseph Mead* in Christ's College Library.

³⁰ Mede's account books included repeated purchases of Keckermann's *Systema Logicae* (Hanover, 1600), *Systema S.S. Theologiae* (Hanover, 1602), and *Systema Physicum...* (Hanover, 1610), along with Alsted's *Encyclopedia septem tomis distincta...* (Herborn, 1630), *The Account Books of Joseph Mead*, (CCL). More on Keckermann and Alsted can be found in Howard B. Hotson, "Philosophical pedagogy in reformed central Europe between Ramus and Comenius: a survey of the continental background of the 'Three Foreigners'", in M. Greengass, M. Leslie & T. Raylor (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib & Universal Reformation* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 29-50; idem, *Johann Heinrich Alsted, 1588-1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation and Universal Reform* (Oxford, 2000).

³¹ Refer to fn. 30.

³² Mede, *Works*, p. XXXIX.

³³ While Mede did not serve as a tutor to these three, they all acknowledge his influence upon them.

³⁴ Mede, *Works*, pp. 1-311.

focused sections. The range of topics included everything from the details of soteriology to the proper date of Christ's birth. While Mede was primarily recognized for his other writings, these discourses display the breadth and depth of his scholarly interests.

The second section contained Mede's works on ecclesiology and Christian worship.³⁵ His first significant piece in this section was a Latin tract entitled *De Sanctitate Relativa* addressed to Bishop Lancelot Andrewes, in which he discussed the necessity of revering the sacred.³⁶ It was the reputation of this tract that most likely convinced Andrewes to support Mede's election to Fellow at Christ's College.³⁷ Following this first tract, Mede continued to deal with the question of the "sacred," particularly as it was applied to Christian worship. In three other treatises entitled, *The Reverence of God's House*, *The Christian Sacrifice* and *The Name ΘΥΕΙΟΕΤΗΡΙΟΝ* or *Altare anciently given to the Holy Table*, Mede applied the same principles in order to demonstrate that the worship practices within the Church of England had biblical warrant. Additionally Mede wrote another treatise entitled, *Churches, that is, Appropriate Places for Christian Worship, Both in, and ever since, the Apostles Times*. Here Mede attempted to demonstrate historically that arbitrary private meetings for the purpose of worship never had been the practice of the early church. This was a deliberate attempt to oppose those puritan separatists who were beginning to espouse a congregational ecclesiastic polity. The preface of Mede's collective works states that the treatises and tracts found in this section were his "eldest thoughts and studies."³⁸ They were probably written sometime in the mid-1630s, with *The Name ...Altare* published in 1637, and *The Reverence of God's House*, along with *Churches...the Appropriate Places for Christian Worship* published in 1638, just before Mede's death. Mede dedicated these books to Archbishop William Laud and John Cosin, procuring their guarded favor during some of the most difficult times for the Church of England. It was no coincidence that these three were published during the height of the debate over practices in worship within the Church of England, just four short years before these mounting tensions would push the country into civil war.

The last section of Mede's writings was the most influential and universally respected. The skill and learning displayed in his apocalyptic writings set him apart from other biblical commentators of his day. The words of William Twisse,

³⁵ Ibid, pp. 319-408.

³⁶ Unfortunately this was not published during the time of Mede's election; had it been, it would have probably given Mede enough recognition to surpass the politics of Christ's. Mede, *Works*, p. III. *De Sanctitate Relativa* was later included in his collective works under the title *Concio ad Clerum, De Sanctuario Dei, seu De Sanctitate Relativa*. Mede, *Works*, pp. 398-408.

³⁷ Mullinger also states that it was because of this tract that Andrewes offered Mede a position as his household chaplain. Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, p. 17.

³⁸ Mede, *Works*, General Preface, p. ix.

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first prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly and close friend to Mede, are often quoted to demonstrate Mede's uniqueness: "Master Mede hath many notions of so rare a nature, that I do not finde he is beholding to any other for them, but onely to his owne studiousnesse and dexteritie, with the blessing of God upon his labours."³⁹ The most famous of his apocalyptic writings was the work entitled the *Clavis Apocalyptica*, first published in 1627. This was not a full commentary on the Apocalypse, but an outline of his method, the use of synchronisms, which served as Mede's key to unlocking the mysteries of this book. The *Clavis Apocalyptica* was republished in 1632, this time accompanied by a full commentary. This book was circulated throughout Britain, continental Europe and North America, gaining Mede international interest and appreciation for his exegetical conclusions.

The *Clavis Apocalyptica* was not his only apocalyptic work, but from 1632 until his death Mede was unable to publish any other books related to this topic due to a ban issued by Archbishop Laud. The Archbishop would not permit the publication of any book identifying Rome or the Papacy as the Antichrist - a key interpretation for any Protestant apocalyptic commentator.⁴⁰ Consequently none of Mede's other works were published during his lifetime. Instead his *Apostasy of the Latter Times* was published in 1641, *A Paraphrase and Exposition of the Propheties of Saint Peter* in 1642, and *Daniel's Weekes* in 1643. Along with these added titles, in 1643 the *Clavis Apocalyptica* was again republished, but this time translated into English with the endorsement of the Long Parliament. Beyond the works already mentioned, Mede wrote a few other short treatises which were collected and published by Worthington in his collective works.⁴¹

2.vi CORRESPONDENCE

One final point should be added in regard to Mede's life. Book IV of his collected works contains ninety-eight letters of correspondence between Mede and significant political and ecclesiastical figures in Britain and continental Europe.⁴² This network of communication reflects the broad interest of intellectuals during the early modern period. Most of these letters are filled with inquiries regarding Mede's apocalyptic interpretations, specifically his method and its application to events on the continent, in England, and in North America.

³⁹ "A Preface written by Doctor Twisse, shewing the Methode and Excellency of Mr Medes interpretation of this Mysterious book of the Revelation of Saint John", in Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, A4.

⁴⁰ All such works were banned between 1633-1640. Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 120.

⁴¹ Mede, *Works*, pp. 419-724.

⁴² These are letters written by and to Mede. Mede, *Works*, Book IV, pp. 731-883.

Mede's correspondence demonstrates two specific points. First, these letters help to solidify Mede's reputation as an expert on the Apocalypse during the seventeenth century. His letters are filled with queries from theologians not only in England, but also Ireland, the Dutch Republic, and France.⁴³ Most were seeking further elaboration on some of Mede's specific interpretative conclusions, while others were interested in circulating more copies of the *Clavis Apocalyptica*; Paul Testard even wrote to communicate that he had translated it into French.⁴⁴ Likewise, biblical scholars who were less convinced by Mede's exegetical conclusions wrote to him as well. The need to respond to Mede's writings is telling in and of itself. Mede's re-introduction of millenarianism was stimulating theological thought. Due to his growing popularity, those who disagreed obviously felt it was necessary to respond to Mede.

Second, Mede's correspondence provides additional evidence for examining the extent of intellectual exchange during the early seventeenth century. Networks were established beyond simply the British Isles. Theological thought was not confined to one's particular country, but was communicated across Europe and to North America. Scholars regularly discussed each other's work through personal correspondence and printed replies. The cross-fertilization of thought created an academic community, which openly engaged with and often times debated the latest scholarly works.⁴⁵

Furthermore an additional body of Mede's letters should be mentioned in regard to networks. From 1619 to 1631 Mede wrote weekly to his close friend Sir Martin Stuteville in Dalham.⁴⁶ These letters contained transcriptions of news tracts from London, as well as Mede's own comments regarding current events in Cambridge, London and the continent. Mede's letters to Stuteville provide a fascinating look at how news was received and disseminated in the early modern period. Battles during the Thirty Years War, gossip about political affairs in London, and updates from the University were all reported meticulously. Clearly Mede had a great interest in and concern for the world around him.

⁴³ There are letters from Bishop James Ussher in Ireland, Ludovicus De Dieu in the Netherlands, and Paul Testard in France. Mede, *Works*, pp. 732-733; 792-793.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* 792-793.

⁴⁵ Recent studies have begun to demonstrate the extent of interchange between Britain and the continent. See: Carl R. Trueman, *The Claims of Truth: John Owen's Trinitarian Theology* (Cumbria, 1998); Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford, 2003).

⁴⁶ These letters are found in the British Library, Harleian Manuscripts 389, 390. Edited editions of the letters are: Daphne M. Wedgbury, *An edition of the letters (1621-1625) of the Reverend Joseph Mead to Sir Martin Stuteville of Suffolk in BL MS Harleian 389* (University of Leicester, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1991); David Cockburn, *A Critical Edition*.

2.vii CONCLUSION

The actual events of Joseph Mede's life were not exciting. Most of it was lived in relative isolation in Christ's College. However, from the simple chambers of his study in Cambridge flowed forth a fount of learning that contributed to the development of certain aspects of theology and biblical exegesis for at least the next century. Students attending Cambridge, fellow English divines, and foreign scholars who came into contact with Mede were all exposed to his scholarly pursuits.

The remainder of Mede's life was spent as a scholar and teacher at Christ's. He refused all appointments that would have brought greater prestige and prominence. Twice Archbishop James Ussher of Armaugh invited Mede to accept the provostship of Trinity College in Dublin, but he politely declined both times. Likewise it seemed that Mede, in his later days, was even offered a position as Archbishop Laud's household chaplain.⁴⁷ Again Mede declined, preferring the quieter life behind the walls of his study. On 1 October of 1638, at the age of fifty-two, Mede fell seriously ill and died. Many friends and admirers lamented Mede's death.⁴⁸ The executor of his will, and his colleague, John Alsop, preached a fitting funeral sermon from Genesis 5:24, "And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

⁴⁷ Northants. Record Office, Isham Correspondence MS 221; as found in Anthony Milton, *The Laudians and the Church of Rome c.1625-1640* (Ph.D. Thesis, Cambridge University, 1989), p. 29.

⁴⁸ In a letter to Samuel Hartlib dated 29 October 1639, E. Ironside wrote, "I am sorry for the death of Mr. Mede, learning suffers in the loss of such men." HP 44/6/1A-2B.

CHAPTER THREE

Crypto-Papists, Anti-Calvinists and the Antichrist

3.i MILLENARIANISM AND THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

The biography of Joseph Mede concludes with a most telling statement:

We will onely observe one thing more concerning the Time of his Death,
That he was taken away from the Evils that were ready to come upon this
Island: a Favour which God vouchsafes to many of the righteous.¹

On the second of October 1638, the inconspicuous Cambridge biblical scholar was laid to rest in the inner chapel of Christ's College. As if scripted by a master playwright, Mede exits the scene² just before what Christopher Hill describes as "the greatest upheaval that has yet occurred in Britain."³ From 1638 to 1660 England would experience widespread ecclesiastical, political and social unrest. The Church of England would be torn apart by embittered factions insisting on more thorough reforms, while Parliament itself would repudiate the divine right of the monarch plunging the nation into civil war. Mede's biographer alluded to his timely passing as a blessing which prevented him from experiencing the coming years of strife and despair. Yet from another perspective he was spared from witnessing the rampant exploitation of his own apocalyptic writings during those tumultuous years. Many radical factions would rely on Mede's millenarianism as a religious and rational justification for drastic ecclesiastical

¹ Mede, *Works*, "Authour's Life", p. XXXIV.

² At Mede's funeral, John Alsop preached from the text of Genesis 5:24; the account of the Old Testament saint Enoch who was spared from experiencing death because God translated him directly to heaven. Mede, *Works*, "Authour's Life", p. XXXIV.

³ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), p. 13.

and political activism during the years of the Civil Wars and through the Interregnum period.⁴

Observing the use of Mede's apocalyptic writings during the 1640s, previous generations of British scholars confidently affirmed the association of millenarianism with a radical agenda. Tai Liu argued that from 1643-1649, as a result of millenarian implications regarding the role of the church in the imminent millennial kingdom, opposing parties at the Westminster Assembly were divided over the issue of ecclesiastical polity.⁵ Both Bernard Capp and William Lamont asserted that the ranks of the military were infected with a sense of triumphant expectation. Factions in Cromwell's New Model Army and members of the Fifth Monarchists attempted to usher in the millennium through their own violent efforts.⁶ Even more Hugh Trevor-Roper identified the political agenda of John Dury and Samuel Hartlib, who believed that the reunification of the Protestant church would mark an eschatological event, inaugurating a millennial Eden.⁷ Finally, again illustrating the exploitation of Mede's writings, Hill pointed out that in 1643, Parliament authorized the publication of the first English translation of Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica*;⁸ a possible political ploy to infuse an apocalyptic urgency in support of the Parliamentary cause against the King. All of these studies presented a historical account of millenarianism inextricably associated with the radical intentions of certain seventeenth-century Englishmen. From these studies a consensus definition of millenarianism has emerged which assumes that radicalism is an essential and necessary component of a millenarian eschatology.

While some of the inheritors of Mede's eschatology did indeed wed his millenarianism to the extreme ecclesiastical and political agendas of the day, did that properly define all millenarians as radical activists? If not, what was the relation between millenarianism and activism?⁹ Likewise, and most important, did Mede himself conform to this radical paradigm? Would he have approved of

⁴ See Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon*; Capp, *The Fifth Monarch Men*; Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution: Studies in Interpretation of the English Revolution of the 17th Century* (New York, 1997); William Lamont, *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion 1603-1660* (London, 1969); Tai Liu, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan Divines and the Puritan Revolution 1640-1660* (The Hague, 1973); J. F. Macgregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984).

⁵ Liu, *Discord in Zion*, pp. 29-56.

⁶ Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp.99-130; Lamont, *Godly Rule*, pp. 137-162.

⁷ Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967), pp. 237-293.

⁸ Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 27-28; The *Clavis Apocalyptica* was first published anonymously by Mede in 1627, republished in 1632 and translated as: Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation*, trans. by Richard More (London, 1643).

⁹ See Bernard Capp, "The political dimension of apocalyptic thought", in C.A. Patrides and J. Wittreich (eds.), *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance thought and literature*, pp. 93-124.

the application of his millenarianism during the revolutionary environment of mid-seventeenth century England? The answer to these questions can only be found by examining Mede within the political and ecclesiastical context of early seventeenth-century England. Mede, of course, formulated his millenarianism during the volatile period that would erupt in civil war after his death. Within this period a number of issues sparked dissent and belligerence. By carefully determining Mede's position on three issues which were crucial during the early Stuart period, Mede's political and ecclesiastical sympathies can be revealed, and ultimately conclusions can then be drawn as to whether he did or did not intend to promote a radical agenda through his millenarianism. Within the corpus of Mede's published works his millenarian writings have received far more attention; however, a careful examination of Mede's non-apocalyptic writings reveals a startlingly different portrait of the "Father of British Millenarianism." By specifically focusing on four of Mede's brief treatises on the church: *The Reverence of God's House*, *The Christian Sacrifice*, *The Name Thysiasterion or Altare anciently given to the Holy Table* and *Churches, that is, Appropriate Places for Christian Worship*, along with other small treatises and correspondences commenting on his contemporary political climate,¹⁰ a reexamination of the association between millenarianism and radicalism within the context of antebellum England can be accomplished. Subsequently, this thorough examination of the patriarch of English millenarianism will refine our conception of the relationship between millenarianism and radical activism, and ultimately contribute to a more accurate definition of seventeenth-century English millenarianism.

3.ii CRYPTO-PAPISTS

During the seventeenth century conflict between partisan groups within the church in England mirrored the battlefields where the Parliamentary Army engaged the royalist troops of Charles I. Rejecting the traditionally "halfly reformed" settlement instituted during the Elizabethan period, demands increased within the Church for a proper form of worship consistent with the best Reformed models on the continent. Puritan activists demanded an end to the Laudian statutes which too closely resembled vestiges of popery. These ecclesiastical radicals saw extravagant forms of external worship as idolatrous and inconsistent with the regulative principle of worship set forth in Scripture.

¹⁰ Joseph Mede, *The Reverence of Gods house a sermon preached at St. Maries in Cambridge before the universitie on St. Matthies [sic] day anno 1635/6* (London, 1638); *The Name Thysiasterion, or altare anciently given to the holy table a common-place...*(London, 1648); *The Christian Sacrifice*, in Mede, *Works*, pp.355-379; *Churches, that is, appropriate places for Christian worship both in and ever since the Apostles times...*(London, 1638); These can be found along with Mede's correspondence in his collective works.

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Contrary to these radical puritans, the central principle for Mede's position on worship included the necessity of outward forms. While many of the more zealous puritans argued that the character of New Testament worship should be spiritual and internal, Mede thought otherwise: the assertion "that the worship of the Gospel should be onely spiritual, and no external worship required therein... is repugnant not onely to the practice and experience of the Christian Religion in all Ages, but also to the express Ordinances of the Gospel itself."¹¹ In the treatise, *The Reverence of God's House*, Mede defended the traditional practice of the *genuflexio versus altare*, or bending the knee towards the altar. Mede argued from examples in the Decalogue and even considered the neglect of this practice to be a sin:

That although Bodily worship, being considered in it self, be one of the minor Legis [minor laws], of the lesser things of the Law, and the honour done unto God thereby of no great value (though not of none) in his sight; yet may a voluntary and presumptuous neglect even of so small a duty be a great and hainous sin, because such a neglect proceeds from a profane disposition and election of the heart.¹²

For Mede, the glorification of God in worship must be done with the body as well as the heart. He deduced that if the mouth was employed for singing during worship, other parts of the body could be used similarly.¹³ Moreover Mede made a precise distinction, in a letter to William Twisse, between an image and a place. For Mede, to worship an image was idolatrous, "for God is a jealous God, and cannot endure that the worship we give to him should look towards anything as an Object but Himself."¹⁴ He then explained that it would be absurd to disallow worshipping towards a place, for then,

we must not look toward any created things when we pray, not to Heaven, not turn our selves towards the Table where God's blessings are when we say Grace,...not lawful to invoke God in his Temple, not lawful to pray unto him with a Book, not use the Communion Table as a place to give praise and thanks unto his Name.¹⁵

It is evident from this treatise that Mede did not conform to the radical changes demanded by the puritans, but instead upheld the established practices of the Laudian Episcopals.

¹¹ Mede, *Works*, p. 47.

¹² *Ibid.* 350.

¹³ *Ibid.* 396.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 818.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 818.