*CHAPTER 2*

*THE GRAND STRUCTURE OF ESCHATOLOGY*

John Wesley, a "brand plucked out of the burning"[[1]](#footnote-0) by God, felt that the divine hand also shaped the destiny of the world and even revealed its future shape the pages of the Bible. Thus, Wesley put significant effort into the development of general eschatology. His formation reflected a comprehensive view of reality and history in which events of the spiritual control the events of the temporal universe according to a detailed chronology. Wesley's thoughts in this area may be divided into three basic categories: the hermeneutics of prophecy, a summary of prophetic history, and his view of his own time in the light of prophecy.

*The Hermeneutics of Prophecy*

The commentary on Revelation in the *Expository Notes upon the New Testament* is Wesley's most comprehensive presentation of general eschatology. In it, he viewed the Apocalypse as a prophetic chronology of events reaching from the first century to beyond the climax of history. In its images he saw depicted the rise, interplay, and fall of earthly empires orchestrated by otherworldly forces. In an apocalyptic hermeneutic worthy of Hellenistic Judaism, this world and the next, although clearly demarcated, were also extensively contiguous with the seemingly great events of the former dependent upon the greater reality of the latter.[[2]](#footnote-1) In Wesley's view, St. John's Revelation uniquely removed the veil which concealed a chronological determinism, displaying a remarkable panorama of the history of past, present, and future events; including suggestions of the Methodist revival. This was the presuppositional context in which Wesley interpreted the Revelation. The present section develops these themes by considering: the purpose of Revelation, the process of revealing, the principles of interpretation, the structure and symbolic aspects of Revelation, and how Wesley (following Bengel) understood the times descibed in the Apocalypse.[[3]](#footnote-2)

The Purpose of Revelation

Wesley extolled Revelation as special even among canonical books. "Of all the books of the New Testament . . . written by the will of God; . . . none were so expressly commanded to be written."[[4]](#footnote-3) His commentary on it in the *Notes* is inaugurated with a virtual paean to its manifold glories.

Indeed the whole structure of it breathes the art of God, comprising, in the most finished compendium, things to come, many, various; near, intermediate, remote; the greatest, the least; terrible, comfortable; old, new; long, short; and these interwoven together, opposite, composite; relative to each other at a small, at a great, distance; and therefore sometimes, as it were, disappearing, broken off, suspended, and afterwards unexpectedly and most seasonably appearing again. In all its parts it has an admirable variety, with the most exact harmony, beautifully illustrated by those very digressions which seem to interrupt it. In this manner does it display the manifold wisdom of God shining in the economy of the church through so many ages.[[5]](#footnote-4)

Although he thought the Revelation contained much relevant to Christian doctrine and praxis, this was of secondary importance since this material was also "delivered in other parts of holy writ; so that the Revelation need not to have been given for the sake of these." Rather, "the peculiar design of this is, *to show the things which must come to pass*." Future prophecy was the "great point in view."[[6]](#footnote-5) In the Revelation "our Lord has comprised what was wanting in those prophecies touching the time which followed his ascension and the end of the Jewish polity." The prophecies of the Old and New Testaments, including those of Jesus, only provided limited information about future events because that was all that was "seasonable" when they were written. The "one short book" of Revelation, however, presupposed "all the other prophesies, and at the same time explaining, continuing, and perfecting them in one thread."[[7]](#footnote-6) It is, in fact, "not only the sum and the key of all the prophecies which preceded, but likewise a supplement to all . . . [containing] many particulars not revealed in any other part of scripture."[[8]](#footnote-7) "The proposition, and the summary of the whole book" are quite clear and important: "'*He cometh*.'"[[9]](#footnote-8) This was for Wesley the fundamental organizing idea not only of the text, but also of history. All history from the destruction of Jerusalem, about the time the Revelation was written, is a preparation for the second coming of Christ.[[10]](#footnote-9) It is to this end that the entire torrent of the prophecy flowed from John's pen sweeping up in its inspired strokes the pre-ordained history of the world.

The Process of the Revealing

Wesley's penchant for detail, supernatural world view, and understanding of history are evident in his graphic description of St. John being in the Spirit on the Lord's day and the receiving of the revelation. John was in:

A trance, a prophetic vision; so overwhelmed with the power, and filled with the light, of the Holy Spirit, as to be insensible of outward things, and wholly taken up with spiritual and divine. What follows is one single, connected vision, which St. John saw in one day; and therefore he that would understand should carry his thought straight on through the whole, without interruption. The other prophetic books are collections of distinct prophecies, given upon various occasions; but here is one single treatise, whereof all the parts exactly depend on each other. Chapter iv.1 is connected with chapter i.19; and what is delivered in the fourth chapter goes on directly to the twenty-second. . . . It was, therefore, with the utmost propriety that St. John on this day [the Lord's day] both saw and described his coming.[[11]](#footnote-10)

"It seems" he continued "the vision presented itself gradually" beginning with John hearing a voice and then seeing the candlesticks. He then saw "*one like a son of man*-That is, in a human form. As a man likewise our Lord doubtless appears in heaven; though not exactly in this symbolical manner, wherein he presents himself as the head of the church." At this point "the apostle . . . is beat back by the appearance of his flaming eyes, which occasioned his more particularly observing his feet." Both his voice and especially "his glorious appearance" "bespoke God."[[12]](#footnote-11) Wesley was explicit that "Christ dictated . . . every word"[[13]](#footnote-12) and that "St. John always saw and heard, and then immediately wrote down one part after another." When the voice beckoned John to "Come up hither," the prophet went "not in body, but in spirit"[[14]](#footnote-13) such that "all this was represented to St. John at Patmos, in one day, by way of vision."[[15]](#footnote-14)

This supernatural picture of John receiving the Revelation shows something of the nature of Wesley's world view, a world view which was a necessary setting for the prophetic content that would follow. It is a picture of the apocalyptic invasion of the present realm of time and space with information about the future from the other, more real, world. John's is the penultimate visitation and vision. It is neither a metaphor in or a relic of mythological biblical reality, but a true communication of objective data to a real human of the real world from the true God in the ultimate reality. All that would follow from it would be equally real.

Principles of Interpretation

Wesley's special hermeneutic concerning Revelation contains at least eight fundamental principles for its interpretation.[[16]](#footnote-15) (1) The interpretation of Revelation should begin with the interpreter becoming open to the illumination of the Spirit. True to his overall understanding of life, the interpretation of the Revelation required personal involvement and fiduciary commitment to the text; a coming together of the illumination of the Holy Spirit with the existential reality of personal faith.

The Revelation was not written without tears; neither without tears will it be understood. How far are they from the temper of St. John who inquire after anything rather than the contents of this book! yea, who applaud their own clemency if they excuse those that do inquire into them![[17]](#footnote-16)

(2) In a similar vein, one ought to be circumspect such that "no man should constrain either himself or another to explain everything in this book. It is sufficient for every one to speak just so far as he understands."[[18]](#footnote-17) (3) The interpreter can take solace in the fact that the Revelation "suffices for the explaining of itself."[[19]](#footnote-18) (4) Thus, interpreters of Revelation are "especially to have" the grand prophetical intent of the book "before our eyes whenever we read or hear it."[[20]](#footnote-19) (5) Yet, it is also very useful to compare it with the Old Testament prophets, to which it bears "a near resemblance."[[21]](#footnote-20) In particular

The introduction and the conclusion agree with Daniel; the description of the man child, and the promises to Sion, with Isaiah; the judgment of Babylon, with Jeremiah; again, the determination of times, with Daniel; the architecture of the holy city, with Ezekiel; the emblems of the horses, candlesticks, &c., with Zechariah. Many things largely described by the prophets are here summarily repeated; and frequently in the same words. To them we may then usefully have recourse. Yet the Revelation suffices for the explaining itself, even if we do not yet understand those prophesies; yea, it casts much light upon them. Frequently, likewise, where there is a resemblance between them, there is a difference also; the Revelation, as it were, taking a stock from one of the old prophets, and inserting a new graft into it. Thus Zechariah speaks of two olive trees; and so does St. John, but with a different meaning[.] Daniel has a beast with ten horns; so has St. John but not with quite the same signification[.] And here the difference of words, emblems, things, times, ought studiously to be observed.[[22]](#footnote-21)

Hence, "it is right therefore to compare them; but not to measure the fullness of these by the scantiness of those preceding."[[23]](#footnote-22) (6) Unlike the Old Testament prophecies, however, Revelation "relates to the whole world, through which the Christian church is extended."[[24]](#footnote-23) (7) Yet, Wesley saw no claim to comprehensiveness in its history, but that it was a selective presentation based on what was important to God and not human interpreters.[[25]](#footnote-24) (8) Given such a history, the interpreter "must take care not to overlook what is already fulfilled; and not to describe as fulfilled what is still to come."[[26]](#footnote-25)

These concepts are meaningful on two counts. First, it is interesting that Wesley, who is often thought to be only adapting the ideas of others to fill a practical and non-scholarly need, should place such an emphasis on underlying principles.[[27]](#footnote-26) This suggests there was much serious thought which existed as an unseen foundation for the popular edifice. Second, these principles again speak of a supernatural and integrated worldview which closely connects his eschatology with the other aspects of his doctrine and life.

The Structure of Revelation

Wesley believed the Revelation to have been "written in the most accurate manner possible." It contains a single prophecy[[28]](#footnote-27) which "reaches from the old Jerusalem to the new, reducing all things into one sum, in the exactest order, and with a near resemblance to the ancient prophets."[[29]](#footnote-28) "The whole Revelation may be divided thus:"

chapters 1- 3 "the introduction;"

4- 5 "the proposition;"

6- 9 "things which are already fulfilled;"

10-14 "things which are now fulfilling;"

15-19 "things which will be fulfilled shortly;"

20-22 "things at a greater distance."[[30]](#footnote-29)

Within this structure the "grand vision" of the book commenced with the fourth chapter.[[31]](#footnote-30)

Wesley believed the overall structure of the book could be discerned in its literary elements. Hence, the phrase "*to show* . . . recurs" throughout the book to indicate that one part refers to another.[[32]](#footnote-31) The major sections of Revelation are connected by "and," while the phrase "after these things" distinguishes the sections of the book (7:9; 11:1); and thus the phrase "and after these things" both connects and distinguishes sections (7:1; 15:5; 18:1).[[33]](#footnote-32) The various doors which are opened, then the opening of the temple of God, and finally the opening of heaven; successively give the prophet "a new and more extended prospect."[[34]](#footnote-33) The structure of the main prophecy is indicated by manifold sevens of epistles, seals, trumpets, phials; each of which are divided into fours and threes. These various elements may be used to interpret each other[[35]](#footnote-34) and these interpretations may then be applied to real history: past, present, and yet to come. These future things are already determined as indicated by the metaphor of being "written in God's book."[[36]](#footnote-35)

Wesley, closely following Bengel, took a fundamentally historicist view of the Revelation. The churches are real churches and do not represent seven ages of church history.[[37]](#footnote-36) The ensuing prophecy is a selective chronology of world history to the end of time climaxing with a glimpse beyond the current natural order into eternity with its new heaven and earth.[[38]](#footnote-37) The seventh seal contains the seven trumpets and the seventh trumpet contains the seven bowls, vials, or phials. This structure is "the sum of all we should have continually before our eyes: so the whole Revelation flows in its natural order."[[39]](#footnote-38) This structure, however, is not without a great deal of flexibility. Although all the seals, trumpets, and phials occur in the sequence described in the text; preparations for a particular seal, trumpet, or phial can come at great length before the actual event and fulfillments can extend well beyond succeeding openings; so that "sometimes, what begins later than another thing ends sooner; and what begins earlier than another thing ends later: so the seventh trumpet begins earlier than the phials, and yet extends beyond them all."[[40]](#footnote-39) Thus, the system is much less rigid and less precise than might at first be expected.

The Symbolism of Revelation

Brief comment must be made concerning Wesley's view of the symbolism of this most symbolic of biblical books. At its heart, there seems to be no consistent principle or pattern for identifying the figurative and symbolic from the plain and literal. Sometimes there is a literal interpretation of minutia which is astounding: Christ "doubtless with the prints of the wounds which he once received" stands in heaven,[[41]](#footnote-40) the angel of Revelation 10:2 must have had the little book in his left hand since he had to have sworn with his right in 10:6,[[42]](#footnote-41) and John's observation of "at least two hundred millions, and two millions over" is described as being only "but a part of the holy angels," the totality of which he later heard.[[43]](#footnote-42)

On the other hand, within this literal framework, he allowed the most extreme symbolism to be employed at times.[[44]](#footnote-43) "'The earth'" refers to Asia since it is near Patmos, Europe is designated as "'the islands'" since "it swims in 'the sea,'" and "'streams of water,' or 'the trees,'" obviously refer to "Afric."[[45]](#footnote-44) The seven Spirits are an emblem for the Holy Spirit.[[46]](#footnote-45) Numbers, especially seven,[[47]](#footnote-46) and colors[[48]](#footnote-47) carry signification. Alpha and Omega refer to time.[[49]](#footnote-48) The four living creatures "are doubtless some of the principal powers of heaven," yet may also symbolize the Christian church, universality, and the four cardinal virtues.[[50]](#footnote-49) Christ's breast covering "is a symbol of rest"[[51]](#footnote-50) and his hair indicates eternity.[[52]](#footnote-51) These examples could easily be multiplied. A most useful example of Wesley's approach to the symbolic aspects of the Apocalypse is appended to his exceedingly detailed description of the book of seven scrolls in Revelation 5:1:

It is scarce needful to observe, that there is not in heaven any real book of parchment or paper and that Christ does not really stand there, in the shape of a lion or of a lamb. Neither is there on earth any monstrous beast with seven heads and ten horns. But as there is upon earth something which, in its kind, answers such a representation; so there are in heaven divine counsels and transactions answerable to these figurative expressions.[[53]](#footnote-52)

The lack of precision of his system also is illustrated in his comment on two consecutive verses from Revelation 20. In discussing the millennia he warned that the real "danger" lay "in interpreting them . . . in a gross and carnal sense." But in the very next verse in reference to the seal set upon he beast he questioned: "how far these expressions are to be taken literally, how far figuratively only, who can tell?"[[54]](#footnote-53) Not even Bengel's instruction that: "the expressions in the Prophecy from the ivth Chapter are very *figurative*; but afterward, when the angel gives John the *open* book, are much *clearer*" provides much help.[[55]](#footnote-54) Wesley obviously followed the ancient dictum that which is absurd in the text is symbolical and he was often influenced in these distinctions by Bengelius, but the exact mechanism seems more intuitive and utilitarian than explicit and rigorous. In summary, there seems to be a peculiar flexibility regarding the identification and use of symbolism.

The Reckoning of the Times

Essential to understanding Wesley's view of the Revelation is an appreciation of the complex interpretation of the times and dates of Revelation he adopted from Bengel.[[56]](#footnote-55) Since Wesley never explained the basic ideas behind the chronology he borrowed,[[57]](#footnote-56) it is perhaps best to summarize of Bengel's system and then consider Wesley's adaptation.

*Bengel's System of Reckoning*

Bengel's long interest in the chronology of Scripture provided the foundation for his understanding the times of Revelation.[[58]](#footnote-57) He combined detailed exegesis and textual criticism, for which he is justly famous, to produce an Old Testament chronology which allotted 3,943 years from creation to the "commencement of the vulgar Christian era." His attention to detail is such that he believed the time during which humanity innocently inhabited the Garden was probably brief and that the day of atonement probably accurately celebrates the anniversary of the fall. He was reasonably certain that creation took place in Autumn some 3,940 years before Christ's actual birth which had occurred in about 3 B.C.E., probably on December 25.[[59]](#footnote-58)

With this background established, Bengel was able to look to the future.[[60]](#footnote-59) While he enjoined caution in establishing dates, he thought the injunctions against setting dates implied in Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32; and Acts 1:6-7 were relevant only for their immediate historical situation.[[61]](#footnote-60) Decades after the evnets described in these passages had occurred God had given the Apocalypse to John. This not only made the setting of dates possible, but its very existence was a divine madate to to do. From Hebrews 9:26; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 Peter 1:20; 4:7; and Habakkuk 3:2 he deduced that the period of New Testament history from the first to the second coming had to be briefer than the roughly 3,940 years of the Old Testament. Less than 3,940 years of future history therefore remained from the birth of Christ until the end. Further, there seemed to be support in both Scripture and in its traditional interpretation that the span of history was limited to 7,777 years, leaving only 3,837 years to pass after the birth of Christ. Of these, two thousand were to be taken up by the first and second millennia (of which more later), leaving only 1,837 possible years or about a century from the time he was writing to the beginning of the first millennium.[[62]](#footnote-61)

The great numerological insight of Bengel was in discerning the number of the Beast. The discovery itself seemed revelatory:

In preparing a sermon for the first Sunday in Advent 1724 his thoughts were led to the 21st ch. of Revelation. Suddenly the idea forcibly struck him, that the 42 months of the Beast's blasphemy (ch. xiii. 5, 6), and likewise the number 666, denote a precise period of TIME, and that these two denote the same period.[[63]](#footnote-62)

Bengel argued, in essence, that the *psephisato* "let him calculate" of Revelation 13:18 requires that there be two numbers to preform the calculation. The only two numbers available in the context are the forty two months of the Beast in verse five and the infamous "666" in verse eighteen.[[64]](#footnote-63) Since months are given, this must be a reference to time and since 666 is the number of a man, these must refer to common years. Therefore common and prophetic time could be unambiguously related in unlocking the chronology of Revelation. Bengel further observed that the 666 common years of the Beast and the 1,000 common years of the millennia are in the beautiful proportion of two to three.[[65]](#footnote-64) That these two numbers should be so associated was crucial since "there is not in all the book a third number that gives us the least handle or pretence for comparing it with the number of the beast."[[66]](#footnote-65) It was a small leap to see that these numbers are really rounded off and that 666 really stands for 666 6/9 (2/3) years. With this refinement a prophetic month (666 2/3 common years divided by forty two prophetic months) is equivalent to 15 55/63 (15.8730 by my calculation) common years.[[67]](#footnote-66) Thus, and somewhat remarkably, 7 prophetic months equal 111 1/9 common years, 14 prophetic months equal 222 2/9 common years, "and so on."[[68]](#footnote-67) From this a table could be constructed equating prophetic and common time periods:

BENGEL'S UNITS PROPHETIC AND COMMON TIME

PROPHETIC COMMON

Hour = 7 59/63 days

Day = 1/ 2 year 8 days or 190 10/21 days

Month = 15 55/63 years or 5,797 1/ 2 days

Year = 190 10/21 years or 69,570 days [[69]](#footnote-68)

In his table Bengel noted that the calculation for the prophetic day is "near 8 days" but that the 69,570 days of the prophetic year are exact. More abstractly the hours, days, months, and years of common time and prophetic time may be related by their proportions:

BENGEL'S PROPORTIONS OF COMMON AND PROPHETIC UNITS OF TIME

COMMON PROPHETIC

190 10/21 = 1

380 20/21 = 2

571 9/21 = 3

666 2/ 3 = 3 1/2 or half 7

1333 2/ 3 = 7

2666 2/ 3 = 14

4000 = 21 [[70]](#footnote-69)

Thus, the 1,260 prophetical days of the woman (Rev. 12:6) are 240,000 common days or 657 common years and 46 common days; the five prophetical months of the first woe are 28,987 1/2 common days, or 4,141 common weeks and 12 common hours, or 79 1/3 common years; and the prophetic year, month, day, and hour of the second woe are 75,565 common days (10,795 common weeks) and 22 common hours, or 207 common years and 40 days.[[71]](#footnote-70)

It also follows that "a *Monad* or *Unit*" of 666 is 1 1/999" (by which he meant one common year based on 666 2/3) is slightly longer that the standard 365 day year. This greatly appealed to Bengel since it is similar to the slightly longer cubit of Ezekiel 40:5 and falls between 365 and 366 days suggesting a solar year[[72]](#footnote-71) which it approximates more closely than many secular calendars.[[73]](#footnote-72) The "comparison" of 666 6/9 and 1000 or, more precisely, 999 9/9 "leads to such *Secula* or ages [centuries] as are somewhat longer than the common ones of 100 years." Thus, by dividing the 1,000 years into nine parts he arrived at the fundamental unit of time: 111 1/9 common years. This figure is a factor of both 666 6/9 and 999 9/9 and is rather close to the ancient *Secula* of both Rome and "the old *Etrusci*," of typically 110 years and between 111 and 112 years respectively, an historical coincidence he found meaningful.[[74]](#footnote-73)

He also explored the Greek terms *kairos* and *chronos* (both often and legitimately translated "time") as clues to St. John's chronological inferences.[[75]](#footnote-74) Given that, that every detail of the text had specific meaning, and that the "time, and times [presumably two], and half a time" (*kairos*) of Revelation 12:14 appears to be a determinate length of time as does the *chronos* of Revelation 6:9-11, such periods should be calculable. The complete, quite detailed, and perhaps tortured, derivation can be summarized as follows. By establishing relative beginning and ending points for the various periods of time mentioned in Revelation (the three and one half times of the woman are longer than the 666 years of the beast since they begin prior to the beast rising from the sea and extend to beyond the dragon being bound (Rev. 13:14) and so on) they could be compared and a sequence established:

(1) The three and one half times of the woman are longer that the 666 years of the beast.

(2) The "short time" of the Devil (Rev. 12:12) is longer that the three and one half times of the woman. (Bengel's reasoning was based on the observation that the "short time" ends with the times of the woman but begins before them. The apparently difficulty is resolved by translating *oligos* as "few" with reference to the basic unit of time he dealt with text critically, see below.[[76]](#footnote-75))

(3) The "non-chronos" of Revelation 10:6 (Bengel translated *hoti chronos oucheti estai* as "*that a chronos* [whole period] *shall be no longer* [than]" hence his term "non-chronos" or vernacularly "not quite a *chronos*" (which Wesley adopted[[77]](#footnote-76)) is longer than the short time (see also Rev. 10:7; 17:7).

(4) The *chronos* of 6:11 is longer, by definition, than the non-chronos.

Further, it follows from "the whole tenor of the text" that these periods, though each longer than the preceding, are not very much longer than the previous period.[[78]](#footnote-77) In a fairly remarkable leap, Bengel then concluded that these times are therefore proportional one to another and was thus able to combine his calculation of prophetic and common times with this scheme of proportional Apocalyptic periods. They are displayed in the following table adapted from Bengel's *Introduction* with the Greek terms and key Scripture references added (note that *kairos* and *chronos* must be carefully distinguished although both may legitimately translated "time"):

Bengel's periods:

111 1/9 years = a half time (*kairos*, Rev. 12:14).

222 2/9 " = 1 time (*kairos*, Rev. 12:14).

333 3/9 " = 1 1/2 times (*kairos*, no specific reference).

444 4/9 " = 2 times (*kairos*, Rev. 12:14).

555 5/9 " = 1/2 chronos (*chronos*, Rev. 12:14).

666 6/9 " = the period of the Beast (Rev. 13:18; cf. 13:5).

777 7/9 " = a time, 2 times and 1/2 (*kairos*, Rev. 12:14)

888 8/9 " = the short or little time (*kairos*, Rev. 12:12: "*oligon kairon*").

999 9/9 " = the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7).

<1111 1/9 " = the non-chronos or "not a time" (*chronos*, Rev. 10:6).

1111 1/9 " = a chronos (*chronos*, Rev. 6:11; Bengel rejected the adjective *mikron* of the Textus Receptus received text; cf. the *mikron chronon* or "little season" of Rev. 20:3 which seems an indefinite period[[79]](#footnote-78)). 2222 2/9 " = an aion (*aeon*).[[80]](#footnote-79)

With this the complex chronological structure of Revelation was disclosed and could be related to real history: past, present, and future.

Bengel also critiqued other positions and buttressed his argument by an historical review of prophetic interpreters noting that his calculations for the length of prophetic time were "the middle way" among the results.[[81]](#footnote-80) He responded to the argument that the times of Revelation are different from those of Daniel 9:24-27 by noting that the measuring rod of Revelation 11:1; 21:15-16 is different in length from that of Ezekiel 40:2, 5-8; 41:8, 17-19[[82]](#footnote-81) and developed a method of correlating the two.[[83]](#footnote-82)

With this structure Bengel had a powerful tool for bringing out (or perhaps imposing upon) the divine order and harmony which had seemed to permeate the text of Revelation but which always had proved illusive. His delight in this scheme was found in three main themes. First, its Scriptural etiology which has already been partially demonstrated. Second, its empirical agreement with the events of past history which are displayed in the summary of Wesley's rendition of his understanding of prophetic history below and in Appendix 1 where a more detailed exposition is made. Third, what may be described as the self-validating, *a priori*, mathematical beauty of which characterized the system.[[84]](#footnote-83) For instance, he noted with satisfaction that "a *Chronos*, the *thousand years*, the *short time*, the *time, times, and a half time*, and the *number of the beast* are in proportion to one another as 10, 9, 8, 7, 6."[[85]](#footnote-84) Bengel also noted the number seven occurs frequently and with importance throughout Scripture in relation to time but that "in the *Revelation*, no number from 1 to 10 is less mentioned in express terms than *7*, in the *account of the times*."[[86]](#footnote-85) Yet, on a subtle level, the "*Septunary*" permeated his entire formation. Multiplying the 222 2/9 years of a *kairos* by the approximately 365 days, 5 hours, and 49 minutes (or 365.242361 days by my reckoning, Bengel disregarded the seconds) of the common year, and then dividing this number by the seven days in a week yielded 11,595 exact weeks less only 44 4/9 minutes (by my reckoning 2,666.6666 seconds or about 11.9999 seconds for each of the 222 2/9 years). The 666 years of the Beast resolved into 34,785 weeks less 2 hours and 13 1/3 minutes, and so on.[[87]](#footnote-86) Also important for him was that this measurement of a day was approximately the mean of many ancient and then contemporary, empirical estimates. In fact:

If Mathematicians religiously disposed, would, out of regard for the prophetical Word, farther examine this length of the year and establish it, it might hereafter give a handle for determining the true, but yet more hidden length of the natural or synodical *Month*, and for other such like discoveries: for in this case too we may say, Here *is the wisdom*.[[88]](#footnote-87)

It was this arcane, but internally coherent (at least on the mathematical, if not the historical, level), formation which Wesley adopted with only the slightest softening and alteration of detail.

*Wesley's Adaptation of Bengel*

Wesley incorporated the results of Bengel's calculations with little change. There are, however, anomalies, which must be investigated. Wesley displays a chart similar to Bengel's in the *Notes* at Revelation 9:14, but with some discrepancies relating to the equivalents for the "com.[mon]" day and year:[[89]](#footnote-88)

WESLEY'S UNITS OF PROPHETIC AND COMMON TIME

PROPHETIC COMMON TIME

Hour = 8 common days

Day = 196 " "

Month = 15 common years + 318 " "

Year = 196 " " + 117 " " [[90]](#footnote-89)

Let the reader understand that these numbers do not tally. With a little rounding off, the common days and months agree nicely with each other and Bengel's chart. The 196 in the common days and years are in disagreement with Bengel and are internally inconsistent within Wesley's own chart. There are also other problems. The *Notes* describe common and prophetic times in Revelation 9:15 and in 9:10 respectively:

1 prophetic month = 15 common years + 318 common days (Rev. 9:15)

5 prophetic months = 79 common years (Rev. 9:10)

Based on this one should be able to construct the following equation:

5 (15 common years + 318 common days) = 79 common years

75 common years + 1590.0 common days = 79 common years

- 75 common years = - 75 common years

1590.0 common days = 4 common years

÷ 4 = ÷ 4

397.5 common days = 1 common year

The difficulty is obvious. Assuming "common" months to consist of thirty days and other mathematical permutations do not help.[[91]](#footnote-90) Neither Wesley nor his possible sources in Revelation 9:15 shed additional light on this morass or on how it came to be. (Instead of Wesley's 212 [635-847] Bengel has 207 years [629-836 or 634-840] which works quite nicely[[92]](#footnote-91)). The best that can be established is that typographical errors entered Wesley's writing or publication process at some point. This is quite possible if the "0" in both cases was misread as a "6."[[93]](#footnote-92) In summary, Wesley, as he admitted, adopted Bengel's system in its entirety. Although he omitted the underlying explanation he clearly understood it. The remaining variations from Bengel are minor and some appear to be a function of poor proof-reading.

*A Summary of Wesley's Prophetic History*

Given the above dating scheme, a brief summary of the broad outlines of Wesley's general eschatology can be made. It is based primarily on Wesley's commentary on Revelation in his *Expository Notes upon the New Testament* with supplements from other sources. For the sake of clarity, a brief overview of prophetic history is presented first followed by discussions of more detailed issues.[[94]](#footnote-93)

An Overview of Prophetic History

For Wesley, the events predicted in the Revelation began to be fulfilled soon after the Apostle wrote.[[95]](#footnote-94) The extent of prophesies already fulfilled by his time provided confidence that those things which were yet to come would surely come to pass.[[96]](#footnote-95) The first three chapters of the Revelation contained the introduction and describe the giving of the Revelation.[[97]](#footnote-96) The seven letters were written to real historical churches but were applicable to the entire church forming "a kind of sevenfold preface to the book." They also served as a sort of spiritual preparation for the reading of the text. It is only in 4:1 "that St. John enters upon that grand vision which takes up the residue of the book."[[98]](#footnote-97) The fourth through the fifth chapters continued this introductory mode containing "the proposition" as John was initiated into the heavenly events.

In the fourth chapter, the great prophecy and intricate structure of the Revelation began to become manifest with the opening of the seven seals. The seals were divided into two groups of four and three. The first four seals affected the visible world "and begin almost at the same time" "quickly after" the Revelation was written in about 96.[[99]](#footnote-98) The first seal of the first or white horseman was realized in the coming to the Roman throne of Trajan in 98. With him ended peace on the earth. The second seal of the second or red horseman pointed back to Decebalus, king of Dacia. The color signified the death and destruction he brought upon the empire. The third seal of the third or black horseman with its scales represented the famines which came upon the Roman empire in the time of Trajan with particular reference to Egypt. The fourth seal of the fourth or pale horse extended throughout the earth. Its rider, death, had probably taken a fourth of all the people of the earth through "sword, famine, pestilence, and wild beasts." Each seal and horseman was also associated with many additional historical particulars and even geographical distinctives.[[100]](#footnote-99) Similarly, their effects extended well beyond their immediate historical appearance.[[101]](#footnote-100) "From Trajan's persecution [98 c.e.], to the first crusade against the Waldenses [1,209 c.e.]" is the extent of the first "time" or "*chronos*;" approximately 1,111 years.[[102]](#footnote-101)

The second group of seals, the last three of the seven, related to the "invisible world; the fifth, to the happy dead, particularly the martyrs; the sixth, to the unhappy [dead]; the seventh, to the angels especially to those to whom the trumpets are given."[[103]](#footnote-102) The seventh seal was the most severe of all. Its preparation began in chapter seven and its gravity was underscored by the half hour of silence in chapter eight. The half hour, strangely, was not considered a chronological indicator but only John's subjective impression of the event.[[104]](#footnote-103)

Contained within the seventh seal are the seven trumpets which are sounded sequentially and which "reach nearly from the time of St. John to the end of the world." Like the seals they also are divided into four and three, yet the seventh is further singled out.[[105]](#footnote-104) The first four trumpets were directed at "enemies of Christ's kingdom."[[106]](#footnote-105) The first trumpet was identified with the struggles between the Jews and the Roman empire of the second century.[[107]](#footnote-106) The second trumpet was identified with the Roman heathen beginning with the invasions of the Goths in 250. The references to the "sea" and "ships" indicated peoples and nations.[[108]](#footnote-107) The third trumpet was seen as being focused against unholy Christians by means of Arianism beginning in 315. The mysterious "*Wormwood*" was interpreted as "the unparalleled bitterness both of Arius himself and of his followers."[[109]](#footnote-108) The fourth trumpet was identified with the assaults on the Roman empire culminating with Odoacer's final destruction in 476.[[110]](#footnote-109)

The last three trumpets were associated with the three woes. Between each of these trumpets "there is a remarkable pause."[[111]](#footnote-110) The first woe brought by the trumpet of the fifth angel was eventuated by the Persian persecution of the Jews, the prelude to which was the attempt by Isdegard II to abolish the Sabbath in 454. The woe proper, extended for five prophetic months or seventy nine common years from the rise of the Persians in 510 to their being overcome by the Saracens in 589.[[112]](#footnote-111) The second woe attended the trumpet of the fourth angel. Its prelude was the rise of the Saracens in 510[[113]](#footnote-112) and it was fully realized in the domination of "Mahomet" and his followers from 634-847 or the 212 common years of the prophetic "hour, day, month and year."[[114]](#footnote-113)

Wesley believed the seventh trumpet was described in Revelation 11:15-22:5.[[115]](#footnote-114) It began in 847. The third woe, which occurred within the seventh trumpet, was initiated in 947 with the casting of the dragon from heaven and continued for "somewhat above 888 years" until 1836. It's inception was particularly associated with the Manichees.[[116]](#footnote-115) The third woe was the institution and persons of the Roman papacy or the beast.[[117]](#footnote-116) The preparation for it was traced to Pope Innocent I (d. 417) "and his successors [who] not only endeavored to enlarge their episcopal jurisdiction beyond all bounds, but also their worldly power."[[118]](#footnote-117) "The beast rose out of the sea" in 1077 with Pope Hlidebrand's or Gregory VII's extension of power over the state. "A little after" in 1143 the forty-two prophetic months or 666 common years began during which time the beast took several forms culminating in an individual still to come in Wesley's time.[[119]](#footnote-118) The non-*chronos* (or less than the 1,111 years of a *chronos*) began in 800 when Charles the Great started the new line of emperors or the "many kings" (Rev. 11:1). It extended to 1836 or about 1,036 years. During this time the 1,260 prophetic days of the woman (847-1524), the time, times, and half a time (1058-1836), and the forty-two prophetic months or 666 common years (1143-1810) of the beast were fulfilling.[[120]](#footnote-119) Wesley, following Bengel, thought himself to be living toward the end of this period.[[121]](#footnote-120) In Wesley's structure, Revelation 11:1-14 interrupted the chronological flow in order to deal with "'the holy city'" or Jerusalem (assuredly not Rome which was designated as Babylon the great) until the mystery of God is fulfilled. He believed the two prophets in the text should be identified with Zerubbabel and Joshua (not Moses and Elijah) and that they would prophesy in Jerusalem for 1,260 common days. The city would then be felled by a great earthquake which would take the lives of a tenth of its inhabitants, the remaining sixty three thousand turning to God at the end. The demographics here are literal.[[122]](#footnote-121)

The woman of Revelation 12 represented the true Church who brings forth the Kingdom of Christ which was snatched from the grasp of the dragon. The "man child," for Wesley, was a reference to the Kingdom of Christ, not His person. From 847 to 1,058 she was dependent upon others, but from 1,058-1,524 she became increasingly independent through the transfer of learning and especially the "original tongues" of Scripture being brought into Europe. This true church ultimately fled to Bohemia where she was succored by means of the Protestant Reformation.[[123]](#footnote-122)

The three and one half times were specific, sequential periods. The first time (222 years) extended from 1,058 to 1,280 during which the Turks oppressed the Church, but were also "frequently repressed" themselves by the forces of the empire. The two times (444 years) extended from 1,280 to 1725 during which Turkish power and its struggle with the forces of the Christian empire and the Church is in view. The half time (111 years) extended from 1,725 to 1,836. During this period the Turks were expected to overextend themselves and perhaps be "swallowed up . . . perhaps by means of Russia, which is risen in the room of the eastern empire."[[124]](#footnote-123)

Significantly, chapter 13 described two risings of the beast. The first, was from the sea and was identified with the Roman papacy primarily in the form of a secular force with overtones of spiritual power. This first period of the beast ran the forty two months or 666 years from 1143 to 1810. The second rising was from the bottomless pit as a fundamentally spiritual malevolence. This period extended in Wesley's thought from 1832 to 1836.[[125]](#footnote-124)

Chapter 14 seemed to depict the ultimate destruction of Rome under the figure of Babylon the great. It also described the removal of both good and evil persons from the world "under the emblem of an harvest and a vintage. . . . Here is no reference in either to the day of judgment, but to a season which cannot be far off." This appears to be a kind of preliminary rapture[[126]](#footnote-125) but cannot be one which will be an unmistakable work of God to those who dwell on the earth.[[127]](#footnote-126) In any case Wesley distinguished it from the traditional rapture of 1 Corinthians 15 which was yet to come at the end of the world.[[128]](#footnote-127)

Chapter 15 introduced the seven phials with their plagues.[[129]](#footnote-128) Wesley believed that as 1836 approached the first four phials of God's wrath would be emptied over all the terrestrial world and its environment affecting "the earth, the sea, the rivers, [and] the sun." The last three phials were "much more terrible." They "go lengthways over the earth in a straight line" upon "the throne of the beast, . . . the Mahometans, . . . [and] the heathens."[[130]](#footnote-129) In 1810 the forty two months of the beast would end with his being thrown into the bottomless pit. From thence he was to arise in 1832 as the antichrist in all his unadulterated spiritual wickedness. He finally would be overthrown in 1836 with the third woe when the final incarnation of the beast and his associate, the false prophet, would be cast directly into the final state of the lake of fire while Satan would be temporarily bound in the bottomless pit fulfilling the "mystery of God."[[131]](#footnote-130) Despite all the drama of these promised events, nothing "will be known to the men upon earth, as both the imprisonment of Satan and his loosing [a thousand years later] are transacted in the invisible world."[[132]](#footnote-131)

With Satan bound, Wesley believed the first 1,000 year millennium would begin in 1836. During this time the Church would be in a "flourishing state" on the earth because of Satan's incapacity. At the end of the first thousand years (presumably 2,836) the second thousand years would begin. This was also the beginning of the "small time during which Satan would be loosed. Also at this juncture between the first and second thousand years the first resurrection would occur, and these saints would reign for the second thousand years with Christ in heaven. Again this event would go unnoticed on earth where humanity would be enjoying a spiritually lax "fatal security" while the nations are deceived. At the end of second thousand years, Wesley thought there would be the final climactic struggle between God and Gog and Magog.[[133]](#footnote-132) At the end of the second millennium the events associated with the end of the world would be initiated: Christ's coming in glory in the day of the Lord; the renovation of the world; the general resurrection; the rapture of the saints; the great white throne judgment; the casting of Satan, his supernatural minions, sinners, death, and *hades* into the lake of fire; and the new creation with the Jerusalem, heavens, and earth.[[134]](#footnote-133) The citizens of heaven would then reign on into eternity over the citizens of the new earth who, although also saints saved by Christ's blood, were not quite as spiritual in temporal existence.[[135]](#footnote-134)

Specific Issues of Prophetic History

With this brief overview, attention may now be paid to several specific issues relating to the interpretation of Revelation: the identity of the antagonists, the disposition of the Jews, the nature of the tribulation, the rapture, and the millennium.

*The Antagonists*

Wesley is adamant about the identity of the Beast. He rejects the notion that there is or would be "on earth any monstrous beast with seven heads and ten horns."[[136]](#footnote-135) He repeatedly defined the Roman papacy beginning in a preliminary fashion with the reign of Hiledebrand or Gregory VII in 1073 and coming to real glory for the 666 years from 1143 to until 1810 as the basic element of the beast.[[137]](#footnote-136) Wesley piled up reasons to support his contention (following Bengel) that "the Pope has an indisputable claim to those titles" associated with the beast.[[138]](#footnote-137) A summary of his major arguments for identifying the beast as the papacy includes: (1) The beast existed over a long period. (2) The beast was already working in the churches. (3) The beasts of Revelation 13 and 17 must be the same. (4) The papacy added to Scripture. (5) The papacy rejected biblical doctrine. (6) The papacy denied the indwelling Holy Spirit. (7) The papacy rejected the true Gospel. (8) The papacy established mediators beside Christ. (9) The papacy bestowed blasphemous and proud titles upon itself. (10) The papacy accrued power to itself. (11) The papacy behaved murderously, especially against true Christians. (12) The papacy emblazoned the word "mystery" on the pope's miter until it was noticed by the Reformers. (13) The papacy's resistance to the "restrainer" of 1 Thessalonians 2:7 which was identified as the secular power of Rome. (14) The papacy's close connection with the city of Rome, the wicked city of Revelation (15). The close association with the seven heads of the beast with the seven hills of Rome on which papal palaces stood. (16) Benedict XIII's 1725 proclamation of the jubilee of the Holy City contained allusions to Babylon the great.[[139]](#footnote-138)

In addition to these identifying features, Wesley ascribed a number of characteristics to the beast. The beast goes through a number of phases. It is initially an institution (Rev. 13:1-17:7), then an institution and an individual (Rev. 17:8-11), and finally culminates in an individual (Rev. 17:12-19:20).[[140]](#footnote-139) Although the beast is first and foremost identified with the papacy a number of special qualifications are made. Appreciating the political aspects of the papacy, it is most precisely identified as "a spiritually secular power, opposite to the kingdom of Christ."[[141]](#footnote-140) Similarly, Rome and the papacy are closely intertwined.[[142]](#footnote-141) In the period of Revelation 17:1-8 the beast is manifested in the figurative Babylon of Revelation, the literal Rome, while the beast in the form of the papacy is suppressed under the fifth phial.[[143]](#footnote-142) In fact, the mystery of iniquity extends beyond Roman Catholicism.[[144]](#footnote-143)

The antichrist, most properly, is the last pope who "will be more eminently the antichrist, the man of sin."[[145]](#footnote-144) He is only revealed when the restrainer is removed.[[146]](#footnote-145) More generally, the antichrist can also be the church of Rome[[147]](#footnote-146) or even a basically malevolent force[[148]](#footnote-147) already operating in the churches.[[149]](#footnote-148) But in the final analysis the true antichrist, the "man of sin" is not yet come and will only appear in 1832.[[150]](#footnote-149)

Finally, there are several specifics relating to the beast / antichrist which bear mentioning. The wound of the beast is inflicted by the secular forces with which it struggles from the time of Gregory VII to Innocent III.[[151]](#footnote-150) The beast has real supernatural powers such as the "real fire" which is brought down from heaven[[152]](#footnote-151) and the copies of the image of the beast which will be ubiquitous and actually talk.[[153]](#footnote-152) Wesley speculated that the most zealous followers of the beast will take his mark on their forehead while the less enthusiastic will possess it on their right hands.[[154]](#footnote-153) In the end the beast is destroyed at the appearance of Christ in glory.[[155]](#footnote-154)

Lesser, still important, antagonists are Gog and Magog. "Gog . . . cannot be one single person, or prince, though perhaps it points out some one, by whom the troubles foretold were begun." Gog is identified in the Old Testament *Notes* with

Those enemies of God's church who descended from the *Scythians*, and ar now masters of *Cappadocia*. *Iberia*, *Armenia*, or are in confederacy with the *Tartars*, and those northern heathens. But others think, all the enemies of *Israel* in all quarters, both open and secret are here intended, and that the *Antichristian* forces and combination, are what the prophet foretells.[[156]](#footnote-155)

In the same place, Magog

Is, at least, part of *Scythia*, and comprehends *Syria*, in which was *Hieropolis* taken by the *Scythians*, and called of them *Scythopolis*. It is that country, which now is in subjection to the *Turks*, and may be extended thro' *Asia minor*, the countries of *Sarmatia*, and many others, under more than one in succession of time. And in the last time under some one active and daring prince, all their power will be stirred up against Christians.[[157]](#footnote-156)

Magog is also identified in the New Testament *Notes* as with the descendants of "the second son of Japhet" who "is the father of the innumerable northern nations toward the east."[[158]](#footnote-157) These descriptions again indicate Wesley's literalness and his apocalyptic connecting of the invisible world of prophecy with the visible world of history.

*The Jews*

Although it is not a central emphasis in his writings, Wesley understood the people of Israel to have a special place in God's plan. The book of Revelation in particular "had, in many places, a special view to the people of Israel"[[159]](#footnote-158) and the prophecy of Daniel eight through twelve is written in Hebrew for their benefit.[[160]](#footnote-159) The seventy weeks of Daniel 9 terminate in Christ. The "time, times, and an half" of Daniel 12:7 "reaches to the calling of the *Jews* upon the destruction of the *antichrist*"[[161]](#footnote-160) and "the afflictions of the *church* are to prepare them, by taking away their filth, for the bridegroom, as gold and silver are tried and refined."[[162]](#footnote-161) With this prophecy God has "prepared" them "for sufferings, and yet not without hope of a glorious deliverance" at "the resurrection of the just."[[163]](#footnote-162) Wesley has no "doubt" that "when 'the fullness of the Gentiles is come in,' then, 'all Israel shall be saved'" (Rom. 11:25-26).[[164]](#footnote-163) Yet, even after Israel's salvation more Gentiles would be saved.[[165]](#footnote-164) Although he did see a regathering of the Jewish people to their land,[[166]](#footnote-165) he seemed to reject the idea of the restoration of a political nation state as so many people in our own time imagine given the political reconstitution of Israel. Thus, the essence of Jesus' statement on Olivet is: "Expect not any deliverer of the Jewish nation; for it is already before God a dead carcass, which the Roman eagles will soon devour." This is an idea which seems to apply for the whole of history.[[167]](#footnote-166) Wesley described the period when Israel is returned in millennial terms: devoid of "cruel habitations" and characterized by "quietness," "glorious peace and righteousness . . . upon the earth," "universal harmony," "assurance for ever," the rule of God and the like.[[168]](#footnote-167) He described "that day that the Lord shall set his hand again to recover the remnant of his people"[[169]](#footnote-168) in a number of ways: "the fullness of time," "the prophesies . . . accomplished," "the last days,"[[170]](#footnote-169) the time when "all nations" turn to God,[[171]](#footnote-170) and after the enemies are vanquished.[[172]](#footnote-171) When, in fact, "the last wonderful deliverance . . . shall be given to the *Jews*" the world ought to rejoice.[[173]](#footnote-172) In summary Wesley had an awareness of and concern for the Jews within the plan of God, an awareness and concern which would grow in intensity among his fellow countrymen in the next century.[[174]](#footnote-173)

*The Tribulation*

Consistent with his basically historicist understanding of Revelation, an examination of the classic passages relating to the tribulation revealed that Wesley did not emphasize a specific seven year period tribulation near the end of the world as is common in modern prophecies.[[175]](#footnote-174) The "great affliction" or "great tribulation" of Revelation 7:14 was not seen as any particular event, but refers to "all who will come hereafter. *Out of great affliction*-Of various kinds, wisely and graciously allotted by God to all his children."[[176]](#footnote-175) Likewise, the hour of temptation in Revelation 3:10 which has received so much analysis since the nineteenth century in determining the signs of the times (in light of *tereo ek*, cf. John 17:15) was seen by Wesley only as denoting "the short time of its continuance; that is, at any one place. At every one it was a very sharp, though short; wherein the great tempter was not idle, Rev. ii.10."[[177]](#footnote-176)

Two other periods are relevant to this discussion. The first is the three and one half year reign of the antichrist from 1832-1836 which is similar to the second half of the tribulation identified by many modern chiliasts.[[178]](#footnote-177) The second is the "strong delusion" (2 Thess. 2:10) which comes on unbelievers just before the end of the world.[[179]](#footnote-178) Or, in the words of Arnett, he "strongly implies that the 'end of the world' will be preceded by a time of tribulation."[[180]](#footnote-179) This tribulation proper would appear to be or, at least, be in the final thousand years of the second millennium. In his classic sermon, "The Great Assize," Wesley identified a number of events which immediately precede and flow into the judgment: signs in the earth (Acts 2:19), shaking of the earth (Isa. 24:10), earthquakes (Luke 21:25), the islands flee (Rev. 16:20), violence in the ocean (Luke 21:25), storms, vapors and smoke (Joel 2:30; *cf*: Acts 2:19), thunder and lightning, and the shaking of heaven with signs in the celestial bodies (Luke 21:25-26; Joel 2:31).[[181]](#footnote-180) A similarly vivid description is found in his comment on Matthew 24:29-31, 36.[[182]](#footnote-181)

Then, Christ shall return as lightning and without warning.[[183]](#footnote-182) At the end, the sun, moon, and stars shall be extinguished (probably all of the universe, not just the solar system).[[184]](#footnote-183) The sign of the Son of Man shall appear (probably the cross).[[185]](#footnote-184)

With what majesty and grandeur does our Lord here speak of himself! giving us one of the noblest instances of the true sublime. Indeed not many descriptions in the sacred writings themselves seem to equal this. Methinks we can hardly read it, without imagining ourselves before the awful tribunal it describes.[[186]](#footnote-185)

Thus, before the world ends it suffers not seven, but a thousand years of decline and disaster although with somewhat less drama than those who would assign the shorter tribulation to Revelation 4-19.

*The Resurrections and Rapture*

Wesley, following Bengel, identified two resurrections: the first and the general.[[187]](#footnote-186) The first resurrection was a resurrection of believers and was placed at the juncture between the millennia.[[188]](#footnote-187) The general resurrection of all the dead would occur at the end of the second thousand years.[[189]](#footnote-188) Bengel cited Tertullian, *c. Marcion* 24, in a manner related to this: "*Within an age of a thousand years is concluded the resurrection of the saints, who rise at an earlier or a later period, according to their merits*."[[190]](#footnote-189) Wesley identified those involved in the first resurrection as a special group of martyrs fitting the qualifications of Revelation 20:4 but "distinct from" those mentioned in Revelation 15:2."[[191]](#footnote-190) The general resurrection of Revelation 20:12-13 seems a quite separate event.[[192]](#footnote-191) It was also distinguished from the first resurrection because it included not only the remaining good dead, but would be a "whole harvest" when "at the same time the wicked shall rise also."[[193]](#footnote-192)

Wesley also believed in the rapture. Specifically, at the second coming, immediately after the resurrection of the dead, believers then alive would actually and suddenly be caught up to meet the returning Lord in the air and that their natural bodies would be transformed into resurrection bodies as this occurred.[[194]](#footnote-193) In this Wesley followed Bengel closely.[[195]](#footnote-194) The seventh trumpet and the trumpet of the rapture which would sound at the end of the second millennia signaling the completion of the world as described in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 are probably the same trumpet. That the seventh trumpet is introduced in 11:15 is not a problem since:

All these seven trumpets were heard in heaven: perhaps the seventh shall be heard on earth also, 1 Thess. 4:16. . . . This immediately appears in heaven, and is there celebrated with joyful praise. But on earth several dreadful occurrences are to appear first. This trumpet comprises all that follows from these voices to Rev. xxii.5.[[196]](#footnote-195)

Wesley's phrase in 2 Thessalonians 2:8: "With the very first appearance of his glory" appears to be a summary of Bengel's thought in the same place which interpreted the events of the end of Revelation 19 as only the portent of the actual coming which occurs after the second millennium. Hence, at this point in the Revelation, Christ coming in glory could still be at the end of the second millennium. The rapture must be preceded by a general falling away, which began "even in the apostolic age" but is finally fulfilled in the last thousand years.[[197]](#footnote-196)

There is also a rapture-like event mentioned in Revelation 14:14.[[198]](#footnote-197) "Two general visitations" are mentioned in which "many good" and then "many evil" persons are taken from the earth. It is mentioned by both Wesley and Bengel.[[199]](#footnote-198) Aside from this rather ambiguous description the only other distinguishing characteristic is that this "is no reference in either to the day of judgment, but to a season which cannot be far off"[[200]](#footnote-199) which precludes it from referring to the rapture or the general resurrection described above. The only solution seems to be that this is a small removal of persons, perhaps only through death, probably as a result of the 1810-1836 resurgence of the antichrist.[[201]](#footnote-200) It could also have reference to the good dead in the first resurrection in some fashion, but 2,836 would seem to be too remote a time.[[202]](#footnote-201)

*The Millennium*

Perhaps the most outstanding feature of Wesley's general eschatology was his belief, again borrowed from Bengel, that a double millennia was described in Revelation 20.[[203]](#footnote-202) The present section assesses Wesley's commitment to millennial ideas in general and then examines the actual content of Wesley's belief as described in the *Notes*. Consideration of the ensuing theological debate is reserved for the discussion at the end of the chapter.

Wesley's belief in the millennium

A review of the Wesley corpus clearly demonstrates a consistent belief in some sort of millennial formation based in Revelation 20. The earliest, explicit comment discovered was in his 1748 second discourse in the Sermon on the Mount series where he considered the meek inheriting the earth:

But there seems to be a yet farther meaning in these words, even that they shall have a more eminent part in the "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" [Luke 21:19], in that inheritance, a general description of which (and the particulars we shall know hereafter) St. John has given in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation. "And I was an angel come down from heaven. . . . And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, . . . and bound him a thousand years. . . . And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and of them which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were expired. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power; but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years [20:1-2, 4-6]."[[204]](#footnote-203)

The genesis of his belief in the millennium, however, may go back all the way to his childhood at Epworth, given his claim in 1763 that he was satisfied from "the bare text of the Revelation from the time I first read [it] . . . as to the general doctrine of the Millennium."[[205]](#footnote-204) Wesley's commitment to the doctrine also can be seen in his polemics concerning it. He gave mild warnings concerning those who rejected the belief[[206]](#footnote-205) and although he rejected Thomas Hartley's affinity for the "Mystic writers" in the same letter he commended him for his "strong and seasonable confirmation of that comfortable doctrine, of which I cannot entertain the least doubt as long as I believe the Bible."[[207]](#footnote-206) Wesley also found support for the Millennium in the tradition of the Church. In his letter to Conyers Middleton, he took a strong position in favor of a literal Millennium and its currency among the early Fathers:

The doctrine (as you very well know) which Justin deduced from the Prophets and the Apostles, and in which he was undoubtedly followed by the Fathers of the second and third centuries is this:

The souls of them who have been martyred for the witness of Jesus and for the word of God, and who have not worshipped the beast, neither received his mark, shall live and reign with Christ a thousand years.

But the rest of the dead shall not live again until the thousand years are finished. Now, to say they believed this is neither more nor less than to say they believed the Bible.[[208]](#footnote-207)

To this list of ancient notables supporting the Millennium Wesley also explicitly added Papias and Irenaeus.[[209]](#footnote-208) Clearly, then Wesley held to the idea of a literal, although not necessarily earthly, millennium. Also clearly, many of the above statements were made after *Expository Notes upon the New Testament*, which contain the essence of his distinctive doctrine of the millennia, were accepted as foundational to the core belief of the fledgling Methodist movement.[[210]](#footnote-209) While Wesley certainly had a long and solid belief in some kind of millennium, it was his reading of Bengel which gave him a distinctive understanding.

The nature of the millennium

The *locus classicus* of Wesley's idea of the millennium is found in the *Notes* on Revelation 20. Wesley believed that the period he called the millennium would immediately and "wholly follow" the times of the beast for five reasons: (1) The general context of the passage required it. (2) The immediately preceding material in which the beast was cast into the lake of fire indicated he was no longer in the picture facilitating the millennium. (3) The "new, full, and lasting immunity from all outward and inward evils," would still be future, given that it has never been experienced by the church. (4) The first thousand years were to be followed by the terrible loosing of the beast. (5) The material from Revelation 20:11 to 22:5 seemed to follow the events of chapter 19 and hence the times of the beast must be past.[[211]](#footnote-210)

Wesley believed the millennium to be, in fact, millennia: two distinct, contiguous, chronologically sequential, and literal periods of one thousand common years each. The definitive description (as usual following Bengel in the same place) is found in his commentary on Revelation 20:4.

It must be observed, that two distinct thousand years are mentioned throughout this whole passage. Each is mentioned thrice; the thousand wherein Satan is bound, verses 2, 3, 7; the thousand wherein the saints shall reign, verses 4-6. The former end before the end of the world; the latter reach to the general resurrection. So that the beginning and end of the former thousand is before the beginning and end of the latter. Therefore as in the second verse, at the first mention of the former; so in the fourth verse, at the first mention of the latter, it is only said, *a thousand years*; in the other places, "*the* thousand," verses 3, 5, 7, that is, the thousand mentioned before. During the former, the promises concerning the flourishing state of the church, Rev. x.7, shall be fulfilled; during the latter, while the saints reign with Christ in heaven, men on earth will be careless and secure.[[212]](#footnote-211)

In addition to the issue of the definite article, his major reason for the two thousand year periods was that they leave:

room enough for the fulfillment of all the prophecies, and those which before seemed to clash are reconciled; particularly those which speak, on the one hand, of a most flourishing state of the church as yet to come; and, on the other, of the fatal security of men in the last days of the world.[[213]](#footnote-212)

Though separate, the two periods of a thousand years are contiguous.[[214]](#footnote-213) "*And when the* former *thousand years are fulfilled, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison*-At the same time the first resurrection begins."[[215]](#footnote-214) The "first resurrection," of the good dead into the heavenly realms, is distinguished from the "general resurrection" at the end of the age.[[216]](#footnote-215) During the first thousand years Christian goodness abounds on earth in a manner similar to the ultimate visions of postmillennialism. During the second thousand years, the saints "live," that is, they are reunited with their bodies (in a limited resurrection distinguished from the general resurrection at the second coming) and they reign with Christ in heaven while evil reigns on earth in a fashion not dissimilar to Amillennialism.[[217]](#footnote-216) Only at the end of the second thousand years, which is accomplished between Revelation 20:7 and 20:11 (2836-3836), does the "great day of the Lord" come with the descent of the great white throne, "'elements melting with fervent heat,'" etc.[[218]](#footnote-217)

Christ does not "come in glory" nor does He or the saints reign upon the earth during either of the millennia. Only at the end of the second millennium, in the renovated universe, does Christ return in visible and final victory.[[219]](#footnote-218) Nor are these events recognized on earth, for "neither the beginning of the first nor of the second thousand will be known to the men upon earth, as both the imprisonment of Satan and his loosing are transacted in the invisible world."[[220]](#footnote-219) Thus at the beginning of the second thousand years "the saints begin to reign with Christ; but the nations on earth are deceived."[[221]](#footnote-220) Further, neither the first nor the second Millennium equal the glory of Eden or the time when Christ shall reign on (the new) earth in eternity:

It is certain that there is some truth in the supposition; seeing it is certain, the days which Adam and Eve spent in Paradise were far better than any which have been spent by their descendants, or ever will be, till Christ returns to reign upon earth."[[222]](#footnote-221)

To summarize, Wesley (following Bengel) believed that Revelation 20 described two millennia of one thousand common years each which would follow one another, the first commencing shortly after the reign of the beast and ending at the second which would extend to the coming of Christ in glory. The first millennium is a time of blessed holiness on earth while evil is bound. At the conclusion of the first thousand years a select group of saints are reunited with their bodies and reign in heaven during the second thousand years while conditions on earth deteriorate spiritually. These periods, for all their involvement with earthly things are primarily heavenly events, their momentous beginnings and endings passing without notice on earth. At the end of the second thousand years Christ returns and the final events of world history ensue.

Yet, the picture of the millennium in Revelation 20 is only one scene of what appears to be a double image. A classically premillennial depiction can also be found which, while not as precise as Wesley's reproduction of Bengel, contains a single literal thousand year reign of Christ on the earth with His saints. There is substantial evidence for this. The affirmation of Justin and the other fathers is also an affirmation of a very literal thousand year millennium on earth. Wesley's father, Samuel, was a committed premillennialist[[223]](#footnote-222) as was John Fletcher.[[224]](#footnote-223) Other important figures in Wesley's life reported to have premillennial leanings included: the Oxford Methodists, the Moravians of Fetter Lane and Germany, Count Zinzendorf, Bohler, the Vicar of Bexley, Charles, Cranmer, David, Latimer, Ridley, and Spangenberg.[[225]](#footnote-224) Wesley's 1764 commendation of Hartley's view of the millennium was an endorsement of a view quite different from Bengel. Hartley believed in a literal, thousand year, earthly reign of Christ on the earth with the saints raised to a state of flourishing Edenic perfection. Some saints even ruled from groups of cities over subject and obedient sinners. Less certain points in Hartley's doctrine included: the duration of the Roman empire, the frequency of Christ's visibility, whether the final conflagration was before or after the millennium, whether some or all the saints would participate, whether the inhabitants of the millennium were to preach to the heathen during a period of probation.[[226]](#footnote-225) There was also an article in the *Arminian Magazine* in 1784: "The Renovation of all things," which included the lines:

"Between the present pollution, corruption, and degradation" of the earth, "and that of a total, universal restoration of all things, in a purely angelical, celestial, ethereal state," and that in this middle period, between these two extremes," the earth will be restored to its paradisiacal state," "renewed in its primitive lustre and beauty."[[227]](#footnote-226)

Thus, there seems to be a premillennial formation coexisting with the more unusual scheme of Bengel.

*Eschatological Dating*

For Wesley general eschatology was not merely the study of what could happen or even what would happen, but also that which was already happening. There are numerous statements which suggest Wesley discovered his own period of history graphically described in Biblical prophecy and was able to date it with a high degree of precision. On the other hand, there are also numerous caveats and even denials concerning dates. The present section examines these conflicting ideas in order to establish Wesley's understanding of where he believed he stood in the great prophetic chronology.

Wesley, in a great number of writings appeared to believe that he was living within years of the beginning of the first millennium of 1836. Revelation 10-14 described: "Things which are now fulfilling."[[228]](#footnote-227) The mid 1700's were the "decline" of "the *little time* wherein Satan hath great wrath;" such that Wesley and his people were "in 'the half time'"[[229]](#footnote-228) which he had calculated to be from 1725 to 1836."[[230]](#footnote-229) He wrote that "the Romish antichrist is already so fallen, that he will not again lift up his head in any considerable degree"[[231]](#footnote-230) indicating the closeness of the end. And he was confident that "in a short time those who assert that they [the first thousand years] are now at hand will appear to have spoken the truth."[[232]](#footnote-231) The judgment was also to occur in "a little while"[[233]](#footnote-232) provoking solemn warning.[[234]](#footnote-233) Nor were these idle digressions and speculations, he was quite serious:

O reader, this is a subject wherein we also are deeply concerned, and which must be treated, not as a point of curiosity, but as a solemn warning for God! The danger is near. Be armed both against force and fraud, even with the whole armour of God.[[235]](#footnote-234)

The immanent transformation of history with the coming of the first millennium was signaled not only by recondite prophetical calculations but also by the empirical evidence of the Methodist revival. He saw "the amazing work" as bearing the mark of a special blessing of God with respect to "(1) the *numbers* of persons," "(2) the *swiftness* of his work" in individual lives, "(3) the *depth*" of changed hearts and lives, "(4) the *clearness*" of understanding, "(5) the *continuance*" of the work "without any visible intermission."[[236]](#footnote-235) The hand of God was upon him and it seemed as if that hand was directing him in the climactic work of the age and that very work was itself a portent of the coming of the Lord. In the sermon "Signs of the Times" Wesley inquired as to the indicators of the present epoch, and found them to correlate with the prophecies of:

The latter-day glory [cf. Jer. 49:30; Hag. 2:9]; meaning the time wherein God would gloriously display his power and love in the fulfillment of his gracious promise that the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea [Isa. 11:9; Hab. 12:14].[[237]](#footnote-236)

The spread of the Methodist Gospel was consistent with the preparation for the great transition to the millennium.

And is it not probable, I say, that he [God] will carry it on in the same manner as he has begun? At the first breaking out of his work in this or that place there may be a shower, a torrent of grace; and so at some other particular seasons which "the Father has reserved in his own power" [cf. Acts 1:7]. But in general it seems the kingdom of God will not "come with observation," [Luke 17:20] but will silently increase wherever it is set up and spread".[[238]](#footnote-237)

While he spoke of Christianity in general, he almost certainly was thinking particularly of Methodism, as that which "spreads by degrees farther and farther, till the whole is leavened."[[239]](#footnote-238) He believed Methodism a "*great work*" as established by "abundant testimony, such as excludes all plausible doubt."[[240]](#footnote-239) Wesley's thoughts along these lines were reinforced by the world-wide nature of the work.

You gave me a very agreeable account of the progress of the gospel in America. One would hope the time is approaching when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Indeed, the amazing revolutions which have [been in] Europe seem to be the forerunners of the same grand event. The poor infidels, it is true who know nothing of God, have no such design or thought. But the Lord sitteth above the waterfloods, the Lord remaineth a king for ever. Meantime it is expedient that the Methodists in every part of the globe should be united together as closely a possible.[[241]](#footnote-240)

Or again:

He [God] is doing great things in many parts of Europe such as have not been seen for many generations; and the children of God expect to see greater things than these. I do not know that England was ever before in so quiet a state as it is now. It is our part to wait the openings of Divine Providence, and follow the headings of it.[[242]](#footnote-241)

Wesley went so far as to see revival's spread over all the earth, as a latter-day answer of Jesus to the imprisoned John the Baptist, when he inquired as to the identity of the Lord, though to accomplish this he spiritualized Jesus' references to physical healings.[[243]](#footnote-242) He also saw the miraculous manifestations of the revival as that which was to be expected in the "last days" described in Acts 2:17.[[244]](#footnote-243) Allied to these specific expectations was the theme in Wesley that the end may appear suddenly, especially with respect to the second coming.[[245]](#footnote-244) In light of such considerations, Wesley's concern for dates cannot be dismissed "only as a curiosity."[[246]](#footnote-245)

But not all saw so clearly as Wesley. Many not only refused to view Methodism as a work of God, but at times even perceived it as the industry of the Devil. In Wesley's eyes, Methodism was, at least under-appreciated by his contemporaries. Wesley wondered at both the Bishop of London, Edmund Gibson, and his much admired Bengel for their failure to be sufficiently appreciative of the great work God was doing among the Methodists.[[247]](#footnote-246)

A great man, indeed, who I trust is now in a better world, Dr. Gibson, late Lord Bishop of London, in one of his Charges to his Clergy, flatly denies that God has wrought any "extraordinary work" in our own nation;-nay, affirms, that to imagine any such thing is no better than downright enthusiasm. . . . Yet a still greater man of a neighboring nation, a burning and a shining light, equally eminent in piety and in learning partly confirmed the Bishop's supposition; for Bengelius, being asked why he placed the grand revival of religion so late as the year 1836, replied, "I acknowledge all the prophecies would incline me to place it a century sooner; but an insurmountable difficulty lies in the way: I cannot reconcile this to matter of fact; for I do not know of any remarkable work of God which has been wrought on earth between the years 1730 and 1740." This is really surprising. It is strange that a sensible man should know so little of what is done at so small a distance. How could so great a man be so ignorant of what was transacted no farther off than England?-especially considering the accounts then published in Germany, some of which I had sent, as early as the year 1742, to one well known through all the empire, Pastor (afterward Superintendent) Steinmetz.[[248]](#footnote-247)

The lack of recognition of God's move through the vehicle of Methodism drove Wesley to the public conclusion that some of the unresponsive ecclesiastical leaders of his day were modern Pharisees and Sadducees, blinded by sin.[[249]](#footnote-248)

This data by itself presents a clear and coherent picture but there was another side to Wesley which preached caution in setting dates. Most benignly, he expressed caution in the *Notes* of 1754 concerning speculation. And "even when God himself reveals things to me, [a] great part of them is still kept under the veil."[[250]](#footnote-249) Even when "over a period of days I corrected the notes upon Revelation" he would conclude "O, how little do we know of this deep book! At least, how little do I know! I can barely conjecture, not affirm any one point concerning that part of it which is yet unfulfilled."[[251]](#footnote-250) Similarly, in his public preaching he spoke of "how little information do we receive from unassisted reason touching" the eternal reward of the righteous.[[252]](#footnote-251)

At another level Wesley could say the end is not yet because "the prophecies are not yet fulfilled."[[253]](#footnote-252) Practically, he tried to eschew controversy over the matter: "Neither will I enter any dispute about it [Christian perfection], nay more than about the millennium," rather his desire was to limit his description of "the main doctrine of the Methodists" concerning salvation and immediately related issues.[[254]](#footnote-253) Even in the commentary there is hesitation: "The danger does not lie in maintaining that the thousand years are yet to come; but in interpreting them, whether past or to come, in a gross carnal sense" which he then seems to explain: "the doctrine of the Son of God is a mystery. So is his cross; and so is his glory. In all these he is a sign that is spoken against. Happy are they who believe and confess him in all."[[255]](#footnote-254) Yet, he still mentioned dates in his preaching, an activity which sometimes proved embarrassing, requiring a hasty retreat. Apparently responding to some consternation over his speculations, Wesley wrote Christopher Hopper:

My Dear Brother, I said nothing, less or more, in the Bradford Church concerning the end of the world, neither concerning *my own* opinion. What I said was that Bengelius had given it as *his* opinion not that *the world* would then end, but that the Millennial reign of Christ would *begin* in the year 1836. I have no opinion at all upon that head. I can determine nothing about it. These calculations are far above, out of my sight. I have only one thing to do, to save my own soul and those that hear me.[[256]](#footnote-255)

This cautionary theme is also sounded in the sermons in the mid 1780s where he concluded that for all the biblical data, eschatology remains a "strange scene" and "it must be allowed that after all the researches we can make, still our knowledge of that great truth which is delivered to us in these words is exceedingly short and imperfect."[[257]](#footnote-256)

The contemporary history may be important here. In 1762 there was an outbreak of enthusiasm among the Methodists in London, which included those who felt they would not die and who foretold the end of all things. George Bell, perfectionist, faith healer, and rising Methodist star predicted that the end of the world would arrive on February 28, 1763. The effect was such that refugees were reported fleeing London. Bell and his associates experienced the more temporal judgment of imprisonment.[[258]](#footnote-257)

Wesley would have none of it and broke decisively with Bell before the arrival of the not-so-great day.[[259]](#footnote-258) Concerning the night of the twenty-eighth Wesley's journal records:

Preaching in the evening at Spitalfields on "Prepare to meet thy God," I largely showed the utter absurdity of the supposition that the world was to end that night. But notwithstanding all I could say, many were afraid to go to bed, and some wandered about in the fields, being persuaded that if the world did not end, at least London would be swallowed up by an earthquake. I went to bed at my usual time and was fast asleep about ten o'clock.[[260]](#footnote-259)

He also went to great pains to publicly disavow Bell and say that he did not believe either the end of the world or any signal calamity will be on the 28th instant; and . . . that not one in fifty, perhaps not one in five hundred, of the people called Methodists believe any more than I do either this or any other of his prophecies.[[261]](#footnote-260)

Although, "the breach" seems to be more over matters of insubordination, pride, and extreme perfectionism than eschatology, Wesley's staunch rejection of date setting is notable. This tendency was probably further reinforced by stifling consequences the bad publicity had on Methodism despite his best efforts to distance himself.[[262]](#footnote-261)

*Discussion*

Wesley believed that God had sovereign control of the world and that he had revealed his plan to humanity through Scripture and especially in the book of Revelation. It seems dates could, at least in principle, be extracted from the vision of St. John and there is evidence that Wesley (at least privately in the later years) really believed that Methodism was a portent of immanent eschatological change. To complete this picture, consideration now must be given to his sources, the development of his ideas, comparisons with contemporary authors, and theological reflection.

Sources

Although Wesley mentioned a number of commentators to whom he was indebted,[[263]](#footnote-262) without doubt, the preeminent source for his grand vision of eschatology was Bengel. In this connection two questions arise. First, what was the extent of Bengel's influence upon Wesley? Second, why did the influence come about?

John Albrecht Bengel (1687-1752) was a Lutheran, pietist biblical scholar and pioneer in the scientific study of the Scripture, especially textual criticism.[[264]](#footnote-263) Wesley considered him "the most pious, the most judicious, and the most laborious, of all the modern Commentators on the New Testament."[[265]](#footnote-264) In the preface to the *Notes on the New Testament* he wrote:

I once designed to write down barely what occurred to my own mind, consulting none but the inspired writers. But no sooner was I acquainted with that great light of the Christian world, (lately gone to his reward) Bengelius, than I entirely changed my design, being thoroughly convinced it might be of more service to the cause of religion, were I barely to translate his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, than to write many volumes upon it. Many of his excellent notes I have therefore translated; many more I have abridged; omitting that part which was purely critical, and giving the substance of the rest.[[266]](#footnote-265)

In the introduction to his comment on the Revelation Wesley said:

The following notes are mostly those of that excellent man; a few of which are taken from his *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, but far more from his *Ekklarte Offenbarung*, which is a full and regular comment on the Revelation. Every part of his I do not undertake to defend. But none should condemn him without reading his proofs at large. It did not suit my design to insert these: they are above the capacity of ordinary readers[.] Nor had I room to insert the entire translation of a book which contains near twelve hundred pages.[[267]](#footnote-266)

While Lindstrom was correct in saying that:

Wesley employed his sources with such independence that the result is a reflection of his own beliefs. He also provided his own textual interpretations and we are justified in regarding *Explanatory Notes*, like the sermons, as a reliable source of evidence on his outlook.[[268]](#footnote-267)

And while was Deschner was likewise correct in concluding that:

What the comparison [of the *Notes*] with the sources shows, i.e., the independence of Wesley in the selection and reformulation of his material, is decisively confirmed by the confrontation of the *Notes* with sermons. We have in Wesley's *Notes* a reliable source for his theological thinking. Other conceptions and doctrines are not to be expected here. What the *Notes* do offer is information about those Biblical motifs which had an effective share in shaping his theological thoughts.[[269]](#footnote-268)

And while it is true that Wesley did "not undertake to defend" all of Bengel's speculations on Revelation,[[270]](#footnote-269) it also must be argued that the correspondence between the *Expository Notes* and the writings of Bengel is so extraordinary in the Apocalypse, that Wesley must have been convinced to a singular degree by Bengel's reasoning, adopting it as his own, virtually without change.[[271]](#footnote-270)

With all this obvious influence, the second question must be raised as to what attracted Wesley to Bengel. It may well be that Wesley was first introduced to Bengel by his friend and intellectual equal, Dr. John Robertson (c. 1691-1761) of Pitcomb with whom he could spend "agreeable and useful hours in that delightful recess."[[272]](#footnote-271) Robertson assisted Wesley in the composition of the *Notes.*[[273]](#footnote-272) His enthusiasm for "pious" Bengel was great and in 1757 he translated his *Erklarte Offenbarung* or "Introduction" or "Exposition" of the Revelation into English.[[274]](#footnote-273) In fact, it is altogether likely, that Robertson's recommendation was one of the formative influences on Wesley adopting so much of Bengel's work. There were probably other reasons as well. Bengel's famous piety must have held an attraction for one who believed in the active role of the Holy Spirit in interpretation.[[275]](#footnote-274) They also shared many interests including scientific matters,[[276]](#footnote-275) patristics,[[277]](#footnote-276) and textual criticism.[[278]](#footnote-277) Both also were noted for a terse writing style.[[279]](#footnote-278) Further, Bengel made sense out of a book which Wesley had long appreciated but little understood.[[280]](#footnote-279) Perhaps as significant was Wesley's discovery during the revival of an eminent scholar who could not only explain Revelation but also could be construed have said that the end was near and that the revival itself was a preordained contribution to the grand climax.[[281]](#footnote-280) Wesley's belief in the miraculous nature of the Methodism and his own life must have been buttressed powerfully by this scriptural demonstration.

Deschner has argued that the *Notes* should be interpreted against their polemical backdrop;[[282]](#footnote-281) in fact, there also may have been a less irenic reason behind Wesley's affinity for Bengel; their similar difficulties with Zinzendorf and the Moravians. Bengel had found not only much to praise in Zinzendorf and the United Brethren but also much that caused him concern. His first personal interactions with them were in 1733, and by 1742 after increasing distress he began setting thoughts on paper in private communications (some of which were, however, leaked to various parties). Only in 1747 did he commit himself publicly in his "Sketch of the United Brethren" which summarized his thought on the subject. His concerns included the Brethren's emphasis on the blood of Christ to the exclusion of other doctrines; weakness in the formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity; the exclusivity of the movement; the monarchial ecclesiology which had grown up around Zinzendorf; and, most importantly for the present study, their understanding of eschatology including a rejection of his own position. Bengel's analysis was such that by 1748 Zinzendorf had retracted most of what was at issue.[[283]](#footnote-282) That Wesley was aware of at least some of this is indicated by Robertson's mention of it in the preface to his translation of Bengel's *Introduction*.[[284]](#footnote-283) Wesley himself had already broken with Zinzendorf after the famous conversation in Latin of 1741.[[285]](#footnote-284)

That Bengel's opposition to Zinzendorf may have been a partial motive for Wesley's adoption of his system is hinted at in the 1777 dedicatory sermon for Methodism's new headquarters. In the sermon, Wesley recounted the history of the movement and while connecting it with Bengel's eschatological predictions he avoided all mention of the early influence of the Moravians with the exception of Steinmetz who, by then, had also broken with them. That Wesley could find support from such an eminent scholar who at one and the same time rejected the Moravian ascendancy and suggested (at least to him, if not to the theory's originator) that Methodism was ordained to usher in the end of the world, may have played an important, if not decisive motive in determining Wesley's affection for Bengel.[[286]](#footnote-285) Thus, a number of forces may be identified which may have contributed to Wesley's adoption of Bengel.

One final source should be mentioned which has perhaps received too little attention, since Tyerman's exposition: Samuel Wesley, John's father. The Reverend Samuel Wesley has often been overlooked as a theological influence in favor of Susanna and dismissed for his eccentricities and general lack of success in many endeavors. Yet, he was a man of no mean intellect. Among his endeavors was a small paper: the *Athenian Gazette; or, Casuistical Mercury, Resolving all the Nice and Curious Questions Proposed by the Ingenious*.[[287]](#footnote-286) The paper regularly contained obscure questions from all fields forthrightly answered by the small "Athenian Society" which produced the paper. Of the group Sam was the only theologian, and therefore it seems probably that his opinions would be reflected the theological questions which comprised about one third of the queries. In any event they were not at variance with his views since every essay had "the approval all."[[288]](#footnote-287) The October 17, 1691 edition was entirely devoted an article on the millennium:

We believe, as all Christians of the purest ages did, that the saints shall reign with Christ on earth a thousand years; that this reign shall be immediately before the general resurrection, and after the calling of the Jews, the fullness of the Gentiles, and the destruction of Antichrist, whom our Saviour shall destroy by the *brightness of His coming*, and *appearance in heaven*; that at the beginning of this thousand years shall be the first resurrection, wherein martyrs and holy men shall rise and reign here in spiritual delights in the New Jerusalem, in a new heaven and new earth, foretold by the holy prophets.[[289]](#footnote-288)

Tyerman concluded that the theologies of Samuel and John were "*essentially* the same."[[290]](#footnote-289) The righteous and the evil

Shall both arise equally immortal, and diversified in nothing but their last sentence. We shall then see not by receiving the visible species into the narrow glass of an organised eye; we shall then hear without the distinct and curious contexture of the ear. The body then shall be all eye, all ear, all sense in the whole, and every sense in every part. In a word, it shall be all over a common sensorium; and being made of the purest aether, without the mixture of any lower or grosser element, the soul shall, by one undivided act, at once perceive all that variety of objects which now cannot, without several distinct organs, and successive actions or passions, reach our sense. Every sense shall be perfect; the ear shall hear everything at once throughout the spacious limits both of heaven and hell, with a perfect distinction, and without confounding that *anthem* with this *blasphemy*; the eye shall find no matter or substance to fix it; and so of the other senses. The reason of this is plain and convincing; for, if the bodies of the just and unjust were not thus qualified, they could not be proper subjects for the exercise of an eternity, but would consume and be liable to a dissolution, or to new changes. Hence we assert, that every *individual person in heaven and hell* shall hear and see all that passes in either state; these to a more extensive aggravation of their tortures, by the loss of what the others enjoy; and those to a greater increase of their bliss, in escaping what the others suffer.[[291]](#footnote-290)

Chronological Development

In his journal entry of September 1, 1778 Wesley stated, that, "I cannot write a better [sermon] on the Great Assize than I did twenty years ago . . . . Forty years ago I knew and preached every Christian doctrine which I preach now."[[292]](#footnote-291) While, Wesley's basic beliefs in the end of the world remained stable, there were two areas which require further attention: the nature of the millennium and the setting of dates.

The introduction to Bengel brought a specificity into Wesley's thinking concerning prophetic dating and the doctrine of the double millennium which had not been present previously. The vagueness of millennial conception in the "Great Assize," for instance is replaced with the precision of the *Notes* on Revelation 20.[[293]](#footnote-292) Yet, premillenial conceptions continued. Wesley continued to require the *Notes* with their double non-earthly millennium as a doctrinal standard for Methodism to the end of his life.[[294]](#footnote-293) At the same time he was also endorsing Hartley's premillennial views and printing similar statements in the *Arminian Magazine*. A similar situation existed in the issue of setting dates. Not only were Bengel's dates retained in the *Notes*, but Wesley continued to use, if not declare in an outright fashion, dates at least to 1777.[[295]](#footnote-294) His public enthusiasm for dating in the 1750's seems to have tapered off rather dramatically in later years probably as a result of the factors mentioned above[[296]](#footnote-295) and there were also denials and pleadings of ignorance as late 1788.[[297]](#footnote-296)

If the situation with Wesley seems confused, his commentators have fared little better. Tyerman and West suggested, if not argued, that Wesley was a premillennialist based on the evidence presented above, and rejected the idea that he set any eschatological dates.[[298]](#footnote-297) Rall argued that Wesley was not a premillennialist and intimated that he set no dates. Based on a review of the *Standard Sermons*[[299]](#footnote-298) and the *Notes*,[[300]](#footnote-299) Rall pointed to Wesley's optimism about the growth of the Kingdom, the lack of any signs of the end, resistance to an outward Kingdom, the "curious" "mild and spiritualized millennialism" of Bengel, and the deterministic Calvinism which Rall saw at the base of premillennial thought.[[301]](#footnote-300) Snyder rejected premillennialism as "inconsistent with the breadth and depth of Wesley."[[302]](#footnote-301) Downes, emphasizing Wesley as a forerunner to C. H. Dodd's realized eschatology, argued that

In fact it seems that, confronted with Revelation Wesley could not ignore the conception of the Millennium yet he was not a systematic theologian, and he was not sufficiently interested in the idea of the Millennium to integrate it with his general eschatological beliefs.[[303]](#footnote-302)

Ultimately none of these solutions fit the evidence in a satisfying manner. To support their indications of Wesley's premillennialism Tyerman and West must effectively reject the *Notes* which Wesley held as a Methodist standard for nearly four decades through the end of life. Rall is obviously reading his presuppositions into material ignoring Wesley's entire argument that the great utility of the two millennia was that both the optimistic and pessimistic prophecies of Christianity's spread could be accommodated and that Wesley's soteriological Arminianism was conditioned by an apocalyptic determinism. Downes' thesis of realized eschatology must wait until the next chapter for analysis, but given the enormous energy Wesley expended in writing about the details of the millennium and timing he can hardly be considered to have been essentially unconcerned about its details.

It is interesting to examine the competing ideas of the millennium in light of the quadrilateral. Certainly both would have had Scriptural merit for Wesley. Both would also have comported well with reason. But as logic tied together different parts of Scripture and secular history, Bengel's formulation, with its ability to integrate pessimistic and optimistic prophetic themes, and many of the past details of world events might even have had an edge. As late as 1777 he considered *Notes* on Revelation to be "one uniform consistent [view] far beyond any I ever saw."[[304]](#footnote-303) Especially important was the logical connection to the ongoing Methodist revival. In the area of experience, future prophecy would have been difficult to evaluate. But Wesley's understanding of experience had a marked emphasis on what might be called the internal witness.[[305]](#footnote-304) The validity of this inward witness seemed to be proportional to outward piety, and was strong enough to be one of the four pillars which supported the doctrine of inspiration for Wesley.[[306]](#footnote-305) This was especially true in the interpretation of Scripture which required the illumination of the Spirit. This also explains Wesley's emphasis on the character of Bengel and his comparisons with other writers.[[307]](#footnote-306) Bengel's level of piety was also evident, however, in the lives of those who supported premillennialism such as his father and his designated successor, Fletcher.[[308]](#footnote-307) Yet, there was also Wesley's own inner witness of the revival as a remarkable, even eschatological, work of God. It was this witness with which Bengel's theories could be made to corroborate in a remarkable fashion. In the final area of ancient tradition, though, Bengel's theories were weak and the fathers seemed to be squarely in the premillennial camp.[[309]](#footnote-308)

Is there a clear solution? Probably not, but this is because there probably was no clear solution for Wesley. There were two competing theories. While premillennialism seemed the solid, traditional position consistent with Scripture, Bengel was also consistent with Scripture and, although not possessing the weight of tradition, was able to both explain the details of Scripture and history. Perhaps most importantly, his system indicated for Wesley that the Methodist revival was a sovereign and eschatological work of God. It is little wonder then that Bengel's influence on the doctrinal standards was never relinquished. It is also little wonder that dates kept appearing despite the disavowals. (Nor can the practical benefit on the movement of suggesting the end was near without ever committing to it be ignored as a motivating force.) It seems reasonable to assume that in his heart of hearts Wesley never finally gave up the hope that the new century would also bring the new Millennium, although he could never work through it thoroughly or endorse it unequivocally. If the millennium was near, then his view of history demonstrated that nothing could stop it. Unwise action and proclaiming too loudly the time of the end could, however, slow down the very movement which it appeared to be ushering in.

Contemporary Comparisons

Beyond the close connection with Bengel described above, it is very useful to consider Wesley's overview of eschatological events in light of those of his contemporaries. Spangenberg's general eschatology provides an interesting comparison with Wesley's. Precursors to the end could be found in the second and final fulfillment of the prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction. But exact timing and predictions were not featured. Rather, believers were instructed to watch for the day of the Lord, for his coming will be "at a time when we do not expect it."[[310]](#footnote-309) The "one day as is a thousand years" motif was employed, but as a way to indicate the potentially vast indefiniteness which separated the first and second comings.[[311]](#footnote-310) In all, there is a moving away from the immanent expectation found in Wesley.

At the end of this ambiguous interregnum Christ was to return, bodies were to be resurrected, and living believers would be literally raptured from the earth to meet the Lord in the air.[[312]](#footnote-311) Spangenberg emphasized the idea that both good and evil "souls shall return . . . into their own body . . . to appear before the judgment seat of Christ."[[313]](#footnote-312) After this would come the "very glorious" general judgment and the final passing away of the universe.[[314]](#footnote-313) The dead, good and evil, would then be sent to the places of everlasting reward and punishment.[[315]](#footnote-314)

The moderation of this presentation may be traced to Spangenberg's own theological balance which was appreciated by Bengel even in the midst of the disputes of the 1740's.[[316]](#footnote-315) No doubt too, Bengel's admonishments and the resultant Moravian retractions encouraged a fairly conservative approach. Finally, he may be reflecting the earlier tradition of the Moravians which considered enthusiasm generated by eschatological speculation to detract from a true appreciation of Christ.

Even more interesting is a comparison to the work of John Gill who shares Wesley's love of detail. He allowed a "modest and humble inquiry" concerning eschatological dating being somewhat more restrained then Bengel and Wesley. He saw some merit in the pope as the antichrist and the Roman empire as the restrainer of 2 Thessalonians 2:6-8. He debunked various dating schemes and suggested 1866 and 1926 as possible terminations of the reign of the antichrist. He hoped this lack of precision would be ameliorated as the time drew nearer and the prophecies became clearer. Unlike Wesley he understood the seven churches of Revelation as descriptive of ecclesiastical ages.[[317]](#footnote-316) Although less avid than Wesley, he correlated secular events to prophetic history.[[318]](#footnote-317) Christ's "spiritual reign" in the hearts of believers would eventuate in the dispelling of "all darkness, Pagan, Papal, and Mahometan; and cause an universal reception of the gospel" which would then facilitate the conquering of the world for Christ by "Christian princes." The end would bring Christ's return to the earth, the "resurrection of the just," the renovation of the world into the new earth, and the binding of Satan. After this unusual order of events Christ would personally exercise a visible and literal reign upon the new earth which is identified with the millennium of Revelation 20. It would be a quite literal one thousand years, although no "Turkish Paradise." All the prophecies of earthly blessing for God's people would have been have already been accomplished during the "spiritual reign." The thousand years will be the judgment of the saints after which would come the resurrection of the unjust and the general judgment. After this was to be the casting of the evil into eternal damnation and the final states of the saints in heaven. The exact disposition of the new earth of the millennium remained a matter of uncertainty for Gill.[[319]](#footnote-318)

Although the details differ, Gill's work has a familiar ring after reading Wesley. The thoughts concerning timing, the pope as antichrist, and the literal millennium (although only one) all appear to be the same pieces presented in the same style, but in a slightly different order. These comparisons suggest that Wesley was truly a child of his age and no innovator in the arena of general eschatology. Both thinkers seem to be driven by a reasoned biblical literalism.

Theological Reflection

Wesley, it may be concluded, held to a fundamentally literal understanding of biblical prophecy whether one examines his adaptation of Bengel or his premillennialism. This placed him solidly within a long line of Christian theologians which continues to the present, especially in Fundamentalist and Evangelical circles.[[320]](#footnote-319) Later theologians have tended not to share in this enthusiasm especially with regard to his generally literal hermeneutic. Sugden was generally critical of this[[321]](#footnote-320) and considered Wesley's speculation about the origin of the sea of glass as "grotesque."[[322]](#footnote-321) Burwash desired to save Wesley from literalism by claiming "The Great Assize:"

Contains many opinions and forms of exposition which the author himself would be far from pressing as authoritative. It generally recites the language of Scripture, not therefore implying that this language is to be understood in a badly literal sense; but leaving the interpretation to the day when God shall declare it.[[323]](#footnote-322)

Ultimately, however, Wesley's literalism was not a function of his eschatology but the reverse. What is significant is that his eschatology is a direct outworking of his literal hermeneutic and, as such, cannot be separated from the rest of his theological formation.

His view of history also flowed from this interpretive position. Outler briefly, but superbly, summarized Wesley's understanding of history.

Wesley had a dramatic "theology of history." Its plot revolved around the grim discrepancies that stretch out between the perfections of the original creation and of its eventual restoration-between what history should (and could) have been and what had, in fact, transpired. Within this perspective, he could see the whole of history as a tragic drama of fallings away and partial restorations from each of which, in its turn, there then followed yet another falling away. And yet such is the power of sovereign grace that God's design is never nullified by any of these outworkings of "the mystery of iniquity." Consequently, both the Christian's hopes for the human future and the imperatives to holy living are bolstered by the assurance that God's designs will yet be realized.[[324]](#footnote-323)

History was a series of cyclical struggles swirling along linear time to the final consummation impelled by the power of God as reflected in Wesley's ultimate "optimism of grace rather than of nature."[[325]](#footnote-324) Hence, Clarence Bence probably was not considering all the evidence when he concluded that

The issue is not whether pre- or post- millennialism is the proper Christian position [for Wesley]. The focus is rather upon the foretaste of glory, the eschatological reality that is available to the believer, the Church, and to some degree, the Christian society prior to the end of the age. This shift away from an apocalyptic dualism, a sharp division between a decadent present existence and a utopian future state is consistent with the Wesleyan soteriology.[[326]](#footnote-325)

In fact, the foretaste of glory was predicated on the apocalyptic certainty that the world was under God's control. The foretaste was only a foretate. History without the perspective of prophetic Scripture must have seemed incoherent. With it, however, there was not only order but also purpose.

1. A citation from Amos 4:11 or Zech. 3:2. Its application to Wesley goes back to his miraculous escape in childhood from the Epworth rectory fire. The sense of destiny and even eschatology in the phrase for Wesley is reflected in his desire to have it engraved upon his tombstone, *Jrn.*, Nov. 26, 1753 (*WJW* 20:480). [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. *NNT*, 1:18; 4:2; 5:12; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, I.IV; where he also argues for a balance between the "*visible*" and the "*invisible*," such that "all that comes to pass in the visible world springs from the invisible: thither also it flows back after it is done. Wonderfully are they interwoven: and we must adhere purely to what we find *written*." [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. On the nature and interpretation of prophecy Wesley's abridgment or "collect" of John Owen's "A Discourse Treating of the Nature of Prophecy" (*CL*, 11:223-265) is interesting background reading, especially ch. 13, "*Some Rules and Observations concerning prophetic Writ in general*" (11:261-265). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. *NNT*, Rev. 1:11. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. *NNT*, Rev. 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
6. *NNT*, Rev. 1:1. On the practical application of Revelation see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
7. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
8. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3 *cf* 5:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
9. *NNT*, Rev. 1:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
10. *NNT*, Rev. 1:7, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
11. *NNT*, Rev. 1:10; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, II.XXXI. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
12. *NNT*, Rev. 1:12-13. In his falling down the Apostle resembles Daniel, *NNT*, Rev. 1:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
13. *NNT*, Rev. 2:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
14. *NNT*, Rev. 4:1. This may be connected with Wesley's idea that in its present state the body is not fit for heaven (see on the resurrection body below). [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
15. *NNT*, Rev. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
16. On Wesley's general principles of interpretation see W. M. Arnett, "John Wesley -- Man of One Book." Unpublished PhD dissertation, Drew University, Madison New Jersey, 1954, 89-96; Outler, *WJW*, 1:58-59; Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Harper Collins Publishers, Zondervan, Francis Asbury Press, 1990), 147-150.

    These may be conflated and summarized: (1) Appeal to God for illumination. (2) Emphasize the literal sense. (3) Appreciate the context. (4) Compare Scripture with Scripture. (5) Seek the insights of reason. (6) Be sensitive to the godly transitions of interpretation. (7) Evaluate and adapt to the real world. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
17. *NNT*, Rev. 5:4; see also 1:3, 20; 2:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
18. *NNT*, Rev. 6, the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
19. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3. It apparently did not describe itself well to Wesley, or anyone else for that matter, until Bengel discovered the keys to its meaning. See *NNT*, Rev., the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
20. *NNT*, Rev. 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
21. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3. It apparently did not describe itself well to Wesley, or anyone else for that matter, until Bengel discovered the keys to its meaning. See *NNT*, Rev. the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
22. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, Conclusion II.VI; Conclusion VII.VIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
23. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
24. *NNT*, Rev. 6, the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
25. *NNT*, Rev. 6, the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
26. *NNT*, Rev. 6, the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
27. One is reminded here of *NOT*, Preface, 17: "It is no part of my design, to save either learned or unlearned men from the trouble of thinking. . . . On the contrary, my intention is, to make them think, and assist them in thinking. This is the way to understand the things of God." [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
28. *NNT*, Rev. 1:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
29. *NNT*, Rev. 3:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
30. *NNT*, Rev. 4, introduction; *cf* 4:1; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, I.XXX-XXXI of which Wesley comment is a paraphrase. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
31. *NNT*, 2:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
32. *NNT*, Rev. 1:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
33. *NNT*, Rev. 4:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
34. *NNT*, Rev. 4:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
35. *NNT*, Rev. 1:3; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, I.XX. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
36. *NNT*, Rev. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
37. *NNT*, Rev. 2:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
38. For a modern analysis of the historicist view in general from theological positions in harmony with Wesley see: Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium, Four Views* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977); R. Ludwigson, *A Survey of Bible Prophecy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973); Richard R. Reiter, et al. (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
39. *NNT*, Rev. 5:1; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, I.XVIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
40. *NNT*, Rev. 8:2; cf. Bengel, *Introduction*, I.XVIII, XIX. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
41. *NNT*, Rev. 5:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
42. *NNT*, Rev. 10:2; cf. 10:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
43. *NNT*, Rev. 5:11. On Wesley's fascination with demographics, see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
44. For example, in the first half of the book, see *NNT*, Rev. 1:4, 8, 12-16, 20; 2:1, 10, 27; 3:5; 12, 18, 21; 4:3, 5-8; 5:1, 6, 8, 11; 6:11, 7:11, 17; 8:3, 5, 9:17; 10:1-2; and much of the rest of the book. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
45. *NNT*, Rev. 7:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
46. *NNT*, Rev. 1:4; 3:1; cf. 5:6. His references to Zech. 3 are not picked up in *NOT*. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
47. *NNT*, Rev. 1:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
48. *NNT*, Rev. 3:5, 18; 4:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
49. *NNT*, Rev. 1:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
50. *NNT*, Rev. 4:6. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
51. *NNT*, Rev. 1:12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
52. *NNT*, Rev. 1:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
53. *NNT*, Rev. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
54. *NNT*, Rev. 20:2, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
55. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.LIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
56. *NNT*, Rev. the introduction and the entirety of the text. The entire third (III) section of Bengel's *Introduction* is devoted to matters of chronology. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
57. *NNT*, Rev., the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
58. Good secondary sources are: John Christian Frederic Burk, *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of John Albert Bengel*, trans. and ed. Robert Francis Walker (London: William Ball, 1837), 267-310 and Gottfried Mälzer, *Johann Albrecht Bengel, Leben und Werke* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1970), 220-248.

    On chronology see his: *Jo. Alberti Bengelii Ordo Temporum, a principio per periodos aeconomiae divinae historicas atque propheticas ad finem usque ita deductus, ut tota series et quarumvis partium analogia sempiternae virtutis ae sapientiae cultoribus ex Scriptura V. et N. T. tanquam uno revera documento proponatur. Stuttg. apud Christoph. Erhard, Bibliop., A D. 1741*; the second edition of which was "considerably enlarged;" Burk, *Memoir*, 267, n.

    See also Bengel's *Cyclus* of 1745 and *Age of the World* of 1746. The introduction to Bengel's commentary on the Revelation by Fausset, seems to be only a summary of this. John Albert Bengel. *Gnomon of the New Testament*, 5 vols. Trans. William Fletcher, ed. Andrew R. Fausset. (Edinburgh: T.& T. Clark, 1859) 5:xvii-xxiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
59. Burk, *Memoir*, 268-272. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
60. Actually some of his Old Testament calculation was predicated on concepts derived from his work in the Revelation. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
61. Bengel, *Gnomon*, Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32; Acts 1:6-7. Related references in the *Gnomon* on Acts 1:7 include: 1 Pet. 1:12; Matt. 11:11; Rev. 1:1. See *NNT*, Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:6-7; 1 Pet. 1:12; and Rev. 1:1 but not Matt. 11:11 or Mark 13:32 for similar sentiments.

    Interestingly he took the exact opposite position in Ser. 40, "Christian Perfection," I.2 (*WJW* 2:101) written in 1741 concerning Acts 1:7:

    Neither is it for them "to know the times and seasons" when God will work his great works upon the earth; no, not even those which he hath in part revealed, by his servants the prophets, since the world began. Much less do they know when God, having "accomplished the number of his elect, will hasten his kingdom," when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat."

    The same position is taken with regard to Matt. 24:36 in sec. I.6 (*WJW* 2:103). There is obviously some development in his thinking here, perhaps as the result of reading Bengel. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
62. Luther also reckoned the age of the earth. He combined this with the assumption that there could be only 6,000 years of history and thus that there was insufficient space for the millennium to be future. Thus placed them between the beginning of the New Testament and Gregory VII. See his *Supputatio* as cited in Bengel, *Introduction*, Conclusion IV.XXX. For a summary of Bengelius calculations see Burk, *Memoir*, 268-272. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
63. Fausset in Bengel, *Gnomon*, 5:xxi. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
64. Bengel credits Luther with (*Introduction*, Conclusion IV.XXX) with the idea that 666 stands for the duration of the Beast. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
65. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV. the introduction and I. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
66. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.VI. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
67. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
68. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLVII. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
69. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.LII. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
70. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.LII. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
71. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.L. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
72. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.III-V. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
73. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.V. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
74. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.VII. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
75. In general, with respect to time, *kairos* refers to a definite period of time whilst *chronos* tends to be more abstract, referring to the general idea of time. There actual use in the Greek text of Revelation, however, is of less significance to the present study than Bengel's and, by extension, Wesley's understanding of them. For a more detailed analysis of the former and ultimately more important issue the reader is referred to the following: "*Kairos*" Kittel 3:455-464 Gerhard Delling. "*Chronos*" Kittel 9:993 Gerhard Delling (again). Richard C. Trench *Synonyms of the New Testament* rpt of 9th edition (London 1880) Studies in the Greek New Testament, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans 1953 pp. 209-212. "Time, *Kairos*" 3:833-839 H.-C. Hahn *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Grand Rapids MI: Zondervan 1978 "Time, *Chronos*" 3:839-845 same data. "Time" in Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, eds. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains* 2 vol. New York: United Bible Societies, 1988, vol. 1:628-654 and sections: (*kairos*): 22.45; 65.42; 67.1, 78, 109, 145; 68:73; (*chronos*): 67.1, 78, 133. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 2nd ed. Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich trans. and eds. Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1979 pp. 394-395, 887-888.??? [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
76. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.XIX. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
77. Fausset in Bengel, *Gnomon*, 5:246. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
78. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLIV.VII (4). [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
79. Bengel rejected *mikron* on four basic grounds (see his commentary on 6:11): (1) The frequent utilization of *chronos* "without an epithet" in Homer and Luke 18:4. (2) It is a harmonization from Rev. 20:3. (2) Its popularity in African manuscripts came about by that ascetic and sacrificial region's desire to encourage future martyrs that their time of vindication would come shortly. (3) External manuscript evidence which included "the most ancient, the most numerous, and the best authorities." (4) *Lectio brevior lectio potier*. (5) The natural style of the reading. (6) The agreement with the general context of the commentary.

    Modern textual criticism rejects Bengel's analysis. The reading is found without comment in *The Greek New Testament* 3rd (corrected) ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M.Metzger, and Allen Wikgren eds. Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies, 1983 and its companion Bruce M. Metzger, ed. *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, corrected edition; New York: United Bible Societies, 1975. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Metzger, and Allen Wikgren *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 26 ed. Stuttgart, Germany: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979 does cite the numerous, but not highly valued manuscripts, of the Majority subfamily which are of a "strictly *koine* type" (p. 53) which omit *mikron*. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
80. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.IX, p. 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
81. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV; cf. III.XLII. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
82. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.LIII; cf. III.XLII.XXVIII; Conclusion VII.VIII; Conclusion VII.VIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
83. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLVII-XLVIII; Conclusion II.VI; VII.VIII. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
84. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.IX; see also *Gnomon*, Rev. 20:4. Interestingly, in his *Cyclus* he attempted to relate the time periods of Revelation to astronomy. He assumed according to the knowledge of the day that the average year consisted of 365 days, 5 hours, 49 minutes, and 12 seconds. From this he argued that 252 Apocalyptic periods or *times* of 111 1/9 years would equal 280,000 years or one complete cycle of the solar system. Unfortunately more recent calculations reducing the average day by nearly a minute preclude his conclusions. Burk, *Memoir* 353; se also Fausset in Bengel, *Gnomon* 5:xxiii-xxiv. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
85. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.IX. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
86. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.X. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
87. That this works at all is fascinating, but that it works for all his major divisions is, of course, purely a function of the proportionality he built into the system previously. Bengel also went on to say: "By reason of the fraction 97/400, 400 solar Years must pass before the odd Hours, Minutes and Second, come out into whole *Days*: and at that same Time they come to whole *Weeks*." Here, however, he seems to be short a day. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
88. Bengel, *Introduction*, III.XLV.XV. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
89. Wesley's abbreviation "com." before years and days in the chart must mean "common." [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
90. *NNT*, 9:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
91. Cf. *NNT*, Rev. 11:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
92. Bengel, *Gnomon*, 5:241. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
93. Note *haplography*, *dittography*, *homoioarchton*, and *homoioteleuton* in textual criticism. Early editions of Wesley's work were notorious for this, and worse, kinds of errors. For a very concise summary see, Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Mirror and Memory* (Nashville: Kingswood Books, 1989), 208-211. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
94. A more detailed correlation of historical dates and comment is presented in Appendix 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
95. *NNT*, Rev. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
96. *NNT*, Rev. 4:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
97. *NNT*, Rev. 4: the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
98. *NNT*, Rev. 2: the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
99. *NNT*, Rev. 6: the introduction. Wesley held the Revelation to be written in 96; *NNT*, Table 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
100. *NNT*, Rev. 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
101. *NNT*, Rev. 6:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
102. *NNT*, Rev. 6:11. Wesley tends to round of Bengel's rather specific dates which in his *Gnomon* for example include not only the years but also the month and date (Rev. 17:10). Thus a given period of years in Wesley can run between two termini which are that period plus one year apart as the 666 years of the beast running from 1143 to 1832 (*NNT*, 17:10). Wesley's interest in the Waldenses as well as the Albigenses in relation to prophecy is found throughout *NNT* (see appendix). His general interest in them is found in *CL*, "The History of the Waldenses," etc. (2:76-82); "The Persecution of the Waldenses" (2:294-336); "Persecutions of the Waldenses" (3:307-310) and "Persecutions of the Albigenses" (3:311-342). He also collected "Persecution of the Church of God in Bohemia" (3:343-390) which also figured into the commentary. Vol. 2 of *CL* also contains a number of persecutions mentioned throughout *NNT*, Rev. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
103. *NNT*, Rev. 6:9. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
104. *NNT*, Rev. 7; 8:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
105. *NNT*, Rev. 8:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
106. *NNT*, Rev. 8:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
107. *NNT*, Rev. 8:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
108. *NNT*, Rev. 8:8-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
109. *NNT*, Rev. 8:10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
110. *NNT*, Rev. 8:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
111. *NNT*, Rev. 8:12-9:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
112. *NNT*, Rev. 9:1-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
113. *NNT*, Rev. 8:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
114. *NNT*, Rev. 9:15; see also 9:12-20; 11:14. Here is another chronological discrepancy. The total of a prophetic hour, day, month, and year should be about 207 common years. This Bengel has in the *Gnomon* in 9:15 where he suggests two periods: 629-836 and 634-840. Both of these time frames, as with Wesley's, are keyed to the rise of Islam. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
115. *NNT*, Rev. 10:7; 11:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
116. *NNT*, Rev. 12:4, 12; cf. 11:15; 20:2; 2 Thess. 4:16. Although this year was from Bengel, he had originally calculated it as 1143-1809, see his letter of Dec. 22, 1724 in John Christian Frederic Burk, *A Memoir of the Life and Writings of John Albert Bengel*, trans. and ed. Robert Francis Walker (London: William Ball, 1837)) 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
117. *NNT*, Rev. 13:1; 14:8, 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
118. *NNT*, Rev. 8:13. The "preparation is made" from 10:1 to 11:13; and, although it begins during the second woe, much detail is "not fulfilled till long after;" *NNT*, Rev. 10:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
119. *NNT*, Rev. 13:1; 17:5-24, esp. vs. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
120. *NNT*, Rev. 10-14: esp. 10:6; 12:6, 12:14; and 17:10. Again, Wesley's figures do not add up. He understands the 1,260 days of the woman (12:6) to be 777 common years and run from 847 to 1524 which, however, is a span of only 677 years. Nor is it clear why he says that Bengel demonstrated that the 1,260 prophetic days were equal to 777 common years in his *Introduction*, since this is not what Bengel seems to have said (III.XLVIII). See also *NNT*, Rev. 12:12-14. They should be according to Bengel's *Introduction* (see above) 1,260 prophetic days x 190.476 or about 657 common years and this is what he uses in the *Gnomon* where his period extends from 864 to 1521 or 657 years (12:6). [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
121. *NNT*, Rev. 4: the introduction; 12:12; 13:1; 20:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
122. *NNT*, Rev. 11; cf. Ezek. 40-48. Chapter 10 also violates the strict chronological sequence according to Wesley, *NNT*, Rev. 12: the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
123. *NNT*, Rev. 12: esp. 4, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
124. *NNT*, Rev. 12:14-16. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
125. *NNT*, Rev. 13:1, 11-12; see also 17:10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
126. *NNT*, Rev. 14: esp 14. Bengel's *Gnomon* in the same passage uses the same language describing the event in rapture-like terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
127. *NNT*, Rev. 20:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
128. See *NNT*, Rev. 20:12 citing 1 Cor. 15. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
129. *NNT*, Rev. 15:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
130. *NNT*, Rev. 16: esp. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
131. *NNT*, Rev. 10:7; 17:10; 18; 19:20; 20:1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
132. *NNT*, Rev. 20:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
133. *NNT*, Rev. 20:1-11; cf. 19:20. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
134. *NNT*, Rev. 20:4-13; cf. 1 Cor. 15:51. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
135. *NNT*, Rev. 20:3-4, 12-22:21. There seems to be a preliminary sort of resurrection or reunion with their bodies for a select group in *NNT*, Rev. 20:4; but see below. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
136. *NNT*, Rev. 5:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
137. *NNT*, Rev. 17:10-11. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
138. *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2:3. See, also for instance, *NNT*, Rev. 31:1 with its eight propositions and twenty three observations. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
139. The key references are: Ser. 3, "Awake, Thou that Sleepest," III.7 (*WJW* 1:155); *NOT*, Dan. 8: the introduction; *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2:3-7; Rev. 13:1, 8; 17:5, 9; 18:24. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
140. *NNT*, Rev. 13:1, observation 16. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
141. *NNT*, Rev. 13:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
142. *NNT*, Rev. 18:7. This clarifies Edward H. Sugden's note that in *NNT* Wesley sees the antichrist as the Pope in 2 Thess. 2:4, but in Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," II.9 (*WJW* 1:169) he identifies the Roman emperors. Similarly, the notes see Rev. 12:6 as the preservation of the Protestant Church in Bohemia, but here he seems to indicate the flight of the Christians from Jerusalem in 70 CE; *Wesley's standard Sermons*, 2 vols. (London, Epworth Press, 1955) 2:101. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
143. *NNT*, Rev. 17:1-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
144. *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2:3-7. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
145. *NNT*, Rev. 17:11; cf. 13:1; 2 Thess. 2:3. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
146. *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2:6-8. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
147. *NOT*, Dan. 7:24; 8: the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
148. *NNT*, 1 John 2:18. Here also referred to as "the spirit of antichrist." Note for instance: "Disciples of Dr. Taylor, laughing at original sin, and, consequently, at the whole frame of scriptural Christianity. Oh what a providence is it which has brought us here also, among these sliver-tongued antichrists!" *Jrn.*, Aug. 28, 1748 (*WJW* 3:245-246). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
149. *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2:7; Rev. 13:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
150. *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2:3; see also 13:1; 17:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
151. *NNT*, Rev. 13:14. The most significant dates Wesley assigns to Gregory VII is 1173 and to Innocent III is 1208. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
152. *NNT*, Rev. 13:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
153. *NNT*, Rev. 13:14-15. Wesley notes that talking images were not unknown "among papists, as well as the heathens."

     On Wesley's view of image worship see: *NNT*, Rev. 14:15. On images see: "The Origin of Image Worship among Christians," (*WW* 10:175-177), *A Roman Catechism, Faithfully Drawn Out of the Allowed Writings of the Church of Rome, with a Reply thereto*, Section 4, Que. 44-49 (*WW* 10:109-112), *Popery Calmly Considered*, Section 3 (*WW* 10:147-148). In none of these appears any reference to idols speaking. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
154. *NNT*, Rev. 13:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
155. *NNT*, 1 Thess. 2:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
156. *NOT*, Exek. 38:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
157. *NOT*, Exek. 38:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
158. *NNT*, 20:8. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
159. *NNT*, Rev. 7:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
160. *NOT*, Dan. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
161. *NOT*, Dan. 12.7. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
162. *NOT*, Dan. 12:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
163. *NOT*, Dan 12:13. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
164. "A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion, II," III.14 (*WJW* 11:263). *NNT*, Rom. 11:16-25 indicates that the Jews will be "convinced" to come to Christ by virtue of the Gentiles influx and that with the coming of Israel there will be "a still larger harvest among the gentiles." See also Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III.3-6 (*WJW* 1:170-172); cf. Ps. 85:10; 144:15. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
165. *NNT* Rom. 11:25. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
166. *NOT*, Isa. 11:11-16; Jer. 33:16-22; Ezek. 36:28-37. See also Nathaniel West, *John Wesley and Premillenialism* (New York: Hunt and Eaton [also Cincinnati: "God's Revivalist Office"], 1894), 25. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
167. *NNT*, Matt. 24.28. Nathaniel West, *John Wesley and Premillenialism* (New York: Hunt and Eaton [also Cincinnati: "God's Revivalist Office"], 1894), 25; see Israel as being restored to the land. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
168. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III.3-6 (*WJW* 1:170-172); cf. Ps. 85.10; 144.15; Ser. 61, "The Mystery of Iniquity," 31 (*WJW* 2:466). [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
169. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III, 3 (*WJW* 1:170-171); cf: Isa. 11.10; Rom. 11.1, 11, 25, 26. *NOT*, Isa. 11:10 describes the greatness and glory of the Jewish people in that day. *NNT*, in Rom. 11 provides additional detail. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
170. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III.3 (*WJW* 1:170-171). [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
171. *NOT*, Deut. 32.43; cf. Acts 3:19-21. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
172. *NOT*, Joel 2:20; 3:17. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
173. *NOT*, Deut. 32.43. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
174. Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 20-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
175. For instance: *NNT*, Matt. 24; 2 Thess. 2; Rev. 7.14. As a good representative of modern emphasis on the tribulation see: Reiter, Richard R; et. al., *Four views on the Rapture* (Grand Rapids: Academie, 1984) and J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (). [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
176. *NNT*, Rev. 7:14. Surprisingly neither 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11 or 2 Thess. 2:1-11 are of great help in this matter. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
177. *NNT*, Rev. 3:10. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
178. *NNT*, Rev. 17:10; see *Gnomon*, Rev. 17:10 where the beast emerges from the bottomless pit on Oct. 14, 1832 and is vanquished on Jun. 18, 1836 or 3 218/333 years. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
179. *NNT*, 2 Thess. 2.10-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
180. William M. Arnett, *John Wesley--Man of One Book NT* (Ph.D. diss., Madison, New Jersey: Drew University, 1954), 239; commenting on *NNT*, Matt. 24:39. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
181. Ser. 15, "The Great Assize," I.1 (*WJW* 1:357). The apparent difficulty of some of these references being pre-millennial is probably circumvented under the idea of double reference so common in prophetic thought: *NNT*, Matt. 24:21; Luke 17:31; Acts 3:19, 21. See also West, *Wesley and Premillenialism*, 25. See also the "The Return of the Lord" in the next chapter for details. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
182. *NNT*, Matt. 24.3. Wesley argued that Jesus Olivet answer to the disciples question of 24:3 was really two answers, the first concerning the destruction Jerusalem and the temple (24 ff., 15 ff., 32) and His own coming and the end of the world (24:29-31, 36). [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
183. *NNT*, Matt. 24.27. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
184. *NNT*, Matt. 24:30. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
185. *NNT*, Matt. 24:30. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
186. *NNT*, Matt. 25:31. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
187. *NNT*, Rev. 20:1-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-186)
188. *NNT*, 20:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
189. *NNT*, Rev. 20:12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
190. Bengel, *Gnomon*, Rev. 20:5; emphasis as in the original. There seems to be no direct connection with Wesley's idea of judgment day lasting one thousand years; Ser. 15, "The Great Assize," II.2 (*WJW* 1:359). [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
191. *NNT*, Rev. 20:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
192. *NNT*, Rev. 20:12-13. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
193. *NNT*, 1 Cor. 15:23; cf. Rev. 20:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
194. *NNT*, Matt. 24; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 20:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
195. Bengel, *Gnomon*, Matt. 24; 1 Cor. 15:51-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 2 Thess. 2:1-12; Rev. 20:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
196. *NNT*, Rev. 11:15; cf. 1 Thess. 4:16. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
197. *NNT*, 1 Thess. 2:3 and Rev. 20:4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
198. *NNT*, Rev. 14:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
199. Bengel, *Gnomon*, Rev. 14:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
200. *NNT*, Rev. 14:14. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
201. See Wesley's second table appended to the end *NNT*, Rev. where the eighteenth age, or 1700-1800 is equated with Rev. 14:9. The first table, however, assigns Rev. 14:6 to the year 1614 followed immediately by reference to Rev. 15-16 associated the year 1810. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
202. These conclusions comport with how Bengel, *Gnomon*, Rev. the outline appended to the introduction. Here 14:14 is a gathering together while the third woe is in progress and prior to the final victory. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
203. Bengel himself argued that the idea of a double millennium was not novel with him and identified authorities who seem to have held to two millennia based on Rev. 20 and others who held to two but understood the second as referring to the eternal state (*Gnomon*, Rev. 20:4). [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
204. Ser. 22, "Sermon on the Mount II" 1.13 (*WJW* 1:494-495). Ellipses are as in the original. Note here that he seems to be equating the new heavens and earth, which he later in the *Notes* seems to quite clearly distinguish from either millennium. This would be difficult to explain by a prophetic law of "double reference."

     Wesley's other major references to the Millennium include: the letters to Middleton: Jan. 4, 1749, III.5, 18; Hopper: Jun. 3, 1788; and Walter Churchey: Jun. 26, 1788; and *NNT*, Rev. 20. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
205. "To Samuel Furly," Mar. 10, 1763 (*LJW* 2:204). [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
206. "To Samuel Furly," Dec. 20, 1762 (*LJW* 4:197); cf. "To Samuel Furly," Mar. 19, 1763 (*LJW* 4:204). [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
207. "To Thomas Hartley," Mar. 27, 1764 (*LJW* 4:234). The occasion was Wesley's Feb. 5, 1764 reading of Hartley's *Paradise Restored: or a Testimony to the Doctrine of the Blessed Millennium, or Christ's Glorious Reign with His Saints on Earth* (1764). To this Hartley had appended *A Short Defense of the Mystical Writers* which was a response to Bishop Warburton's *The Doctrine of Grace* (1763). It was this latter document with which Wesley was not favorably impressed and which was the sole content of Wesley's journal entry of Feb. 5, 1764 (*WJW* 4:442-433). [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
208. "To Dr. Conyers Middleton," Jan. 4-24, 1749, III, 5 (*LJW* 2:340-341). Note that Wesley also cites Irenaeus' belief in the Millennium (section 11, p. 343; see also section 12, p. 344). [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
209. "To Dr. Conyers Middleton," Jan. 4-24, 1749, III.5, 10, cf. 18 (*LJW* 2:340-341, 343, 345-346). [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
210. The *Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament* were required in every Trust Deed in the Methodism. See John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology* (Dallas: Souther Methodist University Press, 1960, 1985), 7-9; Thomas C. Oden, *Doctrinal Standards in the Wesleyan Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press, 1988) for an interesting discussion with contemporary application. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
211. *NNT*, Rev. 20:2. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
212. *NNT*, Rev. 20:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
213. *NNT*, Rev. 20:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
214. *NNT*, Rev. 20:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
215. *NNT*, Rev. 20:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
216. *NNT*, Rev. 20:5. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
217. *NNT*, Rev. 20.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
218. *NNT*, Rev. 20:11-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
219. *NNT*, Rev. 20:3-4. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)
220. *NNT*, Rev. 20.5. [↑](#footnote-ref-219)
221. *NNT*, Rev. 20:7. [↑](#footnote-ref-220)
222. Ser. 102, "Of Former Times," 2 (*WJW* 3:442); see also *NNT*, Rev. 22:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-221)
223. Tyerman, *Samuel Wesley*, 146; see "Sources" below for details. [↑](#footnote-ref-222)
224. "From John William Fletcher," Nov. 29, 1755 (*WJW* 26:613-616). The full text appears in the *Methodist Magazine*, 1793: 370-376, 409-416. [↑](#footnote-ref-223)
225. Nathaniel West, *John Wesley and Premillenialism* (New York: Hunt and Eaton [also Cincinnati: "God's Revivalist Office"], 1894) 26-27. [↑](#footnote-ref-224)
226. Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 2:522-523. Wesley's letter to Hartley may also be found in *AM*, 1783: 498; indicating the importance of Wesley's opinion. [↑](#footnote-ref-225)
227. This summary is from Tyerman (*Life and Times*, 2:154). The full text is found in *AM*, 1784: 154, 209. [↑](#footnote-ref-226)
228. *NNT*, Rev. 4, the introduction; 20:4; cf. "To a Member of the Society," Sep. 16, 1774 (*LJW* 6:113). [↑](#footnote-ref-227)
229. *NNT*, Rev. 12.12. [↑](#footnote-ref-228)
230. *NNT*, Rev. 12.16. [↑](#footnote-ref-229)
231. "To Mr Joseph Benson," Dec. 8, 1777 (*LJW* 6:291). [↑](#footnote-ref-230)
232. *NNT*, Rev. 20.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-231)
233. Ser. 15, "The Great Assize," Introduction, 2 (*WJW* 1:357). [↑](#footnote-ref-232)
234. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," II.9 (*WJW* 1:169); "minished" is as in the original. Edward H. Sugden, *Wesley's standard Sermons*, 2 vols. (London, Epworth Press, 1955) 2:101, notes that in his NT commentary, Wesley sees the Pope in view in 2 Thess. 2:4, but in this sermon he has the Roman emperors in view. Similarly, the notes see Rev. 12:6 as the preservation of the Protestant Church in Bohemia, but here he seems to indicate the flight of the Christians from Jerusalem in 70 CE. This appears to be not a contradiction by reflective of Wesley's composite view of the beast. [↑](#footnote-ref-233)
235. *NNT*, Rev. 13.1; cf. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," II.9 (*WJW* 1:169). [↑](#footnote-ref-234)
236. *Jrn.*, Jun. 16, 1755 (*WJW* 21:18-19). Note that this was immediately after *NNT* was published. For the destiny of God on a personal level see, for instance: *Jrn.*, Nov. 26, 1753 (*WJW* 20:480); "To his Brother Charles," Sep. 28, 1760; May 6, 1774 (*LJW* 4:108; 6:81). [↑](#footnote-ref-235)
237. Ser. 66, "Signs of the Times," II.1 (*WJW* 2:525); see also n. 11, 12; see also: Ser. 63, "The General Spread of the Gospel," 20 (*WJW* 2:494), see also all of sections 17-20; cf. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III.2 (*WJW* 1:170); cf. Ser. 63, "The Good Steward," 21-25, 27 (*WJW* 2:495-499). [↑](#footnote-ref-236)
238. Ser. 63, "The Good Steward," 17 (*WJW* 2:493). [↑](#footnote-ref-237)
239. Ser. 66, "Signs of the Times," II, 8 (*WJW* 2:530). [↑](#footnote-ref-238)
240. "A Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd [Dr. George Lavington, Bishop of Exeter]," Feb. 1, 1749/50," 32-33 (*WJW* 11:374). [↑](#footnote-ref-239)
241. "To Thomas Morrell," Feb. 4, 1790 (*LJW* 8:199). The brackets are as in Telford's text. [↑](#footnote-ref-240)
242. "To William Black," Mar. 4, 1790 (*LJW* 8:204). It is notable that both this and the previous excerpt are dated to the time of the French revolution. [↑](#footnote-ref-241)
243. Ser. 66, "Signs of the Times," II.4 (*WJW* 2:526). [↑](#footnote-ref-242)
244. "Minutes of Some Late Conversations, II" Aug. 1-2, 1775; Q. 16 (*WW* 8:284). [↑](#footnote-ref-243)
245. Ser. 4, "Scriptural Christianity," III.2 (*WJW* 1:170); Ser. 6, "The Righteousness of Faith" III.4 (*WJW* 1:215); Ser. 63, "The Good Steward," 17-20 (*WJW* 2:493-494); *NNT*, Matt. 24:27, 42 (in a curious interpretation); Col. 3:4; Heb. 9:28; Rev. 22:7, 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-244)
246. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-245)
247. Ser. 66, "Signs of the Times," II.2 (*WJW* 2:525). Outler (n. 13) refers the reader back to the incident in Charles Wesley's Journal of Oct. 21, 1738 (noting that the correct date is the 20th) and Feb. 21, 1739; and John's diary (no mention is made in his Journal) of Oct. 20, 1738 and Mar. 24, 1739. [↑](#footnote-ref-246)
248. Ser. 112, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel," Introduction 2-3 (*WJW* 3:579-580) [Ser. 132, "At the Foundation of City Road Chapel," 2-3 (*WW* 7:420)].

     The day's journal entry notes that the foundation stone he placed at the Chapel "Probably . . . will be seen no more by any human eye, but will remain there till the earth and the works thereof are burned up;" *Jrn.*, Apr. 21, 1777 (*WW* 4:96). In his introduction to the sermon Outler wryly notes that Wesley made this somewhat grand eschatological allusion even though he well knew the chapel land was leased for only fifty years (*WJW* 3:578). [↑](#footnote-ref-247)
249. Ser. 66, "Signs of the Times," II.5 (*WJW* 2:527). [↑](#footnote-ref-248)
250. *NNT*, 1 Cor. 13:12. See also "A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Gloucester," II.8 (*WJW* 11:567-568). See also this idea (man's ignorance) as illustrated for Wesley in the incompleteness of astrophysical knowledge Ser. 64, "The New Creation," I.5 and throughout on all areas of science (*WJW* 2:571-572). (It must be remembered that Wesley took these speculations with great seriousness.) [↑](#footnote-ref-249)
251. *Jrn.*, Dec. 6, 1762 (*WJW* 21:400). [↑](#footnote-ref-250)
252. Ser. 99, "The Reward of the Righteous," 1 (*WJW* 3:400). On this general themes see also: Ser. 137, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," I.3 (*WW* 7:278); Ser. 68, "The Wisdom of God's Counsels," 6 (*WJW* 2:554). [↑](#footnote-ref-251)
253. "Remarks on Mr. Hill's Farrago double-Distilled," I, 20 (*WW* 10:424-425). The context is that of refuting Halley's comet as a harbinger of the end. (The commet is named after Sir Edmund Halley, 1656-1742.) [↑](#footnote-ref-252)
254. "To 'John Smith,'" Dec. 30, 1754, 13 (*WJW* 26:181-182; *WW* does not indicate section 13, only 12 and 14). [↑](#footnote-ref-253)
255. *NNT*, Rev. 20.2. [↑](#footnote-ref-254)
256. "To Christopher Hopper," Jun. 3, 1788 (*LJW* 8:63). The event seems to refer to about a month earlier on Friday May 2 when Wesley "explained the former part of Rev. xiv" (see the Journal of this data, *WW* 4:416). The fourteenth verse of *NNT* (which had been in circulation 34 years by then) on this chapter refer to "two general visitations" see above.

     Note the very similar thought and even language in "To Walter Churchey," June 26, 1788 (*LJW* 8:67), cf. Jun. 3, 14; Jul. 22; and *NNT*, Rev. 14. See also Tyerman's reference to "*Methodist Magazine*, 1827, p. 392" (*Life and Times*, 3:524). [↑](#footnote-ref-255)
257. Ser. 64, "The New Creation," 1.2 (*WJW* 2:500, 501). Wesley also remarks upon humanity's ignorance concerning providence and grace in Ser. 69, "The Imperfection of Human's Knowledge," II (*WJW* 2:567-586). [↑](#footnote-ref-256)
258. For a good summary see Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 2:433-437; Henry D. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast, John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1989), 337-339.

     This was not the only occasion of eschatological doom being preached. Tyerman described the "panic fear" and "national confusion" which occasioned a increasingly strong but not devastating earthquakes which resulted in the prophetic outcry of a soldier proclaiming the destruction of half of London on the fourth of April:

     Multitudes ran about the streets in frantic consternation, quite certain that the final judgment was about to open; and that, before the dawn of another day, all would hear the blast of the archangel's trumpet. Places of worship were packed, especially the chapels of the Methodists, where crowds came during the whole of that dreary night, knocking and begging admittance.

     Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 2:71-72. The full description, including the "*earthquake gowns*" which kept one warm while waiting for the disaster, bears reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-257)
259. Wesley charted the events in his Journal. See, particularly: Dec. 26, 1761; Oct. 29; Nov. 22-26; Dec. 4, 8, 22, 25, 26, 1762; Jan. 1, 7 (Wesley mentions Bell's date of Feb. 28 for the end of the world), 9, 17 (a record of correspondence with Bell); Feb. 6, 7, 10, 12, 21 (the "terror" of London at the prophecy is mentioned), 28 (Wesley "showed the absurdity of the position that the world was to end that night, yet "many were afraid to go to bed," April 23 ("the breach is made," and a summary of the events), 1763; the *Arminian Magazine* 18 (1795):50; *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 19-22. [↑](#footnote-ref-258)
260. *Jrn.*, Feb. 28, 1763 (*WJW* 21:407). [↑](#footnote-ref-259)
261. "To the Editor of the London Chronicle," Feb. 9, 1763 (*LJW* 4:202). [↑](#footnote-ref-260)
262. "To his Brother Charles," May 25, 1764 (*LJW* 4:245); "To Thomas Rankin," Jan. 22, 1767 (*LJW* 5:38; is this in part the reason why he "retract{s} server expressions in out Hymns" when he writes to Charles two days later?). (Rack [*Reasonable Enthusiast*, 603, n. 42] includes "To Lady Maxwell" [*LJW* 5:49] in this context but the connection is unclear.) See also Tyerman's assessment that "the injury done to Methodism was serious" (*Life and Times*, 2:439).

     Bell was even more stifled, being arrested while waiting with his followers on "a mound near St Luke's Hospital;" "To the Editor of the 'London Chronicle,'" Telford's introduction (*LJW* 4:202). [↑](#footnote-ref-261)
263. *NNT*, the introduction 7 cited: "Dr. Heylin, *Theological Lectures*. Dr. Guyse. Dr. Doddridge, *Family Expositor*." [↑](#footnote-ref-262)
264. For additional comments on Bengel in Wesley, see: "To Mr. Joseph Benson," Dec. 8, 1777 (*LJW* 6:427; see also: *WJW* 11:478, n. 1). As an interesting indicator of Wesley's respect for Bengel, his journal entry of Feb. 27, 1759; indicates his considerable disappointment at a tract over which he had great expectations because it was written by Oetinger, Bengel's son-in-law (*WW* 2:467); *NNT*, Preface, 7; "To Peard Dickinson," Jun. 24, 1788 (*LJW* 8:67), here the *Gnomon* is called a "jewel." In "To Walter Churchey," Jun. 26, 1788, Wesley admitted to using Bengel's 1836 date but clarified that he did not endorse it. [↑](#footnote-ref-263)
265. Ser. 55, "On the Trinity," 5 (*WJW* 2:378-379). [↑](#footnote-ref-264)
266. *NNT*, Preface, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-265)
267. *NT*, Rev. the introduction. The rendering of *Erklarte* as *Ekklarte*, here, appears to be the first place in the Revelation commentary where Wesley departed from Bengel!

     Hymn 67, "Thou, Lord, on whom I still depend," (the first line) actually contains a "metrical paraphrase" of Bengel's commentary on Rev. 2:17:

     What thy mysterious name shall be?

     Contending for thy heavenly home,

     Thy latest foe in death o'ercome;

     Till then thou searchest out in vain

     What only conquest can explain

     But when the Lord hath closed thine eyes,

     And opened them in paradise,

     Receiving thy new name unknown,

     Thou read'st it wrote on the white stone.

     Hymn 67, (*WJW* 7:166, n. 19-28). [↑](#footnote-ref-266)
268. Harald Lindstrom, *Wesley and Sanctification, A Study in the Doctrine of Salvation* (Stockholm: Nya Bokforlags Aktiebolaget, 1948), p. 117. Lindstrom refers the reader to D. Lerch, *Heil und Heiligung bei John Wesley*, dargestellt unter besonderer Beruechtigung seiner Anmerkungen zum Neuen testament Zurich, 1941; pp. 22, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-267)
269. John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology, an Introduction* (Dallas: Southern Methodist U. Press; 1960, 1985), in David Lerch, *Heil und Heilgung*, 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-268)
270. *NNT*, Rev. the introduction. Wesley follows him rather closely throughout the NT although there are exceptions. Compare, for instance *NNT* and t;he *Gnomon* on Acts 17:16-34. See the discussion in Cell, *Rediscovery of John Wesley*, 106. [↑](#footnote-ref-269)
271. It is remarkable how little attention Bengel receives in the literature. Ayling, Pollock, Southey, Tuttle, Tyerman, and Vulliamy do not mention him at all in their indices or tables of contents. He is mentioned in passing by Cell (3 times, once with substance), Rack (2 times), and Schmidt (5 times, one appears inaccurate). [↑](#footnote-ref-270)
272. *Jrn*, Sep. 10, 1754 (*WJW* 20:491). [↑](#footnote-ref-271)
273. Outler, *WJW* 20:491, n. 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-272)
274. John Robinson, "The Translator's Preface," in Bengel, *Introduction*, iii. [↑](#footnote-ref-273)
275. *NNT*, 2 Tim. 3:16; see also the discussion in Thorsen, *Wesleyan Quadrilateral*, 128-130. [↑](#footnote-ref-274)
276. Wesley passion for the sciences is well known and much demonstrated as in *SWG*. Note, for instance, Bengel's work in correlating astronomy to prophecy discussed above. [↑](#footnote-ref-275)
277. Wesley gave much weight to the fathers from early on: *Jrn.*, Sep. 13, 1736 (*WJW* 18:171). Bengel translated and analyzed classical (Cicero and Ovid) as well as patristic (Chrysostom, Gregory Thaumaturgus, and Macarius) authors (Burk, *Memoir*, 217-223). [↑](#footnote-ref-276)
278. *NNT*, Preface 7. Bengelius, of course, one of the founts of modern textual criticism. [↑](#footnote-ref-277)
279. On Wesley, *NNT*, Preface 6. Note also Wesley's opinion that avarice was a primary motive for large books; *Jrn.* Feb. 17, 1769 (*WJW* 22:171). Although he thought most commentary too verbose, James Hervey described the revised, 1760 notes as "rather too lean" (Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 2:227). On Bengel, see: Robertson, "Translator's Preface," in Bengel *Introduction*, vi. [↑](#footnote-ref-278)
280. "To Samuel Furly," Mar. 10, 1763 (*LJW* 2:204) c.f. *NNT*, Rev. the introduction. [↑](#footnote-ref-279)
281. Timothy Smith quite perceptively observes in a later but similar era that "Revivalism and perfectionism became socially volatile only when combined with the doctrine of Christ's imminent conquest of the earth." Timothy Smith, *Revivalism and Social Reform, American Protestantism of the Eve of the Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 225. [↑](#footnote-ref-280)
282. John Deschner, *Wesley's Christology, an Introduction* (Dallas: Southern Methodist U. Press; 1960, 1985), in David Lerch, *Heil und Heilgung*, p. 24-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-281)
283. Two good accounts are: Gottfried Mälzer, *Johann Albrecht Bengel, Leben und Werke* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1970), 152-282 and Burk, *Memoir*, 399-421. It should be noted that the most of the debate with characterized by a high level of love and respect. Bengel even admired Zinzendorf and his followers as individuals. It was however the beliefs and functioning as a group which caused his great distress. [↑](#footnote-ref-282)
284. Robertson, "Preface," viii; in Bengel, *Introduction*. [↑](#footnote-ref-283)
285. *Jrn*, Sep 3, 1741 (*WJW* 19:211-224). On the break and JW's criticisms, see: *Jrn*, Sep. 17, 1738 2:71?, 122??, Nov. 1, 1739 - Sep. 3, 1741 (*WJW* 19:113-224).

     For descriptions of his early admiration see: *Jrn*, Jan. 25, 1736 (*WJW* 18:142-143); Jan. 25, 1736 (*JJW* 1:142-143), Feb. 8-9, 1736 (152ff); Apr. 26, 1738; May 1, 1738; Jun. 28, 1738 (*WJW* ??); Jul. 6, 1738. [↑](#footnote-ref-284)
286. Ser. 112, "On Laying the Foundation of the New Chapel," esp. 3 (*WJW* 3:579-592); see also Outler's introduction (577-579) and p. 581, n. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-285)
287. L[uke] Tyerman, *The Life and Times of the Rev. Samuel Wesley, M. A., Rector of Epworth, and the Father of the Revs. John and Charles Wesley, the Founders of the Methodists* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co., 1866), 128-149. [↑](#footnote-ref-286)
288. Tyerman, *Samuel Wesley*, 149, 140-141. Tyerman also adds that they "determined controversial points by a majority of votes," 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-287)
289. [Samuel Wesley], *Athenian Oracle*, Vol. i. p. 3; cited in Tyerman, *The Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*, 146-147. [↑](#footnote-ref-288)
290. Tyerman, *Samuel Wesley*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-289)
291. [Samuel Wesley], *Athenian Oracle*, Vol. i. p. 3; cited in Tyerman, *The Life and Times of Samuel Wesley*, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-290)
292. Jrn, 9.1.1778 (Jac, VI, p 135). The term "Great Assize," of course, comes from English Juris Prudence, but was applied to the last judgment as early 1340 in Hampole's *Prick of Conscience* (*SJW* 2:399). [↑](#footnote-ref-291)
293. Ser. 22, "Sermon on the Mount II" 1.13 (*WJW* 1:494-495); cf. *NNT*, Rev. 20:4. [↑](#footnote-ref-292)
294. "Minutes of Several Conversations between the Rev. Mr. John Wesley and Others; From the Years 1744 to 1789," Que. 61 (*WW* 8:331). These were reprinted in 1791 (*WW* 8:298, n.). [↑](#footnote-ref-293)
295. "To Mr Joseph Benson," Dec. 8, 1777 (*LJW* 6:291). Here Bengel and the *Notes* are heartily recommended. [↑](#footnote-ref-294)
296. Outler, *WJW*, 2:500. [↑](#footnote-ref-295)
297. "To Christopher Hopper," Jun. 3, 1788 (*LJW* 8:63). [↑](#footnote-ref-296)
298. Tyerman, *Life and Times*, 2:524; West, *Wesley and Premillennialism*, 22-23. Tyerman's evidence includes a hymn by Wesley's friend W. Piers which mentions Christ reigning on earth. It does not, however, seem to be good evidence for premillennialism since references to "full redemption" apparently indicating the body and "the *New Jerusalem*" indicate that the final and not a millennial intermediate state is in view (2:525). [↑](#footnote-ref-297)
299. Ser. 7, "The Way to the Kingdom;" Ser. 15, "The Great Asize;" Ser. 63, "The [General] Spread of the Gospel;" Ser. 66, "The Signs of the Times;" Ser. 102, "Of Former Times." [↑](#footnote-ref-298)
300. *NNT*, Matt. 10:@3; 16:3, 28; 24:14, 34; Acts 1:6; 1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 20:3-5; 21:1. [↑](#footnote-ref-299)
301. Harris Franklin Rall, *Modern Premillenialism and the Christian Hope* (Nashville: The Abingdon Press, 1920), 245-253. [↑](#footnote-ref-300)
302. Howard A. Snyder, "The Holy Reign of God," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 24 (1989): 74-90; 84-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-301)
303. Downes, "Eschatological Doctrines," 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-302)
304. "To Joseph Benson," Dec. 8, 1777 (*LJW* 6:291). [↑](#footnote-ref-303)
305. Donald A. D. Thorsen, *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience as a Model of Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Harper Collins Publishers, Zondervan, Francis Asbury Press, 1990), 216-221. [↑](#footnote-ref-304)
306. "A Clear and concise Demonstration of the Divine Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures," (*WW* 11:484). See also his understanding of the relationship of Scripture and experience in the issue of salvation (*Jrn.*, May 24, 1738 [*WJW* 18:248-249]). [↑](#footnote-ref-305)
307. Ser. 55, "On the Trinity," 5 (*WJW* 2:378-379); *NNT*, Preface, 7; cf. "To Joseph Benson," Dec. 8, 1777: "But there is no comparison either as to sense, learning or piety, between Bishop Newton and Bengelius. The former is a mere child to the latter." [↑](#footnote-ref-306)
308. Tyerman, *Samuel Wesley*, 448-459; "To John Fletcher," Jan. [15], 1773 (*LJW* 6:10-11). [↑](#footnote-ref-307)
309. His only substantial appeal seems to have been to Tertullian (*c. Marcion*, 24; in Bengel, *Gnomon*, Rev. 20:5) and this is not strong. Wesley premillennial fathers may be found in "To Dr. Conyers Middleton," Jan. 4-24, 1749, III, 5, 10-12, cf. 18 (*LJW* 2:340-346).

     A example of the power of tradition for Wesley is seen in his argument against the doctrine of that sin is eradicated in believers at justification. One of the four arguments he presses is that "it is absolutely new" (Ser. 13, "On Sin in Believers," III.10 [*WJW* 1:325]). [↑](#footnote-ref-308)
310. Spangenberg, *Exposition* sec. 263; p. 463; cf. 1 Thess. "v. 1, &c." [↑](#footnote-ref-309)
311. Spangenberg, *Exposition* sec. 263; p. 463; cf. 2 Pet. 3:8. Wesley also uses it here: *NNT*, Matt 24:28. [↑](#footnote-ref-310)
312. Spangenberg, *Exposition*, sec. 264; p. 464; see also: sec. 273; p. 473; sec. 265; p. 466-467. [↑](#footnote-ref-311)
313. Spangenberg, *Exposition* sec. 265; p. 467. [↑](#footnote-ref-312)
314. Spangenberg, *Exposition* sec. 266; p. 468-469; cf. Rev. 20:11; 2 John 3:10-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-313)
315. Spangenberg, *Exposition* sec. 269; p. 473; sec. 270; p. 474-475; sec. 275; p. 484. [↑](#footnote-ref-314)
316. Burk, *Memior*, 417. Bengel thought the Brethren would do well to listen to Spangenberg as the best of their thinkers. [↑](#footnote-ref-315)
317. John Gill, *A Body of Divinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Sovereign Grace Publishers, [1769] 1971), 623. [↑](#footnote-ref-316)
318. Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 661. [↑](#footnote-ref-317)
319. Gill, *Body of Divinity*, 643-645; 664-667, [↑](#footnote-ref-318)
320. At least one group which shared the general hermeneutical approach of the historicist school was, in 1827, trying to correlate earth history to Revelation 16:12-17 (Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970], 37; speaking of Henry Drummond). [↑](#footnote-ref-319)
321. Sugden, *Sermons*, 2:399, 400, 411-412; cf. Ser. 15, "The Great Assize," III.1-4 (*WJW* 1:366-369). Note that Sugden's speculations about "some wandering star" or the ascendancy of gravitation over centrifugal force as the mechanisms for the end now sound as quaint from a scientific perspective as Wesley's must have sounded to him. [↑](#footnote-ref-320)
322. Sugden, *Sermons* 2:412; cf. Ser. 15, "The Great Assize," III.4 (*WJW* 1:368-369). [↑](#footnote-ref-321)
323. Burwash, *Sermons*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-322)
324. Outler, *WJW* 2:451. See also Outler's note on page 252, where he describes Wesley's agreement with Society of Friends founder George Fox (1624-1691) that a "general apostasy" has always characterized Christianity wherever it has spread (cf: Fox's *Journal*, 1832 ed: 1652, p. 116; 1686, p. 599-600; 1633 p. 364-365; and his broadsheet; as per Outler). [↑](#footnote-ref-323)
325. Outler, *WJW*, 2:500. [↑](#footnote-ref-324)
326. See also Clarence L. Bence, "Progressive Eschatology: A Wesleyan Alternative," *Wesleyan Theological Journal*, 14 (Spr. 1979): 45-59; 53. [↑](#footnote-ref-325)