

Chapter 3

Prophecy and the Temple

Influences

Like chronology, ancient texts and alchemy, prophecy was a subject that Newton spent a great deal of time studying. In England, from the beginning of the Puritan unrest to the mid-eighteenth century, Apocalyptic and millenarian thought had become a widespread concern.¹⁹⁰ The work of English Millenarian Joseph Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica* published in 1627, was to have a sustaining influence on notable scholars such as John Milton, Henry More, Isaac Newton and William Whiston. The majority of Apocalyptic and millenarian thought centred on the relationship between the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica* was translated from Latin into English as *The Key of the Revelation* and was authorised for publication by the Parliament at the height of the Civil War in 1643.¹⁹¹ Although Mede recognised that the correct interpretation of the prophetic language was paramount to understanding the prophet, he explored a synchronic scheme and did not lay down principles of Biblical hermeneutics.¹⁹² Mede believed that the prophet spoke in a figurative and emblematic language that was once easier to understand than it was now. This language was after the tradition of the East, and Mede used non-Biblical sources to help in the understanding of the prophetic language.¹⁹³ Mede's pupil Henry More wanted to establish the prophecies of Daniel and John on a more scientific basis that was compatible with religious stability and a permanent social structure.¹⁹⁴ It did not matter whether the prophecies were fulfilled or what their meaning was, it was an understanding of the meaning of the language of the prophets, which must conform to rules and conventions, by which the meaning was conveyed.¹⁹⁵

Newton's examination of the Biblical prophets dates back to his early years in Cambridge.¹⁹⁶ He owned books on prophecy and discussed the prophetic writings with More.¹⁹⁷ Newton owned all of More's published work on Daniel and the Apocalypse including *A Plain and Continued Exposition of the Several Prophecy or Divine Visions of the Prophet Daniel*, which was a gift to Newton from More. This book was heavily annotated by Newton with points of his disagreement.¹⁹⁸ Both More and Mede were significant influences on Newton. However, Newton's scheme of Biblical hermeneutics goes beyond More's and Mede's systems. Although Mede and More made mention of the Temple, in neither of their work is the Temple a central

feature. Mede stressed the Tabernacle as being of greater importance.¹⁹⁹ He approached the Temple by considering the New Testament but he only included Chaps. 4 and 11 of Revelation and this choice of limited text excluded the architectural description of the Temple of Chap. 21. Mede claimed that the measuring of the courts in Revelation 11 “was propounded in the type of Angle measuring, in Ezekiel”, and through this measuring

You may see the place. But if any one shall conceive otherwise, and would rather refer the type of measuring to the signification of building, namely, that what the drawing or setting out of a model (that is the platform of a work to be done) is to builders the same as measuring to God in the language of the Prophets, it will come not withstanding to the same meaning.²⁰⁰

Through measuring and working out the plan of the building the builder was able to see how much work was to be done; similarly, in the prophetic language, God measured for the same reason. Mede supplied a woodcut of the floor plan or “plot” of the Temple which is exceptionally crude (see Fig. 3.1) and it is clear that he was not interested in the architecture of the Temple.

More is sometimes credited with influencing Newton’s perception of the role of Jewish ritual in Revelation (Mede, 1643).²⁰¹ Despite this claim and having a close relationship with More (although not always in philosophical agreement),²⁰² with the exception of Joseph Mede, Newton did not look upon past interpreters favourably. He claimed that “all that I have seen beside the labours of Mr Mede have been so botched & framed without any due proportion, that I fear some of these authors did not so

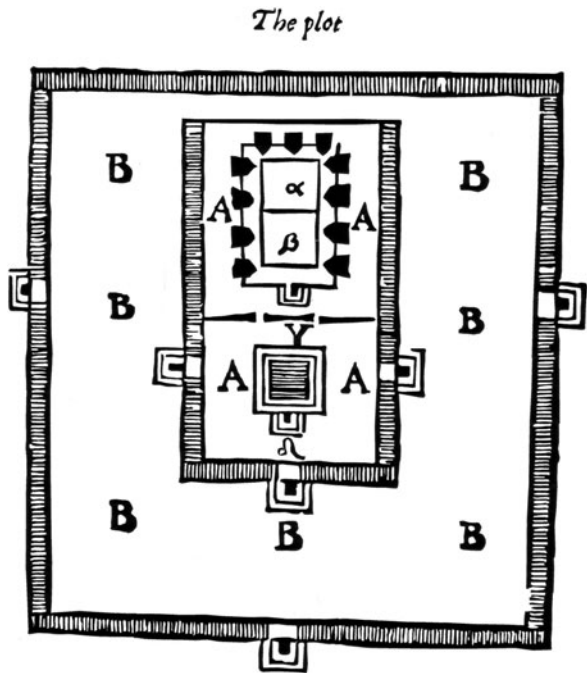


Fig. 3.1 Mede’s floor plan or “plot” of the temple²⁰⁵ (Drawn by the author from Mede, 1643, part 2, p. 6)

much as believe their own interpretation”.²⁰³ Newton acknowledged that “Mr Mede laid the foundation & I have built upon it”.²⁰⁴

Newton believed that Mede had come closer to decoding the secrets of Revelation than anyone else. However, Newton conceded that the obscurity of the prophetic language was a deliberate device by the prophet to conceal the truth from the unfit or to delay the deciphering until the right time or the right person to decode them. At the end of his prophecy Daniel claimed, “and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand”.²⁰⁶ About this Newton stated:

To assign but one meaning to one place of scripture; unless it be perhaps by way of conjecture, or where the literal sense is designed to hide the more noble mystical sense as a shell the kernel from being tasted either by unworthy persons, or until such time as God shall think fit.²⁰⁷

The truth will be revealed by

a remnant, a few scattered persons which God has chosen, such as without being led by interest, education, or humane authorities can set themselves sincerely & earnestly to search after [it].²⁰⁸

Only the wise and the worthy can interpret the prophet. It would only be those that were granted the tools of scientific method to reveal the workings of Providence in history who would be able to decode the prophets,²⁰⁹ and Newton clearly thought that he was one of these worthy people.

Newton’s only published work of prophecy was *The Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St John*, posthumously published in two first English editions in London and Dublin in 1733 by his nephew Benjamin Smith. It was the result of several incomplete manuscripts. This work extended over 50 years but the published works was a small portion of Newton’s writings on prophecy. *Observations* proved to be one of Newton’s best sellers and it was also translated into Latin and German shortly after its first edition.²¹⁰ According to Richard S. Westfall, towards the end of his life Newton “had cleansed his *Observations*”²¹¹ of any heretical material. It was further cleansed by the editor. Certainly the work that was published included carefully selected sections of Newton writings on prophecy, which had been highly edited and sanitised so that there is no reference to Newton’s anti-Trinitarian beliefs. *Observations* was dedicated to Lord King, Baron of Ockham, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, who in his youth had shared Newton’s anti-Trinitarian beliefs. King had also defended, without fee, Whiston, Newton’s successor as Lucasian professor, at his trial for heresy for holding those same anti-Trinitarian beliefs, in 1713.²¹² However, by 1725, when King had been raised to the post of Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, he had forsaken his anti-Trinitarian beliefs. The heirs of Newton could publish without fear of Newton being exposed as a heretic. Nevertheless, there was an angry response from some of the more orthodox Anglicans who perceived Newton’s work to have an anti-scriptural bias.²¹³

Newton claimed that he studied the books of the Biblical prophets not to foretell the future but to reveal God and His creation. He believed:

The folly of interpreters has been, to foretell times and things by this Prophecy, as if God designed to make them Prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves,

but brought the prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the event, and his own providence, not to the interpreters. Be then manifest thereby to the world.²¹⁴

It would be only after the prophesies had been fulfilled that their meaning would be made manifest.

The Language of the Prophets

The language of the prophets was figurative and often obscure but according to Newton they had a common language. He claimed, "John did not write in one language, Daniel in another, Isaiah in a third & the rest in others peculiar to themselves; but they all wrote in one & the same mystical language".²¹⁵ To understand the prophecy it was essential to understand the mystical and sacred language of the prophets and to this end it was necessary to understand the cryptic symbols that constituted that language.

Newton's interest in the development of a universal language dated back to 1661. It was considered that Latin was no longer a suitable language for the new study of natural philosophy, and a language that consisted of mathematics or ideograms may be more suitable for its expression and could be developed into a full language capable of expressing what Latin could not.²¹⁶ In a manuscript titled *Of an Universall Language*, he developed linguistic topics and his word list consists of 2,400 entries. This study is dated 1661; it was never completed²¹⁷ and there appears to be no later manuscript on this topic. It was not until about 1680,²¹⁸ when he began to turn to deciphering the language of the prophet, that he used a similar system of fixing a signification to types and phrases. He claimed:

The rule I have followed has been to compare the several mystical places of the scripture where the same prophetic phrase or type is used & to fix such signification to that phrase as agrees best with all the places . . .²¹⁹

This mystical and figurative language is taken from the natural world, the world of kingdoms and empires, and the political world.²²⁰ The events of man were signified by signs from nature, an "analogy between the world natural and the world politique for the mystical language is founded in this analogy & will be best understood by considering the original".²²¹ In this he followed Mede, who claimed, "In the prophets . . . every kingdom and body of government resembles the world: as the parties also, the heaven, the earth, the stars serve for that representation".²²² However, Newton developed this concept into a mystical language. This mystical language, divined from nature, was the hieroglyphic language of the Egyptian priests and understood by the interpreters of dreams and the Chaldaean paraphrase.²²³ Newton wrote:

Now in heaven the Sun & Moon are by Interpreters of dreams put for the persons of Kings & Queens, but in sacred Prophecy which regards not single persons, the Sun is put for the whole species & race of Kings in the Kingdom or Kingdoms of the world politick shining with regal

power & glory: the Moon for the body of the common people considered as the Kings wife: the stars for subordinate Kings Princes & great men or for Bishops & Rulers of the people of God when the Sun is Christ: Light for the glory truth & knowledge wherewith great & good men shine & illuminate others: darkness for obscurity of condition & for error & ignorance: darkening, smiting or setting of the Sun Moon & stars for the ceasing of a kingdom or for the desolation thereof proportional to the darkness: darkening the Sun turning the Moon into blood & falling of the stars for the same. New Moons for the return of a dispersed people into a body politique or ecclesiastique.²²⁴

The prophets, Newton found, used a mystical language, a language of dreams, not because the prophets were dreaming but because through this language they were able to reveal God.²²⁵ There was a correspondence between the symbols of heaven and earth. Using this signification, Newton derived 70 hieroglyphic images²²⁶ (Mamiani, 2002), which were constructed according to the laws of grammar to form a language.²²⁷

To decode this language of hieroglyphic images, Newton formulated a set of rules to assist in the inscription of the prophetic language. He devised 16 rules for the interpretation of the Scripture.²²⁸ Matania Z. Kochavi has simplified and summarised these 16 rules into 4 major points: (1) The entire prophetic text must be treated as one homogenous structure; (2) The entire text must be decoded in minute detail; (3) The interpretation of prophetic revelation must be simple and (4) The interpreter of the Prophetic text must interpret the text with the aid of historic events.²²⁹ Newton's work on chronology testified to the fulfilment of the prophecies. In his writings on prophecy he scrupulously applied these rules.

For Newton, the truth of the message of God was in the mystical and cryptic hieroglyphs in the prophecies. "All sacred Prophecies are given for the use of the Church, & therefore they are all to be understood by the Church in those ages for whose use God intended them".²³⁰ As the prophecies were revealed to be true this confirmed the truth of God's word. If the message of God were to be revealed, the oldest prophet Daniel was the "easiest to be understood: and therefore in those things which relate to the last times, he must be the key to the rest" (Newton, 1999).²³¹ For Newton, this "proof" of God's message was highly significant for to reject Daniel's prophecy, "is to reject the Christian religion, for this is founded upon his prophecy concerning the Messiah".²³²

But a reliable analogy of the depiction in the prophecies and its earthly realisation depended on the Biblical text not being corrupt. In *Observations*, Newton dedicated a chapter to the authenticity of the Old Testament. The prophet's writings contain the covenant between God and his people. Despite the vagaries of how the Old Testament was transmitted through time he believed that the Book of Daniel had not been corrupted. Newton claimed, "The Book of Daniel is a collection of papers written at several times. The six last chapters contain Prophecies written at several times by Daniel himself while the six first are a collection of historical papers written by others".²³³

In the second part of *Observations* on the Revelation of John the Divine, a chapter is dedicated to the authenticity of the New Testament and here Newton was a lot more critical. Saint Irenaeus (d.c200) had dated Revelation in the time of the Emperor

Domitian (51–96) and other theologians agreed with this dating which confirmed that John’s Revelation was disconnected from Christ’s life on earth. But Newton claimed that Revelation was the earliest book of the New Testament and it was written before the destruction of the Temple of Herod in the year 70. Newton claimed that this was confirmed “by the allusions in the Apocalypse to the Temple and Altar, and holy City, as then standing”.²³⁴ As the oldest book in the New Testament, it was the earliest Christian text.

Newton believed that the Book of Daniel and Revelation demonstrated how the corruption of the Christian Church had been foretold in the Biblical prophecies and this had been proven by the historical development of the Church.²³⁵ The majority of *Observations* is dedicated to a very complex chronology of the historical development of the successive kingdoms and rules which are contemporaneous with the events and depiction of the prophecies. This prophetic chronology spans from the fall of the Temple of Herod in Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD, to Newton’s own time.

His belief that prophecy was revealed through hieroglyphs, which contained historic truth as a collaboration of the natural world and the political world, corresponded with the earthly rituals and parts of the Temple of Jerusalem and the Celestial City of the future.²³⁶ The Temple, ritual objects and rituals that were performed within the Temple appear in both the prophecies of Daniel and John. In Daniel, God commanded him to shut and seal the book which contained the names of the people. This book would remain sealed until the end of time when they “shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”.²³⁷ Newton believed that John’s prophecy

is called the Revelation, with respect to the scripture of truth, which Daniel was commanded to shut up and seal, till the time of the end. Daniel sealed it until the time of the end; and until that time comes, the Lamb is opening the seals.²³⁸

The seals that Daniel closed were opened by the Lamb in Revelation at the end of time. In the Revelation of John this book was sealed with seven seals and each is unsealed one by one marking the end of time.

In the opening of Babson MS 0434, Newton stated:

Generally it is agreed that the future is foretold in the legal constitutions (the Hebrew texts) and the Apostle Paul, who bears witness to this in his writings, Colossians 2.17 and Hebrew 9.23. Thereupon these constitutions are more suitable than the natural world from which the prophets might choose the figures, and the *Apocalypse* is full of this sort of figures and these constitutions and those of the *Apocalypse* are thus like twins, since they prophesy from the same two matters, they explain themselves mutually, they may not be understand apart. It is in fact a legal and sealed up book (The Torah) at hand for Him who is seated of the throne and its seals are undone in the *Apocalypse*. Consider the world-universe of the Israelites and the meaning of its parts and the significant of its ceremonies, which need to be explained.²³⁹

The Books of Law and the *Apocalypse*, the opening of the seals, are explained mutually and for Newton “the Temple is the scene of the visions”²⁴⁰ of the prophets.

However, this much edited version of Newton’s work on prophecy, *Observations*, has many passages omitted. The manuscript *The First Book Concerning the Prophets* comprises two treatises on prophecy, the first written circa mid-1680s and the second, a redraft with many additions, written around 1705–10. Both have the synopsis of

prophetic images or figures which is very similar to Chapter Two, Part One of *Observations*, but in *Observations* there is a notable omission. In the first draft of *The First Book Concerning the Prophets*, Newton claimed:

In the Apocalypse the world natural is represented by the Temple of Jerusalem & the parts of this world by the analogous parts of the Temple: as heaven by the house of the Temple; the highest heaven by the most holy; the Throne of God in heaven by the Ark; the Sun by the bright flame of the fire of the Altar, or by the face of the Son of Man shining through this flame like the Sun in his strength; the Moon by the burning coals upon the Altar convex above & flat below like an half Moon; the stars by the Lamps; thunder by the song of the Temple & lightning by the flashing of the fire of the Altar; the earth by the Area of the courts & the sea by the great brazen Laver. And hence the parts of the Temple have the same signification with the analogous parts of the world.²⁴¹

This passage was written around the same time that Babson MS 0434 was written.

Thirty years later it is redrafted thus:

Sometimes a body politick is represented by the Building of a City or Temple . . . if it be a Temple the parts hereof have the same signification with the analogous parts of the World, for Temples were anciently contrived to represent the frame of the Universe as the true Temple of the great God. Heaven is represented by the Holy place or main body of the edifice, the highest heaven by the most Holy or Adytum, the throne of God by the Ark, the Sun by the bright flame of the fire of the Altar or by the face of the Son of man shining through this flame like the Sun in his strength, the moon by the burning coals upon the Altar convex above & flat below like an half moon, the stars by the lamps, thunder by the song of the Temple, lightning by the flashing of the fire of the Altar, the Angels or inhabitants of heaven by Cherubim carved round the temple, the Sea by the great brazen laver, the earth by the area of the Courts & the bottomless pit or lower parts of the earth called Hades & Hell by the sink which ran down into the earth from the great Altar & was covered with a stone to open & shut. And all these parts of the Temple have the same signification with the parts of the world which they represent. And in allusion to the River Siloam which ran by the Temple of Jerusalem & flowed thence eastward & was by the Jewish Doctors accounted a type of the spirit, a River of life flowing eastward from the throne of God with trees of life growing on the banks thereof is put for the Law of God going out from the Throne of the kingdom to the Nations, the fruit of the trees & the water of the River being that spiritual meat & drink which Christ has represented by his body & blood & by the bread & wine in the Eucharist; & which were also prefigured by the Manna & rock of water in the wilderness.²⁴²

The Practices of the Prytanæa and the Temple

In the manuscript *The Original of Religions*, which unfortunately is undated, Newton examined the ancient religious practices of the Prytanæa, which he believed was the original religion that had been derived from Noah and his sons.²⁴³ The Prytanæa understood the mathematical principle of God's orderly design that sustained the solar system. Newton perceived that they had a pure knowledge of the workings of the structure of the universe. They practiced the ritual around a sacred fire, preserving the divine wisdom of the heliocentric universe. For Newton,

as the Tabernacle was contrived by Moses to be a symbol of the heavens (as St. Paul & Josephus teach) so were the Prytanæa amongst the nations. And as the Tabernacle was a

symbol of the heavens, so were the Prytanæa amongst the nations. The whole heavens they reckoned to be the true & real Temple of God & therefore that a Prytanæum²⁴⁴ might deserve the name of his Temple they framed it so as in the fittest manner to represent the whole system of the heavens. A point of religion then which nothing can be more rational. . .the fire in the middle of the Prytanæum was taken for a symbol of the centre of the world.²⁴⁵

All parts of the Temple represented the political world, which was the microcosm of the universe, designed by God. Moses, in erecting his altar and the Tabernacle, preserved the religion of his ancestors by placing the fire in the common centre of the court of the Priests “so as to make it a symbol of the world”.²⁴⁶ Moses possessed the secret knowledge about the structure of the universe. “Solomon maintained the proportions of the areas of Moses in the construction of the Temple, but he doubled the measurements”.²⁴⁷ Newton established that the Temple of Solomon was the model of all temples. Thus, this was the model microcosm of the universe and revealed the mind of the Supreme Architect – the mind of God. Newton told Conduitt that he believed that an analysis of the origins of religion would solve the problem of religious disputes just as his *Principia* had solved the problems of natural philosophy.²⁴⁸ He claimed:

So then was one design of the first institution of the true religion to propose to mankind by the frame of the ancient Temples, the study of the frame of the world as the true Temple of the great God they worshipped. And thence it was that the Priests anciently were above other men well skilled in the knowledge of the true frame of Nature & accounted it a great part of their Theology.²⁴⁹

The Temple was also the stage or scene of the Apocalypse on earth which corresponded with the Temple of God which was open in heaven. Newton explained the opening of the seven seals in the Apocalypse of John through the ceremonies of the Temple. The Temple was the scene of the prophetic visions, and the visions in the Temple corresponded to the Jewish feast of the seventh month. In Revelation 1:20 there are seven stars which are the seven angels of the seven churches. Newton claimed,

And the seven angels were also Chief Priests because they came out of the Temple where none but Chief Priests enter, & were clothed in pure & white linen & had their breasts girded with golden girdles which is the Priests habit, & at seven sacrifices poured out seven Vials or drink offerings & sounded seven trumpets. And as they are Priests so they are said to be before the throne or Adytum of the Temple & are considered in the Apocalypse as having the oversight of all things, being called the seven eyes of the Lamb, & the seven spirits of God sent forth into all the earth, that is, the seven messengers of God. Angels signify messengers & are put in general for officers & ministers of the Temple & by consequence the seven chief Angels for the seven chief Officers.²⁵⁰

In Revelation 4:4, around the Throne of God sit 24 Elders. For Newton, “These Elders are the Priests and Levites divided into twenty-four courses under twenty-four Princes who had twenty-four chambers about the Temple, twelve on one side of the Priests court and twelve on the other side thereof”.²⁵¹ He examined the vision of John and each of the events in the Apocalypse and positioned them in the Temple. For example:

“And out of [the] throne proceeded lightning and thunderings, and voices” (Revelation 4:5) viz. the flashes of the fire upon the Altar at the morning-sacrifice, and the thundering voices of these that sounded the trumpets, and sung at the Easter gate of the Priest’s Court . . . “And

before the throne was a sea of glass clear as crystal” (Revelation 4:6); the brazen sea between the porch of the Temple and the Altar filled with clear water.²⁵²

Newton represented the people of Israel with the hieroglyphs of the Cherubim and the Seraphim. The Cherubim show the presence of God’s Glory in the earthly sanctuary; their celestial counterparts are the Seraphim who are God’s servants in a Heavenly sanctuary. The Cherubim have one body and four faces; a face of a lion, a face of an ox, a face of a man and a face of an eagle.²⁵³ For Newton, the lion, the ox, the man and the eagle were the four standards of the legion of the Jewish tribes: the three tribes under the standard of Judah were represented by a lion; the three tribes under the standard of Ephraim were represented by an ox; the three tribes under the standard of Reuben were presented by a man and the three tribes under the standard of Dan were presented as an eagle.²⁵⁴ Newton took the symbol of Dan to be the eagle when it is in fact a scorpion (Newton, 1999).²⁵⁵ By equating the faces of the Cherubim with the tribes of Israel and replacing the scorpion with the eagle he was representing the tribes of Israel by the symbols of the four evangelists. These symbols are also replicated in the Seraphim. The four beasts of the apocalypse were the “four Seraphim standing in the four sides of the peoples court:”²⁵⁶ the one in the east has the head of a lion; the one in the west has the head of the ox; the one in the south has the head a man and the one in the north has the head of the eagle.

Seven days before the feast of the seventh month the Chief Priest would continuously study the Book of Law in the Temple.

There were certain priests appointed by the Sanhedrin to be with him those seven days in one of his chambers in the Temple, and there to discourse with him about the Law, and read it to him, and put him in mind of reading and studying it himself. This his opening and reading the Law those seven days, is alluded unto the Lamb’s opening the seals.²⁵⁷

The priests used the parts of the Temple that Newton referred to in his reconstruction in Babson MS 0434. Newton carefully justified these measurements and the position of these chambers within the Temple. The position and measurement of the parts of the Temple were important to the whole concept of the Temple.

In Revelation 11:1–2, John was commanded by the Angel to “Rise and measure the Temple of God and the Altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the Temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles”. Newton claimed that the Temple plus the court of the Gentiles referred to Ezekiel’s measuring the Temple of Solomon but that the measuring of the “Temple of God and the Altar, and them that worship therein, without the Gentiles court signified the building of the second Temple”.²⁵⁸ Solomon’s Temple was the first Temple, representing the history of the Jewish people, while John’s prophesies were of the second Temple which was symbolic of the history of the Christian community.

According to Newton, on the seventh day of the feast the Angel/Chief Priest sounded the seventh trumpet that alluded to the destruction of the first Temple and the Babylonian captivity, followed by the building of the second Temple by Zerubbabel. This Temple was not shown to John for the outer court was not rebuilt but given to the Gentiles, and this marked the beginning of the corruption of the original church.

For measuring is a type of building (Zech. 2 & Ezek. 40) & the outward court of the Temple was not rebuilt by Zerubbabel but left open to the Babylonians & called the court of the Gentiles. Measuring is also a type of distinguishing that which is measured from that which is left unmeasured or from that which is measured for another purpose...²⁵⁹

While those of the 12 tribes who remained in the measured Temple “built up a new spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ”,²⁶⁰ those who stood in the unmeasured outer court received the mark of the Beast, and those “worshipping the Beast & his Image as the heathens worshipped their false Gods & Idols, are called Gentiles”.²⁶¹

In Revelation 11:19, John saw the Temple of God open and there was seen in this Temple the Ark of the Covenant. Newton argued that since the Temple contained the Ark that it was the first Temple. However, when the Angels/Chief Priests poured out the seven vials of wrath that destroyed the Earth, that destruction was signalled by the seventh trumpet, which came out of the second Temple for it had no courtyard. The prophesy of the Book was represented by the Book of the Law. The Chief Priest read aloud from the Book of Law in the Temple and this was therefore repeated and interpreted in John’s vision as the prophesy of the Apocalypses which began with the Temple of God opening to Heaven and ended with the sound of the seventh trumpet.²⁶²

The original religion was that of the ancient religion of Prytanæa, those who followed the religion of Noah, who understood the mathematical principle of God’s orderly design that sustained the solar system. Their practiced ritual around a sacred fire, which preserved the divine wisdom of the heliocentric universe, was followed by Moses and in turn by Solomon. The laws of nature were the Laws of God. Yet these laws were not static. Descartes had presented a view of the universe that was a completely mechanical universe, which once set in motion would move in perpetual movement around the sun. But by the 1660s there were serious misgivings that this system excluded any role for God.²⁶³ Although Newtonian mechanics did reinforce this notion of a celestial clockwork universe Newton noted small variations in the orbits of Jupiter and Saturn.²⁶⁴ Also, in *Opticks*, Newton claimed that Comets could not keep their orbs.²⁶⁵ The universe was in decay.²⁶⁶ Newton concluded that God had to intervene occasionally to “repair” and “restore” the balance of the universe. “Newton and many of his English contemporaries seem, like the Stoics, to view the cosmos as going through successive cycles. The destroyed Earth of the next cycle would emerge”.²⁶⁷

This cyclical nature of decay and restoration was emphasised by Newton’s choice of the feast of the seventh month to be celebrated in the Temple. The Biblical name for this feast is “Yom Teruah, which means ‘the day of the awakening blast’”.²⁶⁸ It is commonly called the “feast of Trumpets” and not only celebrates the resurrection of the dead but also the Jewish New Year. In the *Chronology*, Newton claimed that the Israelites used a lunar–solar calendar and when the year fell behind it was just before the feast of the seventh month that an inter-calendar month was added.²⁶⁹

Newton believed that this cycle of decay of the universe was linked with the history and corruption of the Church and was foretold by the prophets Daniel and John.²⁷⁰ The macrocosm was encoded in the Temple and this building and the

hieroglyphs were a key to understanding the prophets. In Yahuda MS 1.1, Newton referred to his hieroglyphs as constructions (plural) according to the laws of grammar.²⁷¹ However, he also referred to the “construction of the Apocalypse”²⁷² implying a singular structure. Within this context, the measuring and construction of the Temple to strict and justified rules forms a link between the construction of the Apocalypse and the Temple. This is also true of the construction of the Apocalypse which consisted of constructed hieroglyphs. Similarly the Temple contained hieroglyphs in the form of the rituals performed by the Chief Priests.

In Babson MS 0434, the Temple's plan, architecture and the function of the chambers and courts are carefully defined. In this structure are encoded the laws of nature and the places where the rituals are performed. But above all, everything was measured and Newton checked those measurements against a wide range of ancient sources.²⁷³ “For measuring is a type of building” it defined those who kept faith and followed the line of the original religion and the unmeasured defined its corruption. The measuring and the ritual performed by the Chief Priest herald in the stages in the evolution of the Church and historical events that lead to that evolution. The cycles of decay and renewal of this history are aligned to the cycle of the universe encoded into the Temple.

Is Ezekiel's Vision of the Temple the Same as Solomon's Temple?

Richard Westfall²⁷⁴ and Ayval Leshem²⁷⁵ considered Solomon's Temple and Ezekiel's Temple to be two different Temples. This was a highly debated question in the seventeenth century.²⁷⁶ The debate had originated in *In Ezechielem Explanationes et Apparatus Urbis Templi Hierosolymitani (Ezekiel's explanation and the preparation of the cities and of the temple of Jerusalem)*, written by Juan Battista Villalpando and published in 1604. Villalpando claimed that Ezekiel's vision was a vision of Solomon's Temple.²⁷⁷ Newton, who had studied Villalpando's reconstruction,²⁷⁸ concurred that they were the same Temple and Newton's main source for his reconstruction of Solomon's Temple was the Book of Ezekiel. William Whiston claimed:

As for Sir *I.N.*'s description of Solomon's Temple; [I think he should call it Ezekiel's Temple; for he takes it principally from Ezekiel, who describes neither Solomon's, nor Zorebabel's, nor Herod's, but the Jews future Temple] I reserve its examination till I publish my own plan of all those Temples.²⁷⁹

Through Newton's use of Ezekiel as his main source for the structure of Solomon's Temple he emphasised the measurement, which he checked against various other sources, which highlighted the measurement in Revelation. The Prophet Ezekiel's vision became the “construction of the Apocalypse” or at least the end of the decay and the beginning of the renewal.

Whiston designed and constructed a model of Ezekiel's Temple in 1726; unfortunately no details of the models have survived, and “he used these models as the basis for his millennial lectures about the recall of the Jews, the rebuilding of the Temple,

and the second coming”.²⁸⁰ After Newton’s death, Whiston used the Newtonian methodology of Scriptural interpretation to reveal that current early events were “leading up to the millennium and the physical reconstruction of the Temple in Jerusalem”.²⁸¹ Whiston believed that the draft copies of Newton’s work on prophecy were much more coherent than *Observations*, and he claimed that most of it was written when Newton was in his forties and at most in his fifties.²⁸² Although Newton revised his papers on prophecy in his old age, in general the revision sanitised what had already been written. The main ideas and structure of *Observations* were conceived and written at the same time as he was working on the *Principia*.

However, although Whiston utilised the Newtonian methodology of Scriptural interpretation, he was more critical of Newton’s work of chronology and prophecy than supportive. He attacked the foundations of Newton’s research rather than his methodology, which he supported. He claimed that Newton was unhappy with all the histories, chronologies and prophecies that he had collected from ancient times. Consequently, Newton

ventured to furnish himself with new materials from his own sagacity: take not a few things for granted as the foundation of his reasonings, which best suited his preconceived opinions tho’ they were not supported, nay tho’ they were even contradicted by a great deal of real and positive evidence. This way of supposals without nay, against positive proofs runs through Sir Isaac Newton’s whole chronology: as I have at large shewed in my consultation of it. And this is but too frequent in his observations on the prophecies.²⁸³

Whiston maintained that Newton was led into making “many mistakes in both these treaties”. He challenged Newton’s sources and asserted that although the Temple services were frequently alluded to in the Apocalypse, and that both Mede and Newton agreed that they are an important part and are of very great value; “yet does it seem to me that Sir Isaac Newton has therein carried this matter farther than it will bear: and farther than any good evidence can support him”.²⁸⁴ Despite his criticism, Whiston believed that Newton’s “discoveries” in prophecy were significant and should be considered and discussed “because the momentous *truths* here laid down by so great a man have a right to be supported and recommended; and the public has a right to have his *mistakes* noted and corrected”.²⁸⁵

The *Observations* stimulated other commentaries and defences of Newton’s work. However, most of these works ignored the significance that Newton placed on the Temple. John Saint Clair’s *Observations on Certain Passages in Daniel and the Apocalypse of John* published in 1755 is a defence of both Mede and Newton’s work on Prophecy. Yet the Temple is given no importance; he dealt with Revelation 21 by stating that it was “more convenient beholding the City, rather than to shew that Christ’s Church was established on a mountain. You find the like in Ezekiel”.²⁸⁶ Many contemporary writers ignored the Temple entirely.²⁸⁷ For although the published works of the *Chronology* and the *Observations* do give the Temple an important role, the real significance of that role in Newton’s thought is seen only in his unpublished papers. These papers make it clear that the role given to the Temple by the editors of the *Chronology* and the *Observations* was disproportionately minor as compared to the role given to it in Newton’s unpublished papers.

Conclusion

The title of Babson MS 0434, *Introduction to the Lexicon of the Prophets, Part two: About the appearance of the Jewish Temple*, implies that it should have been included in the *Observations*. Yet apart from Newton's the opening paragraph quoted above, it is unlike the rest of his prophetic work. Ezekiel's vision of the Temple is discussed purely through its structure and its use. There is no mention of its prophetic meaning. Although Newton claimed that Ezekiel's description was the best in terms of his analysis of the Temple, he also noted that Ezekiel could be obscure,²⁸⁸ and that there were areas in the Temple that Ezekiel had not seen.²⁸⁹ Furthermore he suggested that Ezekiel gave interpretations that were erroneous²⁹⁰; his narrations were extremely difficult to understand²⁹¹; he left out descriptions that are described by others²⁹² and he omitted relevant details.²⁹³ Despite his reservations regarding Ezekiel, in Babson MS 0434 Newton emphasises the measurements, the plan and how the building was used. Yet the title indicates that it was meant to be part of his lexicon of the Prophets. In a manuscript, *Treatise on Revelation* dated mid 1680s (Newton, c mid-1680s),²⁹⁴ a table of contents is given for a proposed structure for *The First Book Concerning the Language of the Prophets* consisting of five books but omitting Book Two. There are 10 titles of chapters in the first book and the tenth chapter is titled "Of the parts of the Temple".²⁹⁵ However, there is no Book Two; after "Of the parts of the Temple", is the list of chapters for the third book. This leaves the question "was Book Two going to be the reconstruction of the Temple"? The *Treatise on Revelation* manuscript is dated around the same date as Babson MS 0434, so it does make this a possibility.

The omission of the plan of the Temple in *Observations* is equally as puzzling. In his unpublished manuscripts on prophecy, it is made clear how important the plan of the Temple is to the prophesy of the history of the Christian community. Yet the plan of the Temple has remained separate in Babson MS 0434. It could not have been easy for Smith to compile this work from the manuscripts left by Newton. However, Babson MS 0434 is not an isolated manuscript; it is part of Newton's overall system that was outlined and heavily edited by Conduitt and Smith in the *Chronology*, *Observations* and in his unpublished manuscripts. The Temple is "the scene of the visions" of Daniel and John and as such its meaning and construction need to be considered carefully and both the meaning and construction is seen in his unpublished papers.