

# THE RELIGION OF ISAAC NEWTON

*The Fremanle Lectures 1973*

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## APPENDIX A

Isaac Newton

### Fragments from a Treatise on Revelation

These three consecutive fragments are part of a 550-page manuscript described in the *Solihby Catalogue* under lot 227. Its present signature is Yahuda MS. 1, and it consists of eight bundles. This treatise is related to Keynes MS. 5 and Yahuda MS. 9. The introduction, which bears no title, is followed by 'Rules for interpreting the words and language in Scripture' and 'Rules for methodising the Apocalyp's'. The fragments cover folios 1-19 of the first bundle; folio numbers out of sequence indicate insertions by Newton on the verso or in the margins. The text on folio 10<sup>r</sup> breaks off abruptly, and folio 11 is wanting.

(1<sup>r</sup>) Having searched (and by the grace of God obtained) after knowledg in the propheticque scriptures, I have thought my self bound to communicate it for the benefit of others, remembering the judgment of him who hid his talent in a napkin. For I am perswaded that this will prove of great benefit to those who think it not enough for a sincere Christian to sit down contented with the principles of the doctrin of Christ such as the Apostel accounts the doctrin of Baptisms and of laying on of hands and of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment, but leaving these and the like principles desire to go on unto perfection until they become of full age and by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebr 5. 12

I would not have any discouraged by the difficulty and ill success that men have hitherto met with in these attempts. This is nothing but what ought to have been. For it was revealed to Daniel that the prophecies concerning the last times should be closed up and sealed until the time of the end: but then the wise should understand, and knowledg should be increased. Dan 12. 4, 9, 10. And therefore the longer they have continued in obscurity, the more hopes there is that the time is at hand in which they are to be made manifest. If they are never to be understood, to what end did God reveale them? Certainly he did it for the edification of the church; and if so, then it is as certain that the church shall at length attain to the understanding thereof. I

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mean not all that call themselves Christians, but a remnant, a few scattered persons which God hath chosen, such as without being (blinded) led by interest, education, or humane authorities, can set themselves sincerely and earnestly to search after truth. For as Daniel hath said that the wise shall understand, so he hath said also that none of the wicked shall understand.

Let me therefore beg of thee not to trust to the opinion of any man concerning these things, for so it is great odds but thou shalt be deceived. Much less oughtest thou to (keep to) rely upon (2<sup>r</sup>) the judgment of the multitude, for so thou shalt certainly be deceived. But search the scriptures thy self and that by frequent reading and constant meditation upon what thou readest, and earnest prayer to God to enlighten thine understanding if thou desirest to find the truth. Which if thou shalt at length attain thou wilt value above all other treasures in the world by reason of the assurance and vigour it will add to thy faith, and steddy satisfaction to thy mind which he only can know how to estimate who shall experience it.

That the benefit which may accrue by (the) understanding the sacred Prophecies and the danger by neglecting them is very great and that the obligation to study them is as great may appear by considering the like case of the Jews at the coming of Christ. For the rules whereby they were to know their Messiah were the prophecies of the old Testament. And these our Saviour recommended to their consideration in the very beginning of his preaching Luke 4:21: And afterward commanded the study of them for that end saying, Search the scriptures for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and these are they which testify of mee: And at another time severely reproved their ignorance herein, saying to them when they required a sign, Ye Hypocrites (can) ye can discern the face of the sky but can ye not discern the signes of the times. And after his resurrection he reproved also this ignorance in his disciples, saying unto them, O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. Thus also the Apostles and those who in the first ages propagated the gospel urged chiefly these Prophecies and exhorted their hearers to search and see whether all things concerning our Saviour ought not to have been as they fell out. And in a word it was the ignorance of the Jews in these Prophecies which caused

them to reject their Messiah and by consequence to be not only captivated by the Romans but to incur eternall damnation. Luke 19. 42, 44.

If then the Prophecies which concerned the Apostolique age were given for the conversion of the men of that age to the truth and for the establishment of their faith, and if it was their duty to search diligently into those Prophecies: why should we not think that the Prophecies which concern the latter times into which we (3<sup>r</sup>) are fallen were in like manner intended for our use that in the midst of Apostacies we might be able to discern the truth and be established in the faith thereof, and consequently that it is also our duty to search with all diligence into these Prophecies. And if God was so angry with the Jews for not searching more diligently into the Prophecies which he had given them to know Christ by: why should we think he will excuse us for not searching into the Prophecies which he hath given us to know Antichrist by? For certainly it must be as dangerous and as easy an error for Christians to adhere to Antichrist as it was for the Jews to reject Christ. And therefore it is as much our duty to endeavour to (know him as) be able to know him that we may avoyd him, as it was theirs to know Christ that they might follow him.

Thou seest therefore that this is no idle speculation, no matter of indifference but a duty of the greatest moment. Wherefore it concerns thee to look about thee narrowly lest thou shouldst in so degenerate an age be dangerously seduced and not know it. Antichrist was to seduce the whole Christian world and therefore he may easily seduce thee if thou beest not well prepared to discern him. But if he should not be yet come into the world yet amidst so many religions of which there can be but one true and perhaps none of those that thou art acquainted with it is great odds but thou mayst be deceived and therefore it concerns thee to be very circumspect.

(2<sup>r</sup>) Consider how our Saviour taught the Jews in Parables that in hearing they might hear and not understand and in seeing they might see and not perceive. And as these Parables were spoken to try the Jews so the mysticall scriptures were written to try us. Therefore beware that thou be not found wanting in this tryall. For if thou beest, the obscurity of these scriptures will as little excuse thee as the obscurity of our Saviours Parables excused the Jews.

Consider also the instructions of our Saviour concerning these latter times by the Parable of the Fig-tree. Now learn a parable

of the Figtree, saith he: When his branch is yet tender and putteth forth leaves, ye know that Summer is nigh. So likewise (when) ye when ye see these things know that it is near even at the doors.— Watch therefore for ye know not what hower your Lord doth come. Wherefore it is (4<sup>r</sup>) thy duty to learn the signes of the times that thou mayst know how to watch, and be able to discern what times are coming on the earth by the things that are already past. If thou doest watch thou mayst know when it is at the door as a man knows (that) by the leaves of a figtree that Somer is nigh. But if through ignorance of the signes thou shalt say in thine heart My Lord delayeth his coming; And shalt begin to smite thy fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken: Thy Lord will come in a day when thou lookest not for him and in an hower that thou art not aware of, and cut thee asunder and appoint thy portion with the Hypocrites, and there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Matt 24. If thou doest not watch, how canst thou escape more then other men, For as a snare shall it come (up) on all them that dwell upon the face of the whole earth. Luke 21.

(3<sup>v</sup>) Consider that the same Prophets who foretold our saviours first coming foretold also his second coming; and if it was the main and indispensable duty of the Church before the first coming of Christ to have searched into and understood those prophesies aforehand, why should it not be as much the duty of the church before his second coming to understand the same prophesies aforehand so far as they are yet to be fulfilled? Or how knowest thou that the christian church if they continue to neglect, shall not be punished even in this world as severely as ever were the Jews? Yea will not the Jews rise up in judgment against us? For they had some regard to these prophesies insomuch as to be in generall expectation of our Saviour about that time when he came, onely they were not aware of the manner of his two comings; (and were mistake) they understood the description of his second coming, and onely were mistaken in applying that to the time of his first coming. Consider therefore, if the description of his second coming was so much more plain and perspicuous then that of the first, that the Jews who could not so much as perceive any thing of the first could yet understand the second, how shall we escape who understand nothing of the second but have turned the whole description of it into Allegories. And if the Jews were so severely punished for not understanding the (first) more difficult Prophesies, what can we plead who know

nothing of the more perspicuous; and yet have this advantage above them that the first which is a key to the second and was hidden from them is made manifest to us, and that we have the second also much further explained in the new Testament.

(4<sup>r</sup>) (Consider how also) Again consider how the Apostels instructed the Churches of the first age in the knowledg of these latter times 2 Thes 2. 5. And if it was the duty of those Christians to understand them which were not to live in them, shall we think that the knowledg thereof is of no concernment to us.

(Again) Consider also the designe of the Apocalypse. Was it not given for the use of the Church to guide and direct her in the right way, And is not this the end of all prophetick Scripture? If there was no need of it, or if it cannot be understood, then why did God give it? (But if was ne) Does he trifle? But if it was necessary for the Church then why doest thou neglect it, or how knowest thou that thou art in the right way, and yet doest not understand it? (3<sup>v</sup>) (This was the principal caus of the reformations which have hitherto been made from the Roman errors first by Waldenses and Albigenes and then by the Protestants, and therefore we have reason to beleive that God foreseeing how much the Church would want a guide in these latter ages designed this Prophecy for this end and by consequence we may expect that he hath some further counsel to be brought about by the fuller manifestation of it.)

(4<sup>r</sup>) Lastly consider the Blessing which is promised to them that read and study and keep the things which are written in (5<sup>r</sup>) this Prophecy. Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear the words of this Prophecy and keep the things (that) which are written therein, for the time is at hand, Rev. 1. 3. And again to reinforce the invitation to take these things into consideration, the same Blessing is repeated in Ch 22. 7 And does God ever annex his blessings to trifles or things of indifference? Wherefore be not overwise in thine own concept, but as thou desirest to inherit this blessing consider and search into these Scriptures which God hath given to be a guide in these latter times, and be not discouraged by the gainsaying which these things will meet with in the world.

[They will call thee it may be a (hot-headed fellow) a Bigot, a Fanatique, a Heretique etc: And tell thee of the uncertainty of these interpretations, and vanity of attending to them: Not considering that the prophesies concerning our Saviour's first

coming were of more difficult interpretation, and yet God rejected the Jews for not attending better to them. And whither they will believe it or not, there are greater judgments hang over the Christians for their remissness then ever the Jews yet felt. But the world loves to be deceived, they will not understand, they never consider equally, but are wholly led by prejudice, interest, the prais of men, and authority of the Church they live in: as is plain because all parties keep close to the Religion they have been brought up in, and yet in all parties there are wise and learned as well as fools and ignorant. There are but few that seek to understand the religion they profess, and those that study for understanding therein, do it rather for worldly ends, or that they may defend it, then (for world) to examin whither it be true with a resolution to choose and profess that religion which in their judgment appears the truest. And as is their faith so is their (6r) practise. For where are the men that do never yield to anger nor seek revenge, nor disobey governours, nor censure and speak evil of them, nor cheat, nor lye, nor swear, nor use God's name idly in their common talk, nor are proud nor ambitious nor covetous, nor unchast, nor drink immoderately? Where are they that live like the primitive Christians, that love God with all their hearts and with all their souls and with all their might, and their neighbour as their selves; and that in what they do well are not rather led by fashions and principles of Gentility then religion, and where those disagree do not account it rudeness to depart from the former? I feare there are but very few whose righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

This is the guise of the world, and therefore trust it not, nor value their censures and contempt. But rather consider that it is the wisdom of God that his Church should appear despicable to the world to try the faithfull. For this end he made it a curs under Law to hang upon a tree that the scandal of the Cross might be a tryall to the Jews; and for the like Tryall of the Christians he hath suffered the Apostacy of the latter times, as is declared in calling it the hower of temptation which should come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth Rev 3. 10. Be not therefore scandalised at the reproaches of the world but rather looke upon them as a mark of the true church.

And when thou art convinced be not ashamed to profess the truth. For otherwise thou mayst become a stumbling block to others, and inherit the lot of those Rulers of the Jews who belevied in Christ but yet were afraid to confess him least they

should be put out of the Synagogue.<sup>1</sup> Wherefore when thou art convinced be not ashamed of the truth but profess it openly and indeavour to convince thy Brother also that thou mayst inherit at the resurrection the promis made in Daniel 12. 3, that they who turn many to righteousness shall shine as the starrs for ever and ever. And rejoyce if thou art counted worthy to suffer in thy reputation or any other way for the sake (7r) of the Gospel, for then great is thy reward.

But yet I would not have thee too forward in becoming a teacher, like those men who catch at a few similitudes and scripture phrases, and for want of further knowledg make use of them to censure and reproach superiours and rail at all things that displeas them. Be not heady like them, but first be thoroughly instructed thy self and that not only in the propheticque Scriptures but more especially in the plain doctrines delivered therein so as to put them in practice and make them familiar and habituall to thy self. And when thou hast thus pulled out the beam out of thine own eye then shalt thou see clearly to pull out the mote out of thy Brothers eye. Otherwise how wilt thou say to thy Brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye and behold a beam is in thine own eye.

Some I know will be offended that I propound these things so earnestly to all men as if they were fit onely for the contemplation of the learned. But they should consider that God who best knows the capacities of men does hide his mysteries from the wise and prudent of this world and reveal them unto babes. They were not the Scribes and Pharisees but the inferiour people who belevied on Christ and apprehended the true meaning of his Parables and of the Prophetes in the old Testament concerning him. The wise men of the world are often too much prepossesed with their own imaginations and too much intangled in designes for this life. One has bought a piece of ground, another has bought five yoke of Oxen, a third has Married a wife, and therefore since they are for the most part otherwise engaged it was fit that the (halt and) poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind and those that are in the high ways and hedges should be also invited. (And) God who intended this Prophecy chiefly for their sakes is able to fit their understanding to it. And it is the gift of God and not of human wisdom so to understand it as to beleave it.

'Tis true that without a guide it would be very difficult not onely for them but even for the most learned to understand it

<sup>1</sup> see Ezek. 3. 18' added in margin of MS.

right But if the interpretation be done to their hands, I know not why by the help of such a guide they may not by attending and often reading (8r) be capable of (judg) understanding and judging of it as well as men of greater education. And such a guide I hope this Book will prove: especially if the judgment of the Reader be prepared by considering well the following Rules for enabling him to know when an interpretation is genuine and of two interpretations which is the Best.

It was the judiciously learned and conscientious Mr Mede who first made way into these interpretations, and him I have for the most part followed. For what I found true in him it was not lawful for me to recede from, and I rather wonder that he erred so little then that he erred in some things. His mistakes were chiefly in his Clavis, and had that been perfect, the rest would have fallen in naturally. Whence may be guessed the great uncertainty of others who without any such previous methodising of the Apocalyps have immediately fallen upon giving interpretations. For so by taking the liberty to twist the parts of the Prophecy out of their natural order according to their pleasure without (observing whe) having regard to the internall characters whereby they were first to be connected, it might be no very difficult matter amongst the great variety of things in the world to apply them more ways then one to such as should have some show of an interpretation. And yet all that I have seen besides the labours of Mr Mede have been so botched and framed without any due proportion, that I (could heartily wish those Authors) fear some of those Authors did not so much as beleave their own interpretations, which makes me wish that they had been moved to more caution by considering the curs that is annexed to the end of this Prophecy.

I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the Prophecy of this book; If any man shall add unto these things God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from (9r) the words of the book of this Prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city and from the things which are written in this book.

For to frame fals interpretations is to prejudice men and divert them from the right understanding of this book. And this is a corruption equipollent to the adding or taking from it, since it equally deprives men of the use and benefit thereof. But yet I hope they did it neither out of the vanity of appearing somebody

in the world, nor out of designe to promote the externall splendor and felicity of Churches rather then the internall purity which is of infinitely more value, nor out of any other temporal ends, but with an upright heart that God may not lay it to their charge.

Yet I could wish that those who make all to be long since past, even in the Apostels age, had considered that when according to them this Prophecy should have been usefull to the Church, their interpretations were not so much as thought upon. All sacred Prophecies are given for the use of the Church, and therefore they are all to be understood by the Church in those ages for whose use God intended them. But these prophecies were never understood by the Church in the former ages. They did not so much as pretend to understand them, nor thought that they concerned their times, but with one universall consent delivered down to posterity the famous Tradition of the Antichrist described therein to come in the latter ages. And therefore since they were never yet understood, and God cannot be disappointed, we must acknowledg that they were written and shall prove for the benefit of the present and future ages, and so are not yet fulfilled. Wherefore let men be carefull how they endeavour to divert or hinder the use of these scriptures, least they be found to fight against God.

Considering therefore the great concernment of these scriptures and danger of erring in their interpretation, (10r) it concerns us to proceed with all circumspection. And for that end I shall (propound to myself) make use of this Method.

First I shall lay down certain (Rules) general Rules of Interpretation, the consideration of which may prepare the judgment of the Reader and inable him to know when an interpretation is genuine and of two interpretations which is the best.

Secondly, To prepare the Reader also for understanding the Prophetique language I shall lay down a short description thereof, showing how it is borrowed from comparing a kingdom either to the Unvers or to a Beast: So that by the resemblance of their parts the signification of the figurative words and expressions in these Prophecies may be apprehended at one view and limited from the grownd thereof. By which means the Language of the Prophets will (appear) become certain and the liberty of wresting it to private imaginations be cut of. The heads to which I reduce these words I call Definitions.

Thirdly, These things being premised, I compare the pts of the Apocalyps one with another and digest them into order by those

internal characters which the Holy-ghost hath for this end imprest upon them. And this I do by drawing (them) up the substance of the Prophecy into Propositions, and subjoyning the reasons for the truth of every Proposition.

And here I cannot but loudly proclaim the admirable and more then humane wisdom that shines in the contexture of this Prophecy and its accurate consent with all other prophesies of the old and new Testament.

Fourthly,

(12<sup>r</sup>) Rules for interpreting the words and language in Scripture.

1. To observe diligently the consent of Scriptures and analogy of the prophetic stile, and to reject those interpretations where this is not duely observed. Thus if any man interpret a Beast to signify some great vice, this is to be rejected as his private imagination becaus according to the stile and tenour of the Apocalyps and of all other Propheticque scriptures a Beast signifies a (kingdom) body politique and sometimes a single person which heads that body, and there is no ground in scripture for any other interpretation. (excepting that it is sometimes spoken of a single person)

2. To assigne but one meaning to one place of scripture, unlesse it be by way of conjecture. (For a man cannot be obliged to beleive more meanings of a place then one. If the place be intended literally he is not obliged to beleive any mysticall sense, but if mystically, he is not obliged to beleive the litterall sense. And if two meanings seem equally probable he is obliged to beleive no more then in general that one of them is genuine untill he meet with some motive to prefer one side.

Yet this rule is not so to be understood but that the same thing may have divers meanings but then each meaning is to be collected from a different (place) passage or circumstance of Scripture. As when of any thing done under the Law we collect the litterall truth (from) out of the old Testament and a mystical meaning (from) out of the new: Or understand the heads of the Beast both of mountains and Kings out of Rev 17. 9, 10. Or consider the number of the Beast as it is the number of his name Rev 13.17, as it is apposite to the number of the churches Rev 7. 4 and 21.17 and as it is the type of some iniquity Rev 19.2.)

(12<sup>v</sup>) (as where) unlesse 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 (untill such time) from being tasted either by unworthy persons, or untill such time as God shall think fit. In this case there may be for a blind, a true literal sense, even such as in its way may be beneficial to the church. But when we have the principal meaning: If it be mystical we can insist on a true literal sense no farther then by history or arguments drawn from circumstances it appears to be true: if literal, though there may be also a by mystical sense yet we (cannot scarce be) can scarce be sure there is one without (divine authority for it, and) some further arguments for it then a bare analogy. Much more are we to be cautious in giving a double (literal or a double) mystical sense. There may be a double one, as where the heads of the Beast signify both mountains and Kings Apoc 17. 9, 10. (Or in the number) But without divine authority or at least some further argument then the analogy and resemblance and similitude of things, we (can be sure of) cannot be sure that the Prophecy looks more ways then one. Too much liberty in this kind savours of a luxuriant ungovernable fancy and borders on enthusiasm.

(12<sup>r</sup>) 3. To keep as close as may be to the same sense of words, especially in the same vision, (2 unless where the propriety of the language or other circumstances plainly require a different signification in divers places scripture it self declares that there is a double meaning 1) and to (reject) prefer those interpretations where this is (not) best observed. (12<sup>v</sup>) 3. To keep as close as may be to the same sense of words especially in the same Vision and to (neglect) prefer those interpretations where this is most not (duely) observed unles (the propriety of the language) any circumstance plainly require a different signification. (12<sup>r</sup>) Thus if a man interpret the Beast to signify a Kingdom in one sentence and a vice in another when there is nothing in the text that does argue any change of (signification,) sense, this is to be rejected as (a patch and) no genuine interpretation. So if a man in the same or contemporary visions where the earth and sea or the earth and waters stand related to one another shall interpret the earth to signify sometimes the dition of a Kingdom as in the first Trumpet in chap 12 where the Dragon came down to the inhabitants of the earth and sea, sometimes councils as where the Earth helped the woman, and sometimes onely a low estate as where (the Dragon was cast into the earth or the two horned Beast rose up out of earth) the Dragon was cast into the earth or the two horned Beast rose out of the earth this wavering is not readily to be

acquired in but such an interpretation to be (sought) indicated after as retains the same signification of Earth in all cases. (12<sup>v</sup>) So in the vision of the whore chap 17 and 18, to take the Kings of the earth (chap 17. 18) over which the woman or great city reigned chap 17. 18 for any other then the kings of the earth which committed fornication with her ch 17.2 and 18. 3, 9 and lamented her fall ch 18. 9, 10 that is for any other then the 10 kings or horns (who gave their Kingdom to the Beast) of the Beast she reigned over, is not congruous. (12<sup>r</sup>) So in the vision of the whore chap. 17 and 18 to take Kings of the Earth in (chap) one sense chap 17. 2 and ch 18. 3, 9 and in another ch 17. 18 is is not harmonious.

4. To (prefer) chose those interpretations which are most according to the litterall meaning of the scriptures unles where the tenour and circumstances of the place plainly require an Allegory. Thus if the wound by a sword should be interpreted of a spirituall wound, or if the battel at the seventh Trumpet and vial exprest by the concours of Armies, and by a hail-storm with other meteors should be in interpreted of a spiritual Battel; since there is nothing in the text to countenance such an interpretation it ought to be rejected as a phantasy, where note that the usuall signification of a prophetic figure is in the application of this Rule to be accounted equipollent to the litterall meaning of (12<sup>v</sup>) a word when ever it appears that the Prophets speak in their figurative language. As if they describe the overthrow of nations by a tempest of Hail, thunder, lightning and shaking of the world, the usuall signification of this figure is to be esteemed the proper and direct sense of the place as much as if it had been the litterall meaning, this being a language as common amongst them as any national language is amongst the people of that nation.

(12<sup>r</sup>) 5. To acquiesce in that sense of any portion of Scripture (13<sup>r</sup>) as the true one which results most freely and naturally from the use and propriety of the Language and tenor of the context in that and all other places of Scripture to that sense. For if this be not the true sense, then is the true sense uncertain, and no man can attain to any certainty in the knowledg of it. Which is to make the scriptures no certain rule of faith, and so to reflect upon the spirit of God who dictated it.

He that without better grounds then his private opinion or the opinion of any human authority whatsoever shall turn scripture from the plain meaning to an Allegory or to any other less naturall sense declares thereby that he reposes more trust in his

own imaginations or in that human authority then in the Scripture (and by consequence that he is no true beleever). And therefore the opinion of such men how numerous soever they be, is not to be regarded. Hence is it and not from any real uncertainty in the Scripture that Commentators have so distorted it; And this hath been the the door through which all Heresies have crept in and turned out the ancient faith.

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Rules for methodising the Apocalyps.

(12<sup>v</sup>) Rule 5B. To prefer those interpretations which, caeteris paribus, are of the most considerable things. For it was Gods designe in these prophesies to typely and describe not trifles but the most considerable things in the wold during the time, time of the Prophesies. Thus were the question put whether the three frogs, the head or horn of any Beast, the (13<sup>v</sup>) whore of Babylon, the woman Jezabel, the Fals Prophet, the Prophet Balaam, the King Balac, the martyr Antipas, the two witnesses, the woman clothed with the Sun, the Manchild her Son, the Eagle proclaiming Wo and the like were to be interpreted of single persons or of Kingdoms Churches and other great bodies of men: I should by this Rule (also) prefer the latter, unless perhaps in any case the single person propounded might be of more note and moment then the whole body of men he stands in competition with, or some other material circumstance might make more for a single person then a multitude.

(13<sup>r</sup>) 6. To make the (visions and) parts of (the same) a vision succeed one another according to the order of the narration without any breach or interfering unless when there are manifest indications of such a breach or interfering. For if the order (of visions and) of (their) its parts might be (inter) varied or interrupted at pleasure, (they) it would be of no certain interpretation, which is to elude (them) it and make (them) it no prophesie but an ambiguitie like those of the heathen Oracles.

7. In collateralall visions to adjust the most notable parts and periods to one another: And if they be not throughout (equ) collateral, to make the beginning or end of one vision fall in with some notable period of the other. For the visions are duely proportioned to the actions and changes of the times which they respect by the following Rule and therefore they are duely proportioned to one another. ② But yet this Rule is not over strictly to be adhered to when the visions respect divers kingdoms or one

vision respects the Church and another the state. ① (because there may be remarkable revolutions in) An instance of this you have in suiting the Dragon to all the seals the Beast to all the Trumpets and the Whore to the Wo Trumpets.

8. To (prefer) choose those (interpretations) constructions which without straining reduce contemporary visions to the greatest harmony of their parts. I mean not only in their proportions as in the precedent rule, but also in their other qualities, and principally so as to make them respect the same actions. For the design of collateral visions is to be a key to one another and therefore the way to unlock them without straining must be by fitting one to the other with all diligence and curiosity. This is true opening scripture by scripture. An instance of this you have in the comparison of the Dragon's history with the seals and Trumpets in Prop , and of the Trumpets with the (seals) Vials, in Prop etc.

(14) 9. To (prefer) choose those (interpretations) constructions which without straining reduce things to the greatest simplicity. The reason of this is manifest by the precedent Rule. Truth is ever to be found in simplicity, and not in the multiplicity and confusion of things. As the world, which to the naked eye exhibits the greatest variety of objects, appears very simple in its internal constitution when surveyed by a philosophic understanding, and so much the simpler by how much the better it is understood, so it is in these visions. It is the perfection of (all) God's works that they are all done with the greatest simplicity. He is the God of order and not of confusion. And therefore as they that would understand the frame of the world must endeavour to reduce their knowledg to all possible simplicity, so it must be in seeking to understand these visions. And they that shall do otherwise do not onely make sure never to understand them, but derogate from the perfection of the prophecy; and (declare) make it suspicious also that their designe is not to understand it but to shuffle it of and confound the understandings of men by making it intricate and confused.

10. In construing the Apocalyps to have little or no regard to arguments drawn from events of things; (For there) Because there can scarce be any certainty in historical interpretations (untill) unless the construction be first determined.

11. To acquiesce in that construction of the Apocalyps as the true one which results most naturally and freely from the characters imprinted by the holy ghost on the severall parts thereof for

insinuating their connexion, and from the observation of the precedent rules. The reason of this is the same with that of the fifth rule.

Hence if any man shall contend that my Construction of the Apocalyps is uncertain, upon pretence that it may be possible to find out other ways, he is not to be regarded unless he shall show wherein what I have done may be mended. If the ways (15) which he contends for be less natural or grounded upon weaker reasons, that very thing is demonstration enough that they are false, and that he seeks not (after) truth but (labours for) the interest of a party. And if the way which I have followed be according to the nature and genius of the Prophesy there needs no other demonstration to convince it. For as of an Engin made by an excellent Artificer (every) a man readily believes that the parts are right set together when he sees them joyn truly with one another notwithstanding that they may be strained into another posture; and as (every) a man (readily) acquiesces in the meaning of an Author how intricate so ever when he sees the words construed or set in (the) order according to the laws of Grammar, notwithstanding that (the) words may possibly be forcing) there may be a possibility of forcing the words to some other harsher construction: so a man ought with equal (construction) reason to acquiesce in that construction of these Prophesies when he sees their parts set in order according to their suitableness and the characters imprinted in them for that purpose.

'Tis true that an Artificer may make an Engin capable of being with equal congruity set together more ways then one, and that a sentence may be ambiguous: but this Objection can have no place in the Apocalyps, because God who knew how to frame it without ambiguity intended it for a rule of faith.

But it is needless to urge with this general reasoning the Construction which I have composed, since the reasons where-with I have there proved every particular are of that evidence that they cannot but move the assent of any humble and indifferent person that shall with sufficient attention peruse them and cordially believes the scriptures. Yet I would not have this so understood as to hinder the further search of other persons. I suspect there are still more mysteries to be discovered. And as Mr Mede layed the foundation and I have built upon it: so I hope others will proceed higher until the work be finished.



#### Rules for interpreting the Apocalyphs.

12. The Construction of the Apocalyphs after it is once determined (16<sup>r</sup>) must be made the rule of interpretations; And all interpretations rejected which agree not with it. That must not be strained to fit history but such things chosen out of history as are most suitable to that.

13. To interpret sacred Prophecies of the most considerable things and actions of those times to which they are applied. For if it would be weakness in an Historian whilst he writes of obscure actions to let slip the greater, much less ought this to be supposed in the holy Prophecies which are no other then histories (prophecies) of things to come.

14. To proportion the most notable parts of Prophecy to the most notable parts of history, and the breaches made in a continued series of Prophecy to the changes made in history. And to reject those interpretations where the parts (of) and breaches of Prophecy do not thus bear a due proportion to the parts and changes in History. For if Historians divide their histories into Sections Chapters and Books at such periods of time where the less, greater and greatest revolutions begin or end; and to do otherwise would be improper: much more ought we to suppose that the holy Ghost observes this rule accurately in his prophetic dictates, since they are no other then histories of things to come. Thus by the great breaches made between the sixth and seventh seal by interposing the vision of the sealed saints, and between the sixth and seventh Trumpet by interposing the vision of the little book, that prophesy is divided into three cardinal parts, and the middle part subdivided by the little breach between the fourth and fifth Trumpet made by interposition of the Angel crying Wo, and all the other seals and trumpets are as it were less sections. And therefore to these breaches and sections, according to the rule, must be adapted periods of time which intercede and determinate proportional revolutions of history. Again if a Historian should use no proportion in his descriptions but magnify a less thing above a greater or attribute the more courage to the softer of two persons etc.: we (17<sup>r</sup>) should count it an argument of his unskillfulness. And therefore since the dictates of the Holy-Ghost are histories of things to come, such disproportions are not to be allowed in them. Thus in Daniel's vision of the four Beasts, it would be grossly absurd to interpret, as some (have) Politicians of late have done, the fourth Beast of

Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors; since that is described to be the most terrible, dreadful, strong, and warlike Beast of all the four, and the Prophet dwells far longer upon the description of that than of all the others put together: whereas the kingdom of Antiochus Epiphanes and his successors was both less and weaker and less warlike than any of the three before him.

15. To chose those interpretations which without straining do most respect the church and argue the greatest wisdom and providence of God for preserving her in the truth. As he that would interpret the (actions or) letters or actions of a very wise states-man, so as thence to know the council wherewith they are guided and the designs he is driving on, must consider the main end to which they are directed and suppose they are such as most conduce to that end and argue the greatest wisdom and providence of the states-man in ordering them: so it is in these Prophecies. They are the counsels of God and so the most wise, and fittest for the end to which they are designed: And that end is the benefit of the Church to guide (her) and preserve her in the truth. For to this end are all the sacred prophecies in both the old and new Testament directed, as they that will consider them may easily perceive. Hence may appear the oversight of some interpreters whose interpretations if they were true would make the Apocalyphs of little or no (benefit) concernment to the Church.<sup>2</sup>

Yet I meane not that these Prophecies were (to con) intended to convert the whole world to the truth. For God is just as well as merciful, and punishes wickedness by hardening the wicked and (18<sup>r</sup>) visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children. But the designe of them is to try men and convert the best, so that the church may be purer and less mixed with Hypocrites and lukewarm persons. And for this end it is that they are wrapt up in obscurity, and so framed by the wisdom of God that the incon siderate, the proud, the self-conceited, the presumptuous, the sciolist, the sceptic, they whose judgments are ruled by their lusts, their interest, the fashions of the world, their (opini) esteem of men, the outward shew of thing or other prejudices, and all they who, of how pregnant natural parts soever they be, yet cannot discern the wisdom of God in the contrivance of the creation: that these men whose hearts are thus hardened in seeing should see and not

<sup>2</sup> 'Perhaps what follows may be better inserted into the preface.' added in margin of MS.

perceive and in hearing should hear and not understand. For God has declared his intention in these prophesies to be as well that none of the wicked should understand as that the wise should understand, Dan: 12.

And hence I cannot but on this occasion reprove the blindness of a sort of (people) men who although they have neither better nor other grounds for their faith then the Scribes and Pharisees had for their (religion) Traditions, yet are so pervers as to call upon other men for such a demonstration of the certainty of faith in the scriptures that a meer naturall man, how wicked soever, who will but read it, may judg of it and perceive the strength of it with as much perspicuity and certainty as he can a demonstration in Euclide. Are not these men like the Scribes and Pharisees who would not attend to the law and the Prophets but required a signe of Christ? Wherefore if Christ thought it just to deny a signe to that wicked and adulterate generation notwithstanding that they were God's own people, (even) and the Catholique Church; much more may God think it just that this generation (19<sup>r</sup>) should be permitted to dy in their sins, who do not onely like the Scribes neglect but trample upon the law and the Prophets, and endeavour by all possible means to destroy the faith which men have in them, and to make them disregarded. I could wish they would consider how contrary it is to God's purpose that the truth of his religion should be as obvious and perspicuous to all men as a mathematical demonstration. Tis enough that it is able to move the assent of those which he hath chosen; and for the rest who are so incredulous, it is just that they should be permitted to dy in their sins. Here then is the wisdom of God, that he hath so framed the Scriptures as to discern between the good and the bad, that they should be demonstrations to the one and foolishness to the others.

And from this consideration may also appear the vanity of those men who regard the splendor of churches and measure them by the external form and constitution. Whereas (God) it is more agreeable to God's designe that his church appear contemptible and scandalous to the world to try men. For this end doubtless he suffered the many revoltings of the Jewish Church under the Law, and for the same end was the grand Apostacy to happen under the gospel. Rev . . . If thou relyest upon the external form of churches, the Learning of Scholars, the wisdom of statemen or of other men of Education; consider with thy self whither thou wouldst not have adhered to the scribes and Pharisees hadst

thou lived in their days, and if this be thy case, then is it no better then theirs, and God may judg thee accordingly, unless thou chance to be on the right side, which as tis great odds may prove otherwise so if it should happen yet it would (not) scarce excuse thy folly although it might something mitigate it.