



What Did the Great Scientist Foresee for the Year 2060?

■ BY JOHN CHAMBERS

On February 22, 2003, the *Daily Telegraph* of London, England, published a front-page story that began with the words:

"Sir Isaac Newton, Britain's greatest scientist, predicted the date of the end of the world—and it is only 57 years away."

The *Telegraph* somewhat softened its horrific first paragraph that Newton had predicted the end of the world for 2060 by declaring in a fourth paragraph:

"Newton, who was also a theologian and alchemist, predicted that the Second Coming of Christ would follow plagues and war and would precede a 1,000-year reign by the saints on earth—of which he would be one."

But the damage was done. Over the next few days the news was disseminated to every corner of the globe, getting much play in newspapers, on radio, on TV and on a vast number of Internet news sites, many of which played the story for laughs, showing, for example, a graphic illustration of a mushroom cloud along with the words, "Party like it's 2060!"

Although the 2060 date came as a shock

to the general public which was not even aware of Newton's theological interests, it wasn't news to the small group of scholars who regularly study the theology of Sir Isaac Newton. One of those scholars, University of King's College (Halifax, Nova Scotia) Assistant Professor Stephen D. Snobelen, had broached it in the course of the *Daily Telegraph* interview some nine days prior to the airing on Britain's BBC 2 of a documentary, *Newton: The Dark Heretic*. One of the historical consultants for the BBC documentary, Professor Snobelen is shown in a closing sequence handling and commenting on the manuscript bearing the 2060 date at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

The explosive date of 2060 A.D. had been known to Newton scholars since the early 1970s. The scientist's theological and alchemical papers remained out of sight in the house of the Earl of Portsmouth (a descendant of Newton's niece) for 250 years till, in 1936, the eccentric Jewish scholar Abraham Shalom Ezekiel Yahuda acquired the largest single collection of the theological papers at an auction at Sotheby's in London. Yahuda bequeathed the documents to the State of Israel, but it wasn't

until 1967 that they finally ended up in the Jewish Library in Jerusalem. Even so, they remained difficult of access to scholars until 1991, when the majority of Newton's scientific, administrative, theological and alchemical manuscripts were released on microfilm.

Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727) was not only one of the two or three most influential scientists who ever lived, discovering the three laws of motion, the concepts of mass, force and universal gravitation, and the true nature of light, and independently inventing (along with Gottfried Leibniz) the differential calculus. He was also one of the most thoroughgoing and perspicacious researchers into theology and alchemy that the world has ever known. The mathematician/scientist believed that the Word of God was writ large both in the natural world—he had done much to uncover those words—and in the Bible, and Newton was just as driven to discover that Word in the latter as in the former. Further powering his drive to plumb the depths of the Scriptures—and of all other noteworthy classical texts as well—was his conviction that the ancients had discovered the same laws of the universe as himself; in setting them

forth in the three volumes of the *Principia mathematica* he was merely dressing up in modern garb truths that the great thinkers of the past had known since the beginning of time, and which they had called the *prisca sapientia* ("pristine wisdom").

Newton's announcement, unearthed three centuries after the publication of the *Principia*, that the world would end in 2060 (actually, transition to a very different world) was one uniquely destined to arouse passionate interest and anxiety in the year 2003. After all, this was the year the U.S. invaded Iraq (the land of ancient Babylon), stirring up to no predictable end the international wasp's nest of radical Muslim terrorism. It was the year North Korea, Pakistan and India rattled their nuclear sabers. It was the year that AIDS, a plague of Biblical proportions, continued to ravage the world—and when the SARS epidemic leapt out of nowhere as if to give us all a bitter foretaste of apocalyptic doom to come.

To top it off, 2060 was a date dangerously close to 2012—the year when, according to many prophets and prophetic texts both ancient and modern, mankind will be engulfed in a final, world-convulsing holocaust.

A 2002 *History Channel* documentary on the Bible Code erroneously calls Newton an early investigator into the uncanny, accessible-to-computers-only code popularized by Michael Drosnin in his books *The Bible Code* and *The Bible Code II* (1997 and 2003). Newton didn't believe God's prophetic words

were embedded in an eternally dynamic subtext hidden beneath the literal text of the Bible. Deeply religious, the scientist was a member of the Church of England even while he adhered in secret to the belief of the fourth-century "heretic" Arius that the doctrine of the Trinity (that God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ, are one) was a diabolical falsehood imposed by the early Church; Newton believed that though the Son and the Holy Spirit were divine, only God was God. The scientist had come to this belief through a painstaking study of the scriptures and of other, contemporaneous, texts. He believed that the Bible was an expression of the word of God, but that there were many corrupt and flawed versions of the Bible; Newton had set himself the lifetime task of minutely and rigorously examining the texts to see exactly what God had said.

He went about this in the same way as the modern Biblical scholar, by rounding up all of the different versions of a particular text he could get his hands on, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew—his chief interest being in the books of Daniel and of Revelation—and subjecting them to a minute comparative linguistic analysis; from this he would determine the true meaning of the words. Newton's interpretations are then hardly fantastical, and not even mystical (he steered clear of the those prophets, like Ezekiel, who seemed to him to speak in wildly emotional terms); for example, his interpretation of the provocative word "beast" in the

Book of Revelation, based on careful linguistic analysis, is simply 'groups of people or organizations' (notably, the churches).

In a forthcoming book, *Isaac Newton, Heretic*, Professor Snobelen writes that, for Newton, "the holy Prophecies" of the Scripture were nothing else than "histories of things to come" (Yahuda MS 1.1, folio 16 recto). Crucial to Newton's interpretation of these highly symbolic texts was his belief that the prophetic time periods 1260, 1290, 1335 and 2300 days actually represent 1260, 1290, 1335 and 2300 years, using the "day-for-a-year principle." How did Newton come by this strange belief? In a special communication to *Atlantis Rising*, Professor Snobelen writes:

"[Newton was...] following in the tradition of Joseph Mede, the Cambridge polymath and prophetic exegete who died in 1638. But the 'day-for-a-year' principle is based on other scriptural texts, such as: [Nu 14:34] 'After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know my breach of promise,' and [Eze 4:6] 'And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year.'"

Professor Snobelen sets out the pro-

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the end of his life, he settled upon the year when the papal church had once and for all gathered up all temporal power. This date for the “formal institution of the apostate, imperial Church” —the beginning of the period of “the Pope’s supremacy” — was A.D. 800, “the year Charlemagne was crowned emperor of Rome in the west by Pope Leo III.” Adding 1260 years to 800 brings us to the year 2060, when “Babylon will fall,” the apostate Church will cease, and Christ will return to earth to set up a global 1000-year kingdom of God. On page 144 of his *Observations* (1733), Newton cited Daniel 7:26-27 as evidence: “But the judgment shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy it unto the end. And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

The Halifax professor is quick to say that Newton did not believe the world would literally end in 2060. Rather, there will be a wholly new beginning. “Before the Second Coming, the Jews would return to Israel according to the predictions made in biblical prophecy,” he says. “The Temple would be rebuilt as well. Slightly before, or around the time of Christ’s return, the great battle of Armageddon would take place when a series of nations (the ‘Gog and Magog’ confederacy of Ezekiel’s prophecy) invade Israel.” Christ and the saints would then intervene to establish the worldwide 1000-year Kingdom of God. This would be a time of peace and prosperity; in the *Observations*, Newton quotes Micah 4:3: “[The people will] beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks,” and when “nations shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”

One of the most compelling aspects of Newton’s predicted date of 2060 is how far in the future, comparatively speaking, he sets the time for the “end of the world.” A tiny minority of prophetic exegetes around about Newton’s time placed the end-time in the twenty-first century, but the trend was “to place the end within or not long after one’s lifetime.” Joseph Mede, setting the commencement date at A.D. 476—the time of the fall of the Roman Empire—concluded that the end would come in 1736; William Lloyd, Bishop of Worcester, announced in person to Queen Anne in 1712 that the Vatican City would be consumed by a flame of fire from heaven in the year 1716; and



Fresco from monastery in Mt. Athos, Greece, depicts judgment day. (Photo: Paul LaViolette)

“Newton’s own prophetic disciple William Whiston set 1736 as the end of the 1260 years and the year 1766 as the beginning of the Millennium.” Newton’s mid-twenty-first-century date comes of course from his choosing as the commencement date the time when the Roman Catholic Church achieved total hegemony over worldly affairs—A.D. 800. But we may ask ourselves: Did Newton know more? Did one of the greatest thinkers of all time—and the man who read more ancient works of arcane literature than anyone before or since—know something that no one else knew?

Professor Snobelen wonders if Newton, who hated prophetic date-setters, would be infuriated if he knew that the whole world now knows of his date of 2060. Or, would he simply “have been satisfied that now, as we are moving toward the age in which the true Gospel is to be preached, it is time to preach openly?” Concludes the Halifax professor: “We will have to wait until 2060 to ask him.” ■

For further information on Newton’s recently discovered alchemical and apocalyptic/theological writings, the reader is urged to go to the site of the newly created Newton Project, at www.newtonproject.ic.ac.uk.

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