

**“THE GLORY AND BLESSEDNESS HOPED
FOR WILL SHINE”:
ACCESSING WILLIAM AMES
ESCHATOLOGICAL THOUGHT.**

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ABSTRACT

Eschatology has been a widely discussed topic within theology as a whole. This subject presents natural challenges due to its complexity. Reformed theology, since its inception, has engaged with this issue in an attempt to bring greater clarity. In order to delve more deeply and competently into this discussion, thus broadening the conversation concerning this theme within Reformed theology, the present text will draw on the insights of the Reformed theologian William Ames. Interest in this Puritan theologian's eschatological thought has recently been revived, particularly due to the emphasis placed by the neo-orthodox theologian Karl Barth, who highlights Ames as contributing to a more concrete eschatology. The promised redemption is not something that will eclipse the physical realities of this world; God, as Creator, continues to bestow upon His creation its inherent characteristics, albeit in a state of full restoration. In this regard, Ames clearly emphasizes that there will be no other heaven or earth, but rather a new heaven and a new earth. Redemption, therefore, points toward and leads to restoration.

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KEY WORDS

William Ames; Reformed Theology; Eschatology; New Heavens; New Earth.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *The Glory and Blessedness Hoped for Will Shine*

Hans Schwarz once observed that if “we abandon the hope for an actual transformation of our world into God’s kingdom, faith becomes empty and meaningless and is hardly bearable” (SCHWARZ, 2000, p. 368). Our existence cannot be seen in an abstract way, the resurrection is not a change in human substance where everyone becomes a spiritual being with no relation to creation (BERKOUWER, 1972, p. 211). A disproportionate focus on our own salvation, on deliverance from this evil world and on the promised future can lead a Christian to become selfish, without realizing that the reality for which God created us involves an ongoing relationship between our humanity and the world.²

Taking this into account I will focus on how theologian and Puritan William Ames built his eschatological view without losing sight of these two realities in order to better grasp the link that must exist between Christian eschatological hope and creation in this

² “Apparently, humanity and the world belong indissolubly together” (KOOI AND BRINK, 2000, p. 713).

essay. In his work *The Marrow of Theology*, Ames states: “then finally the glory and blessedness hoped for will shine forth in all fullness, not only in the soul but also in the very body” (AMES, 1997, p. 214). In the same chapter, Ames adds that this same transforming reality that the body will experience will also be shared by the creation when he says: “The elements [of the creation] will not be taken away, but changed” (AMES, 1997, p. 214). The elementary question that follows is what meaning does Ames himself propose in saying that the body will experience fullness and that creation will be transformed?

The discussion around William Ames still has its *raison d’être* in view of the recent discussion brought up by Christoph Schwöbel³ in his article *The Beginning of the End or the End of the Beginning? Barth’s Eschatology as a Guide to the Perplexed* (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 9-25). Although Schwöbel basically discusses the eschatological thought of the distinguished twentieth-century theologian Karl Barth, he does so by mentioning William Ames as someone Barth relies on to justify the need to avoid an overly spiritualized view of Christian hope. Some questions can already be raised: why does Barth use William Ames? Does William Ames have something to offer us through his eschatological perspective? What would William Ames’ eschatological perspective

³ German Lutheran theologian Christoph Schwöbel was a professor of systematic theology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. He lived from February 1955 to September 18, 2021.

be? Before we try to answer these initial questions, it is important to know a little about William Ames' life and whether there is any material dealing with his eschatological thinking.

2 WILLIAM AMES'S LIFE AND HIS ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEW

2.1 *A Short Overview of Ames's Life*

William Ames (1576-1633), sometimes known as “the learned doctor,” was a prominent Puritan of the seventeenth century who demonstrated how Christianity combined theory with everyday life, Ames stands out as one of the most important figures present at the great Synod of Dort (AMES, 1997, p. 7).⁴ His name is linked to his firm Calvinist convictions, which shaped his position and tone in the discussions against Arminianism in the Netherlands.⁵ His

⁴ “One of Ames's biographers, looking back on the Remonstrant debates with a supralapsarian gleam in his eye, wrote, ‘Ames plainly deserved our saying in his honor what the mothers of Israel once said in honor of David: ‘Other theologians have slain their thousands, but Ames his tens of thousands!’ Ames was thought to be something of a giant killer in theological debate.” It is important to note that although William Ames had a strong influence on the Synod of Dort, Ames was not a delegate at the meeting. His influence was behind the scenes “as theological advisor to the president of the Synod.” See: Takayuki Yagi, *A Gift from England: William Ames and his Polemical Discourse against Dutch Arminianism*, (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2020) 13ff. Henri A. Krop, “Philosophy and the Synod of Dordt. Aristotelianism, Humanism, and the Case Against Arminianism” in: *Revisiting the Synod of Dort (1618-1619)* ed. Aza Goudriaan and Fred van Leuburg (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 49-79.

⁵ “Ames was one of the most active polemicists against Remonstrantism” (KROP, 2011, p. 71). See Jan van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System*, (Authentic Media, 2013), 23-26; Joshua R. Farris, S. Mark Hamilton, “Lombard, Ames, and Polhill:

education and life both started in England. William Ames, who was raised in Ipswich, learned under William Perkins, who exposed him to Puritan ideas (AMES, 2008, p. xv). Ames was forced to flee his nation and seek safety in Holland as a result of his involvement in a fervent opposition to the state's influence on the church and his doubts about the church's adherence to a kind of Roman Catholic traditions inside England's Church (AMES, 1997, p. 3ff).⁶

Theologically, William Ames is deeply influenced by William Perkins, a recognition that Ames states in the following words:

I Gladly call to mind the time, when being young, I heard worthy Master Perkins, so preach in a great Assembly of Students, that he instructed them soundly in the truth, stirred them up effectually to seeke after godlinesse, made them fit for the kigdome of God; and by his own example shewed them what things they should chiefly intend, that they might promote true Religion, in the power of it, unto God's glory, and others salvation.⁷

In this succinct account of Ames's life, two significant points nevertheless merit attention. Firstly, William Ames is renowned for

Unlimited Atonement Without Double Payment" in. *Unlimited Atonement: Amyraldism and Reformed Theology*, ed. Michael F. Bird, Schott Harrower (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2023), 121-122.

⁶ See Carl R. Trueman, "Reformed Orthodoxy in Britain" in *A Companion to Reformed Orthodoxy* ed. H. J. Selderhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 325f.

⁷ Noted by Takayuki Yagi in *A Gift from England: William Ames and his Polemical Discourse against Dutch Arminianism*, 16. "His [Ames] heroes wered the Puritan heroes, William Perkins, John Hooper, Paul Baynes, Edward Dering, Richard Rogers, 'and such like heavenly men'" (SPRUNGER, 1978, p. 8).

his theological approach that incorporates Ramist reasoning.⁸ The Ramist approach is based in the teachings of the famous French philosopher and protestant martyr Peter Ramus.⁹ This method's primary advantages are its simplicity and applicability.¹⁰

The Puritans interpreted and applied the Bible by comparing one text in Scripture with another and by the use of Ramist logic. Peter Ramus (1515–72) was a French Protestant philosopher who aimed to make logic more simple and practical than the Aristotelian methods of medieval scholastics. Puritan preachers and writers functioned as heirs of a great tradition of biblical reflection, rooted in the church of all ages and especially the Reformed

⁸ “Among English Puritans, Ames was undoubtedly the most deeply imersed in Ramist thought” (AMES, 1997, p. 37).

⁹ Peter Ramus (1515-1570) was a French Huguenot philosopher and educational theorist. He died in the famous night of Saint Bartholomey. Compared to the modern curriculum of his day, Ramus' liberal arts educational program aimed to cover a greater number of courses in less time. Ramus defended that the Aristotelian method should be replaced because it was artificial in approaching the things. Practically speaking, the divisions and definitions that made up the Ramist technique were meant to make it easier to memorize. Any discipline's definition, which outlined the goal or ultimate state of the field, was the first step. The division of the major components, which would then be specified and further segmented, should come next. Ramus's Protestantism allowed the Puritan pupils in Cambridge to enthusiastically accept his teachings. For a while, ramism posed a formidable challenge and modified prior scholarly knowledge rather than completely replaced it. See Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism*, (New Heaven & London: Yale University Press, 2002), 299; Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backrgonds of English and American Puritanism*, 13-14. Takayuki Yagi in *A Gift from England: William Ames and his Polemical Discourse against Dutch Arminianism*, 16. Jan van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System*, 73.

¹⁰ “While these figures promoted the revival of scholastic logic, a Huguenot professor of pholosophy in Paris, Peter Ramus, championed a radically simplified, anti-Aristotelian logic that advocated presenting material through an ever-branching progression from the general to the particular via the division of each topic into two parts” (BENEDICT, 2002, 299). See Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 38.

tradition. They drew from the theological wells of continentals such as John Calvin, Henry Bullinger, and Theodore Beza, and British divines such as William Perkins and especially William Ames (1576–1633), a theologian who never came to the new World but whose writings profoundly influenced New England ministers for generations (BEEKE, 2011, p. 235).

Secondly, although Ames had never put his feet on New-England lands, his influence was decisive over that land. *Marrow of Theology* was more widely distributed among New England students, greatly influencing the minds and hearts of individuals who were immigrating (AMES, 1997, p. 2).¹¹ The most well-known individual who was impacted by Ames was Jonathan Edwards, who acknowledged having a great deal of debt to Ames' writings (VLIET, 2013, p. 233ff).¹²

¹¹ "Ames's influence was greatest in New England, where his *Marrow* became the primary text at Harvard and was often read and quoted throughout the colonies. This was in part, no doubt, due to the fact that it was one of Ames's students, Nathaniel Eaton (1610-1674), who became the first head of Harvard College" (AMES, 2008, p. xx).

¹² "P. Miller's assessment of the significance of Ames in New England is based on early college curricula. Ames' teaching was primary among the Non-Separatist Congregationalists which constituted the "content of Harvard's ministerial training" into the late 1600s and at the Collegiate School in New Haven through the early 1700s when Jonathan Edwards was student" (AMES, 1997, p. 2).

2.2 Ames' Eschatological Thought: Secondary Source Review

2.2.1 The lack of theological literature on Ames's eschatology

We have discovered a severe lack of secondary literature on William Ames' eschatological theology while attempting to identify it. The reason for this lack in the theological literature of Ames is not easily explained. The truth is that during our investigation, we were not able to locate any sources that specifically addressed this issue in detail. A significant portion of the debate around William Ames pertains to his impact on the Synod of Dort;¹³ others are related to his interpellations against those who defended any idea contrary to the reformed tradition of his time,¹⁴ and the development and application of the Ramist method by Ames, as emphasized above.¹⁵ As we will see below, it is also crucial to stress and bear in mind that

¹³ "One Englishman who had a particularly profound influence in the Netherlands was William Ames (1576– 1633). His writings against Arminianism were influential at the Synod of Dort along with his presence there as chief theological advisor and secretary to Johannes Bogerman, the presiding officer. Ames was appointed professor of theology at the University of Franeker in Friesland, and for eleven years the "Learned Doctor Ames" sought to "Puritanize" the entire university" (TELFER, 2020, 164).

¹⁴ "One should, however, note that Ames's anti-Arminian polemical writings, the *Coronis ad collationem Hagiensem*, for example, remained in print for the greater part of the seventeenth century" (KROP, 2011, p. 64).

¹⁵ "The mainstream of Puritan theologians, Ames included, claimed allegiance to both pure doctrine and practical divinity – head and heart held in meaningful relationship. The whole conglomerate held together with the 'glue' of Ramist arrangement and method. If the vocabulary and method were rhetoric of *Hole Writ* and Holy Spirit, as Ames affirmed, it also happened to be the particular arrangement of Peter Ramus." (SPRUNGER, 1972, p. 129)

the secondary literature discussed in this study is not a methodical assessment of Ames' eschatological ideas.

2.2.2 Christoph Schwöbel and *The Beginning of the End or the End of the Beginning? Barth's Eschatology as a Guide to the Perplexed*

In *The Beginning of the End or the End of the Beginning? Barth's Eschatology as a Guide to the Perplexed* written by Christoph Schwöbel, as the title of this interesting article suggest, Schwöbel engaged to give a clear understanding about Karl Barth's eschatological idea taking as parameter Barth's *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*¹⁶ (Lessons in the Christian religion). These lectures were given by Barth in the year of 1925 to 1926 in Münster. These lectures, as pointed out by Schwöbel, were the only "full systematic treatment" (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 13) given by Barth to the topic of eschatology.

From these lectures, specifically from paragraphs 35, 36, 37 e 38 Schwöbel draws some remarks on Barth's eschatological thoughts. In the §35, as reported by Schwöbel, Barth starts establishing the foundation of his eschatological thought and he does that selecting hope as source. According to Barth hope is "the fundamental and concluding instruction concerning what it means

¹⁶ See Karl Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion, Teil 3: Die Lehre von der Versöhnung/Erlösung 1925/26*, ed. Hinrich Stoevesandt. Karl Barth-Gesamtausgabe, Vol. 38 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 2003).

that God in his eternal Son has elected and called lost sinners to be His partners in His covenant” (BARTH, 2003, p. 388 and SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 14). The created world does not stand by itself, without being well-maintained “it falls back into nothingness” (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 14). Under the covenant God address humanity to reconcile the fallen creature with Himself giving to them hope (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 14). Hope is the way to eternal life, because in Barth thought “Christian truth does not become eschatological, it is eschatological from the very beginning” (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 14).¹⁷ The §36, as Schwöbel points out, is somewhat complex. In Barth’s view, God’s word to humanity, redemption is true and real, like creation and reconciliation, but it also stands in opposition to them as something new, third, and last. Barth “immediately points out that for God in the *actus purus* of God’s eternal agency, creation and reconciliation are one.

However, God is not revealed to us in the unity of his agency” (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 16). Revelation presupposes time and space, otherwise there would be no revelation. The coming of Jesus into our world is known as the advent of Christ. It is not an event that is bound to or restricted to a specific location and time, nor is it an event that transcends spatial and temporal features (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 17). In this approach, Barth introduces an entirely new viewpoint on all eschatological articles (immortality of

¹⁷ See Barth, *Unterricht in der christlichen Religion*, Teil 3, 407.

the soul, end of the world, resurrection of the dead, last judgment, hell, and eternal life), suggesting that they have to be viewed as predicates of Christ's Presence rather as discrete categories within this event (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 15).

Barth addresses different questions regarding the actuality of resurrection in the §37, what is seen as the troubled reality of the church militant in the *regnum gratiae*, or kingdom of grace, is seen as the triumphant reality of the church, which rejoices in Christ's victory, in the *regnum gloriae*, or kingdom of glory. The end of the church militant take place in the *parousia*, in the coming of Christ (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 18-19). What Barth has in mind, as indicated by Schwöbel, is the fact that "believers who, through the resurrection of the dead, participate in the new presence of Christ and so become part of the *regnum gloriae*, are nobody else than the justified sinners they are in the *regnum gratiae*" (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 19).

Barth highlights a particular continuity and discontinuity at this point, human beings will not be the same person, and they will not be someone else. With the Lutheran idea of *simul iustus et peccator*, Barth attempts to reconcile a certain paradox, but he makes clear that, in contrast to Luther, we will no longer be sinners. The old reality will give way to the new one.¹⁸ Barth concludes this paragraph by emphasizing the ontological change of being in Christ.

¹⁸ "The resurrection is an ontologically new reality for those who in the old order of reality have to die" (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 19).

1) Redemption does not mean human beings ceasing to be themselves, God remains creator, human beings remain human. Identity remains. 2) Nothing is added to those who have been reconciled. 3) Redemption does not mean going to another place called heaven. Resurrection takes place in this world which experiences regeneration and resurrection. 4) Our time is the time that is embraced by eternity (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, p. 119-20). With this presupposition in mind, Barth begins §38. Redemption means human beings achieving their ultimate goal, which is to glorify God. This is how he ends his remarks related to this eschatological movement of Christ's advent, where God's will, as expressed in his name, will be done both in heaven and on earth.

2.2.3 Jan Van Vliet and the eschatological “legacy” of William Ames

In his work, Jan Van Vliet devotes a few lines in his book to the intellectual legacy of William Ames related to his ideas on eschatology.¹⁹ When addressing Ames' eschatological legacy, Vliet draws attention to the ways in which Wilhelmus à Brakel assimilated and preserved Ames's ideas, this simply indicates that Vliet is less intrigued by whatever Ames may have said or stated about this topic and more focused on Brakel's acceptance of it (VLIET, 2013, p. 209). First of all, Vliet notes that William Ames maintained an

¹⁹ The topic of discussion takes up less than one page. See Jan van Vliet, *The Rise of Reformed System*, 209.

eschatological perspective that was indicative of the Reformed perspective at the time. In Vliet words “both William Ames and William Perkins hold to an eschatology that represents Reformed thought at that period in its development” (VLIET, 2013, p. 209). Though Ames’s eschatological thought was sound and grounded in Scripture, as Vliet’s statement likely suggests, it was yet in development. From Vliet’s observation, it is clear that Ames does not really add to or develop anything new on the subject; instead, he only reiterates the eschatological position that has already been held and developed within the Reformed *milieu* (VLIET, 2013, p. 209). Finally, Vliet still highlight the place this theme holds in *Marrow of Theology*, Ames display this subject in the final chapter of Book 1 (VLIET, 2013, p. 209).

So, after examining the limited available material, we can now return to our central question: What eschatological perspective did William Ames espouse? As Schwöbel notes, Barth draws on Ames’ work, incorporating his statement, “*Non enim coelos alios et terram aliam sed coelos novos et terram novam expectamus*”, which translates to, “for we expect not other heavens and another earth, but new heavens and a new earth.”²⁰ Thus, the central question to be explored pertains to Ames’ conception of a more tangible, non-spiritualized reality of the New Heaven and the New Earth. We now

²⁰ Heppé draws on Ames’s eschatological concept when engaging with the eschatological thought within Reformed theology. See Heinrich Heppé, *Reformed Dogmatics*, rev. and ed. By Ernest Bizer, translated by G. T. Thomson (London: Wakeman Grait Reprints, from 1950 ed.; copyright held Harpers Colins), 706.

turn to examine Ames' vision in order to elucidate his eschatological framework, aiming to address a notable gap in the discussion of the eschatological thought of the Puritan theologian William Ames. This will be achieved through an engagement with his primary text, *The Marrow of Theology*.

3 PRELIMINARY APPROACH TO WILLIAM AMES'S ESCHATOLOGICAL VIEW

3.1 The Genuine History Directed by God

Ames begins the *Chapter 41 The End of the World* bearing in mind that this event will be one that has a profound relationship with what God is doing at this moment. The idea of covenant provides the necessary linkage so that the expected event is not seen as disconnected from what is accomplished by the Holy Spirit in the lives of the elect (AMES, 1997, p. 214). The Bible's history is still being told. This story follows what the covenant of grace has displayed in its previous chapter of redemption. In the redemptive's history, the last chapter is already being written by God, and its final application that has started in this life will be fully experienced in the consummation (AMES, 1997, p. 214). Ames puts it as follows: "1. So far we have considered the administration of the covenant before the end of the world. In that end, the application which has only been begun in this life will be perfected" (AMES, 1997, p. 214). The connection between the dispensations and their administration

allows us to see that there is a genuine history that has been directed by God himself.²¹ Geerhardus Vos has put it similarly when he states:

That history, in the course of which we are situated, will have a conclusion it is not an endless process but a genuine history that ends in a definite goal and so has a boundary and limits. As it had beginning, it will have an ending. That ending will come as a crisis, and everything that has to do with this crisis belongs to the ‘doctrine of the last things’” (VOS, 2016, p. 1095)

John Calvin’s own statements provide support to the Reformed tradition’s belief that there is a relationship between what is started in this life via Christ and completed upon his return. Firstly, Calvin foreshadows this idea of connection when he states that the Pauline perspective is that the pledge lasts until both parties have completed the contract in his commentary on Ephesians 1:14 (CALVIN, VOL. XXI, 1984, p. 209). This promise is the Holy Spirit’s presence, which the believer receives during the process of his redemption and who stays with him until the day of the ultimate

²¹ “Not only is the second coming ideally and logically linked with the first; there is between them a real bond as well. Just as the Old Testament was a continual coming of God to his people until in Christ he came to live bodily among them, so the dispensation of the New Testament is a continued coming of Christ to his inheritance in order in the end to take possession of it forever. Christ is not only he who was to come in the days of the Old Testament and actually came in the fullness of time. ...Christ’s second coming is the complement of the first” (BAVINCK, 2008, p. 570).

resurrection because of the promise (CALVIN, VOL. XXI, 1984, p. 209). According to Calvin, Paul is stating the following:

The significance of a pledge lasts no longer that till both parties have fulfilled the bargain; and, accordingly, he afterwards adds, *ye are sealed to the day of redemption*, (Eph. Iv.30,) which means th day of judgment. Though we are now reemed by the blood of Christ, the fruit of that redemption does not appear; (Rom. Viii.21-23) (CALVIN, VOL. XXI, 1984, p. 209).

Secondly, Calvin's commentary on Romans 8:19 reinforces and makes clear that it is not possible to disconnect the redemptive action worked by the Holy Spirit in this life with what is perfectly completed at the return of Jesus Christ (CALVIN, VOL. XIX, 1984, p. 303-304). What makes Calvin's interpretation all the more surprising is that he does not disregard creation itself as the recipient of this transformation that will take place at Christ's second advent.²² Creation, although mute, according to Calvin, also has a strong longing for its restoration; this awaited restoration is closely related to what will happen to the children of God (CALVIN, VOL. XIX, 1984, p. 303). A certain hope is attributed to irrational creatures by Paul, which further awakens the certainty of the hope held by rational creatures "that the faithful may open their eyes to behold the

²² "He teaches us that there is an example of the patience, to which he had exhorted us, even in mute creature. For, to omit various interpretations, I understand the passage to have this meaning – that there is no element and no part of the world which, being touched, as it were, with a sense of its present misery, does not intensely hope for a resurrection" (CALVIN, VOL. XIX, 1984, p. 303).

invisible life, though as yet it lies hid under a mean garb” (CALVIN, VOL. XIX, 1984, p. 304). The eschatological event to be experienced in the future is an extension of what happens in this life by the power of the Holy Spirit.²³

Since Ames and Calvin begin from the same place in this regard, Ames does not add to or develop anything different from the eschatological thinking of his day. However, Ames does clarify the connections and continuity between what the Spirit accomplishes in this dispensation through justification and redemption, and how these will be fulfilled in the life to come.

3. That declaration of justification and redemption which is shown in their effects will then be completed; in this life the faithful are said only to await redemption, Luke 21:18; Rom. 8:23; Eph. 1:14. 5. Then the image of God will be perfected in all the sanctified. Eph. 5:27, *That he might present the church to himself glorious, not having sopt or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without fault*” (AMES, 1997, p. 214)

At this point, it can be initially concluded that Ames is defending the idea that the eschatological event that God’s children

²³ “Nevertheless let us not cease also to say that we thank God, and to be contented with his giving of such provision to us as ought well to suffice us, and to wait until he accomplishes and perfects what he has begun, seeing we have his Holy Spirit thus dwelling in us with a promise that we shall never be destitute of him right up to between our teeth and to walk with such steadfastness that all the miseries of the world may not stop us pursuing our course till we come to our goal.” (CALVIN, 1973, p. 78).

are looking forward to is not a fundamental departure from what is experienced in this life, as had been expressed in Reformed understanding that was prevalent in his time.²⁴ According to Ames, the idea that a child of God longs or expects for the end of the world does not imply that the world will dissolve; rather, it implies that the state of misery that sin has brought into the world and into human existence will end, as Ames succinctly says: “8. Hence the end of the world should be awaited with all longing by all believers. Phil. 3:20; Titus 1:11, *We expect the savior, Jesus Christ. Expecting that blessed hope and that glorious coming of the glory of the great God and our savior*” (AMES, 1997, 214).

3.2 New Heavens and New Earth are not “hot air balloon”

The second aspect to be highlighted in Ames’ eschatological thinking, in this brief academic work, is what Christoph Schwöbel describes as the theoretical and fundamental aspect of Barth’s idea when criticizing the spiritualized tendency in eschatological reflection in his day.²⁵ In disapproving of this idea, Barth uses William Ames when he says: “*Non enim coelos alios et terram aliam sed coelos novos et terram novam expectamos*” (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, 21). The problem raised by this statement is the aspect of physicality that the New Heaven and the New Earth represent.

²⁴ “William Ames [...] hold to an eschatology that represents Reformed thought at that period in its development” (VLIET, 2013, 209). See William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 214.

²⁵ See Item 2.3 and SCHWÖBEL, 2022, 21.

Within a more spiritualized vision, the tendency is to see the heaven and earth of the future more as something ethereal, without physical concreteness, as “hot air balloon” (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, 21).

It appears that Karl Barth has a more tangible understanding of the eschatological reality. Barth in his *Dogmatics in Outline*, when he discuss *The resurrection of the Body and the Life Everlasting*, states the following:

And now the Christian man looks forward. What is the meaning of the Christian hope in this life? A life after death? An event apart from death? A tiny soul which, like a butterfly, flutters away above the grave and is still preserved somewhere, in order to live immortally? That was how the heathen looked on the life after death. But that is not the Christian hope. ‘I believe in the resurrection of the body.’ Body in the Bible is quite simply man, man, moreover, under the sign of sin, man laid low. And to this man it is said, Thou shalt rise again. Resurrection means not the continuation of this life, but life’s completion. [...] So the Christian hope affects our whole life: this life of ours will be completed. That which is sown in dishonour and weakness will rise again in glory and power. The Christian hope does not lead us away from this life; it is rather the uncovering of the truth in which God sees our life. It is the conquest of death, but not a flight into the Beyond. The reality of this life is involved. Eschatology, rightly understood, is the most practical thing that can be thought. In the eschaton the life falls from above into our life (BARTH, 1959, p. 154).

Naturally, Barth's eschatological thought goes beyond this and is likewise rather obscure,²⁶ which is not the point of this article, the point to be noted is that which relates to the thought of William Ames.²⁷ Ames presents the same concreteness in his eschatological approach that Barth makes use of, and Ames' statement related to this is as follows: firstly, Ames affirms that the heavenly glory awaited by the children of God will shine in its completeness over soul and body, "6. Then finally the glory and blessedness hoped for will shine forth in all fullness, not only in the soul but also in the very body" (AMES, 1997, p. 214). He goes on to state that resurrection is nothing more than the reunion of the soul with the body, in an intimate and sanctified relationship that is only possible through the power of God. In a sense, the point that stands out is that without the union between the soul and the restored physical body,

²⁶ "Revelation must be understood not just as an epistemic principle but as true apokalypsis, as the ultimate eschatological disclosure of truth in the event of reconciliation. Reconciliation and revelation happen on earth and so they make the journey to the heavens by the apocalyptic seer unnecessary" (SCHWÖBEL, 2022, 21).

²⁷ See George Hunsinger, *Disruptive Grace: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 173ff. Also Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: A Selection*, translated and edited by G. W. Bromiley, (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1962), 243-244. "The impartation of the Holy Spirit is the coming of Jesus Christ in the last time which still remains. As we shall see, it is the promise, given with and through world in which it exists and has its mission, may live in this time which moves towards its end. Hence the new coming of Jesus Christ has an eschatological character in this second form too. If the Parousia is an eschatological event in its third and final stage as well, this means specifically that in it we have to do with the manifestation and effective presence of Jesus Christ in their definitive form with His revelation at the goal of the last time."

there is no resurrection. Resurrection presupposes the power of God bringing the soul to the restored body (AMES, 1997, p. 214-215).

12. Resurrection relates to what has fallen. Because man fell from life by the separation of soul from body, it is necessary for his rising again that the same soul be reunited to the same body and that the same exist in the restored union of the two. 13. That such a resurrection is possible for God appears from the fact that the restoration of a man requires no more power than was manifested in his first creation. Phil. 3:21, *According to that effectual power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself* (AMES, 1997, p. 215).

However, the most concrete aspect presented by Ames of the material concreteness promised by God through the new heavens and new earth is seen in his statement that says: “The elements will not be taken away, but changed” (AMES, 1997, p. 215). This reality that is impacted by the distortion brought forth by sin will be altered. Unlike the beginning of all things, there will not be another creation *ex nihilo*.²⁸ The Holy Spirit’s transformative power will be used to the things that already exist in creation.²⁹ It is nevertheless common for people who are not accustomed to considering divine truths

²⁸ “15. [...] The operating principle is Christ’s divine omnipotence by which it may be easily accomplished, even in an instant” (AMES, 1997, p. 215).

²⁹ “18. Although all will be raised by Christ, it will not all happen in one and the same way. The resurrection of the faithful is to life and is accomplished by virtue of the union which they have with Christ who is their life (Col. 3:4; 1 Thess. 4:14) and by the operation of his quickening Spirit which lives in them. Rom. 8:11, He... shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit dwelling in you. But the resurrection of the others is through that power of Christ by which he will execute avenging justice” (AMES, 1997, p. 215).

within their own divine standards to perceive this occurrence as occurring in spiritual rather than physical dimensions (AMES, 1997, p. 214-216).³⁰ The goal of biblical eschatology, which is endorsed by Ames and spread throughout Reformed tradition contexts, is to bring attention to the more biblical and tangible aspects of the future eschatological reality, in which God's children will reside in and experience the concrete, new earth and heavens rather than floating around like air balloons.

4 CONCLUSION

Returning to our question: *What kind of eschatological thought did William Ames hold?* Firstly, we can answer that William Ames held a solid and concrete eschatological vision, where Barth himself rightly directs his thinking towards the concreteness of the new heavens and new earth. Secondly, Ames' eschatological vision also promotes an close relationship between what is initiated by the Holy Spirit in this life and what will be consummated with the advent of Christ. The Christian will not experience two distinct realities in terms of God's power, but a continuity that will be completed by the advent. The spiritual reality of this transforming power is more related to God's omnipotence than to its effects. The redemption

³⁰ "The resurrected body will be a spiritual (pneumatic) body (1 Cor. 15:44). This does not mean that the physical is absorbed by the spiritual as imagined by Origen. Neither should we define it as a body controlled by our spirit – as though this were not now the case – not as an invisible body. From the context it may be concluded that it will be a body that corresponds to re-creation through the Spirit and which he not only inhabits but also rules" (GENDEREN AND VELEMA, 2008, p. 868).

brought by Christ and effected by the Holy Spirit does not entail or signify the elimination or extinction of any physical, corporeal, or material aspect of this world. Rather, it represents its complete restoration in accordance with the higher purpose introduced through Christ's ministry. Redemption not only produces the forgiveness of sins to the elect, but also establishes the final judgment regarding their presence and effects within creation. Redemption thus paves the way for the restoration of all creation. In other words, the effect of the consummation of the ages is not the extinction of this material world or of our physical bodies, but their complete restoration and elevation to a state of perfection that will never end. Thirdly, it is clear that this eschatological hope must not give us a false hope that the physical and concrete aspects of this new heaven and new earth will be the axiom of Christ's return. To think in this way is to make a profound mistake, and to forget that the Christian's greatest joy with the arrival of the new heavens and new earth is not exactly the concreteness of this place, but the concreteness of Christ's presence in our midst. Christ is and will be the Christian's greatest joy in the new heavens and the new earth.³¹

³¹ An interesting discussion is raised on this last aspect in Michael Allen's book *Grounded in Heaven*. See: Michael Allen, *Grounded in Heaven: Recentering Christian Hope and Life in God* (Grand Rapids: William Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018).

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RESUMO

A escatologia tem sido um tema amplamente discutido dentro da teologia como um todo. Esse assunto apresenta desafios naturais devido à sua complexidade. A teologia reformada, desde o seu início, tem se envolvido com essa questão na tentativa de trazer maior clareza. Com o objetivo de aprofundar e tratar com mais competência essa discussão, ampliando assim o diálogo sobre esse tema dentro da teologia reformada, o presente texto recorrerá às contribuições do teólogo reformado William Ames. O interesse pelo

pensamento escatológico desse teólogo puritano foi recentemente retomado, especialmente devido à ênfase dada pelo teólogo neo-ortodoxo Karl Barth, que destaca Ames como alguém que contribui para uma escatologia mais concreta. A redenção prometida não é algo que eclipsa as realidades físicas deste mundo; Deus, como Criador, continua a conceder à Sua criação suas características inerentes, ainda que em um estado de plena restauração. Nesse sentido, Ames enfatiza claramente que não haverá outro céu ou outra terra, mas sim novos céus e nova terra. A redenção, portanto, aponta para a restauração e conduz a ela.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

William Ames; Teologia Reformada; Escatologia; Novos Céus; Nova Terra.