Introduction

Andrew Crome

Early in the morning of 19 July 1591, two Puritan gentlemen, Edmund Coppinger and Henry Arthington, mounted a cart in Cheapside to announce that they had discovered the messiah. William Hackett, a Presbyterian of dubious moral character, had assumed 'the office and spirite of S. *Iohn Baptist,* affirming, that hee was sent thither by God, to prepare the way of the Lord before his second comming to iudgement'.[1] Arthington and Coppinger, viewing themselves as the two witnesses of God predicted in the Book of Revelation (Rev. 11:1-12), believed that Hackett had been sent to overthrow episcopacy and Elizabeth I, and inaugurate a new era of perfected church government on earth. The authorities were not amused, and Hackett was executed. Roughly two hundred years later, and several thousand miles to the west, an altogether more respectable New Jersey Presbyterian preacher, David Austin, predicted Christ's return for the fourth Sunday of May 1796. When the prophecy failed, Austin was not imprisoned or attacked by concerned authorities. Instead his flock (which included a number of politicians) humoured his preaching, until finally losing patience and dismissing him as minister as his prophecies continued unabated. Undeterred, the preacher fell to designing wharves and houses to prepare the Jews for their prophesied return to Palestine.[2]

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[1] Richard Cosin, *Conspiracie, for pretended reformation viz. Presbyteriall discipline* (London, 1592), p. 7.

[2] Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic: Millennial themes in American thought* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 137-40.

These two examples, neatly bookending the period covered in this collection, might be used to offer representative vignettes on the way in which interpretation of prophecy developed from the sixteenth until the late eighteenth centuries. What was seen as threatening and politically destabilising to Elizabethan politicians appeared eccentric, but largely harmless, to enlightened Americans on the cusp of the 1800s. Yet history never develops in such neat, sweeping, and clean cut movements, despite what secularisation theory may seem to imply at times.[3] To problematise this narrative, two other stories might be considered. In 1587, the Puritan preacher William Perkins wrote *A Fruitfull Dialogue Concerning the End of the World*. Here, he was quick to condemn the sort of credulous acceptance of prophecy that led to Hackett's radical actions. In a dialogue between 'Christian' and 'Worldling', the latter betrays a popular interest and excitement in prophecy – finding prophecies hidden on stone walls, in popular ballads and breathless discussions with neighbours, and in books dedicated to the subject. 'Christian' is unimpressed: 'I make as little account of these verses as of *Merlin's* drunken prophecies, or the tales of *Robin Hood*.'[4] As the Godly man reminds his credulous interlocutor, there are several signs that need to be fulfilled before the world will end – he should concentrate on holy living rather than prophetic speculation if he wants to be blessed.

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[3] For a recent defence of the secularisation thesis see Steve Bruce, *Secularization: In defence of an unfashionable theory* (Oxford, 2011).

[4] William Perkins 'A fruitfull dialogue concerning the end of the world' (1587) in *The vvorkes of that famovs and vvorthy minister of Christ in the Vniversitie of Cambridge, M. VVilliam Perkins. The third and last volume* (London , 1631), p. 467.

Roughly two hundred years later and several thousand miles to the west in Rhode Island, Jemima Wilkinson arose from a serious illness reborn as the second coming of Christ, or the Publick Universal Friend. As the Friend she attracted significant attention from the press, who repeatedly slandered her, concerned at her refusal to accept any clear designation of gender or race, and speculating on her political and moral aims.[5] While Jemima was founding a community in New York State in the 1790s, across the Atlantic former naval officer Richard Brothers was declaring himself the 'nephew of the Almighty', and claiming that George III should surrender the crown in his favour. Against the backdrop of the French Revolution, Brothers's actions caused enough concern for the government to declare him criminally insane and imprison him in an asylum for some eleven years.[6]

All of these incidents are merely snapshots of events which need to be placed within a larger matrix of historical developments to fully make sense. But they serve as reminders that while a narrative of 'disenchantment' or secularisation might be read into the period 1500-1800, that in reality predictions, prophecies, and speculation about the end times cannot be slotted into neat historical boxes. As Perkins' work shows, Elizabethan writers might find prophecy as politically harmless and eccentric (albeit spiritually unhelpful) as those who dismissed Austin in late-eighteenth-century New Jersey; while governments and the press might be equally alarmed by the political dangers of the prophetic form in 1591 and 1795. While, as the anonymous 'Freethinker' bewailed in that year, it may be 'strange,

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[5] Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia PA., 2003), pp. 220-37.

[6] See Deborah Madden, *The Paddington prophet: Richard Brothers's journey to Jerusalem* (Manchester, 2010).

that any man in his senses should, in this Enlightened age, be ambitious of the name and character of a prophet',[7] plenty continued to aspire to the title.

The aim of this book is to attempt to shed some light on why this was the case within a particular geographical and historical context. Taking as its frame the transatlantic world in the period 1500-1800, contributors explore the variety of ways in which prophetic discourse could be appropriated, transformed, and reworked as new lands and peoples were discovered, and unprecedented political revolutions were dealt with and debated. The aim of this introduction is therefore threefold. First, the choice of geographical focus will need to be justified. The Atlantic paradigm has been both defended and heavily criticised in recent work, and it is important that the reader is aware of the benefits that adopting an Atlantic approach to examining prophecy can offer. At the same time, it would be remiss not to highlight continuing difficulties with the paradigm. Second, it introduces the reader to the importance of prophecy within this context. Starting from the 'discovery' of the Americas by Columbus, prophecy has had an important role to play in shaping the way in which Europeans understood the new people groups, cultures, and landscapes they discovered. Prophecies of a future millennial kingdom and of a church in the wilderness motivated emigration; predictions of the discovery of the 'lost tribes' of Israel encouraged evangelisation of indigenous peoples; while prophecy might also be seen as playing an important part in encouraging rebellions and revolutions, as fears of both Hackett and Brothers suggest. Finally, this introduction will lead the reader into the book itself, with a

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[7] A Freethinker, *An enquiry into the pretensions of Richard Brothers in answer to Nathaniel Brassey Halhed* (London, 1795), p. 3.

brief summary of each of the chapters. The book as a whole aims to provide an accessible

but rigorous overview of the cultural, religious, and political impact of prophecy in the

transatlantic world from 1500-1800. While it cannot claim to be exhaustive in scope, it aims

to highlight important recent work in the field, suggest new approaches, and offer ways in

which the study of prophecy might develop into the next decade of research.

I. Defining Key Concepts: Prophecy in the Atlantic

This book's title employs two related, but distinct, terms – prophecy and eschatology.

Neither term is unproblematic. 'Prophecy' can refer, quite simply, to the statement of a

prophet. As such, it implies inspiration from a deity, with the prophet speaking as their god's

mouthpiece. The content of their discourse might highlight moral failings, offer predictions

of the future, or be in a spiritual language which requires interpretation.[8] The Hebrew

prophets of the Old Testament were therefore usually marked out by their moral criticism of

the society that surrounded them, calling God's people back into his service. In the early

modern world, a number of different people might be described as (or describe themselves

as) a prophet. These might be marginal figures such as Hackett, mythical prophets from the

distant past such as Merlin, more detailed constructions from recent folklore such as

Mother Shipton, or even someone as innocuous as the local Church of England minister. As

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[8] Bertrand Taithe and Tim Thornton, 'The language of history: Past and future in prophecy' in Bertrand Taithe

and Tim Thornton (eds), *Prophecy: The power of inspired language in history 1300-2000* (Stroud, 1997), pp. 1-

16.

one role of the prophet was to interpret the word of God, early modern Protestants

sometimes described the regular exposition of the word as a form of prophecy.[9] In this

sense, John Calvin has recently been described as a prophet.[10]

But prophecy, in a popular sense at least, could also refer to predictions. Prophecies

relating to the future, whether to the outcome of events should the prophet's hearers not

repent, or promises of ultimate redemption, were also part of both biblical and folk

prophetic traditions. Here prophecy directly intersected with eschatology (the study of the

'last things'). Eschatology could be personal (as in the Catholic tradition of the four last

things: death, judgement, hell and heaven), or cosmic (as in the apocalyptic prophecies of

Daniel and Revelation). When prophecy focused on its eschatological elements it became

inherently politicised, as predictions of change could have alarming implications for

authorities. At times of political turmoil, as the examples mentioned above suggest, it could

be subversive and used as a way of promoting rebellion – as seen in the predictions during

the Pilgrimage of Grace which rose against Henry VIII in 1536-7. Tudor governments

therefore legislated against prophecy in 1541-2, 1549-50 and 1563. Yet at the same time,

prophecy could be employed by those in power to support their positions, and to suggest

divine endorsement of their rule; it remains 'a matter of conflicting interpretation... ever

unstable and dynamic.'[11]

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[9] As in William Perkins's preaching manual *The arte of prophesying* (London, 1607).

[10] Jan Belserak, *John Calvin as sixteenth-century prophet* (Oxford, 2014).

[11] Taithe and Thornton, 'The language of history', p. 11.

As this volume is focused on prophecy and eschatology, it is this more predictive sense of prophecy which predominates in this book. The precise form examined varies from author to author, with chapters moving between elite, popular, and radical contexts across religious traditions. Prophecy here is used to describe something more than a general sense of providence, although this remained an important part of prophetic speculation and an essential element in the shared worldview between Britain and America into the early nineteenth century.[12] In particular, many of the contributors focus on prophecies which might be described as millennial in nature. The term refers in the first instance Revelation 20:1-6, in which Christ returns to earth and reigns with his saints for a period of a thousand years while Satan is bound. As a number of chapters in this collection highlight, the belief in the coming of the millennium was important across the Atlantic world in the early modern period. The precise nature that this millennium would take differed from group to group, and examinations of millennialism often break it down into three distinct forms: premillennialism (in which Christ returns *before* the millennium and thus inaugurates it supernaturally), postmillennialism (in which Christ returns *at the end* of the millennium, which has been inaugurated through a Christianisation of the world) and amillennialism (in which the millennium is not interpreted literally, but instead seen to refer to a spiritual state).[13] Although such clear-cut categories do not fully apply to pre-eighteenth-century eschatology, they remain a useful way of understanding the core of millennial debates.[14]

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[12] Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (New York, NY., and Cambridge, 2007); Connors and Gow, 'Introduction', pp. xi-xii.

[13] Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism in the trans-Atlantic World, 1500-2000* (Basingstoke, 2011), pp. 11-12.

[14] Andrew Crome, *The restoration of the Jews: Early modern hermeneutics, eschatology, and national identity in the works of Thomas Brightman* (Cham, 2014), pp. 11-12, n.51. For a discussion of the mishandling of these

In attempting to understand the lands that were 'discovered' by Europeans in the late fifteenth century, the prophetic portions of scripture provided one way of situating the previously unknown portions of the world within existing maps of meaning. Columbus interpreted his voyages though the lens of the fulfilment of biblical prophecies, as well as those by twelfth-century abbot Joachim of Fiore and fourteenth-century astrologer Pierre d'Ailly, relating to what he believed would be a special role for the Spanish monarchy in rebuilding Jerusalem.[15] The natives that he discovered, he believed, were signs of a new age; marked by Edenic purity, their appearance presaged the return to the prelapsarian state.[16] While Columbus's position was not necessarily the mainstream view, neither was it unique. As a series of Friars arrived in America over the course of the sixteenth century, many read both the new lands and its inhabitants through the lens of prophecy.

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terms in early modern historiography see Crawford Gribben, *The puritan millennium: Literature and theology, 1550-1682* Second Edition (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008)*,* pp. 8-11.

[15] Christopher Columbus, *The book of prophecies* ed. Roberto Rusconi, trans. Blair Sullivan (Berkeley, CA., 1997). See also: Carol Delaney, 'Columbus's ultimate goal: Jerusalem', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48:2 (2006), pp. 260-92; Leonard I. Sweet, 'Christopher Columbus and the millennial vision of the New World', *Catholic Historical Review* 72:3 (1986), pp. 369-82; Arthur Williamson, *Apocalypse then: Prophecy and the making of the modern world* (Westport, CO., 2008), pp.71-8.; Pauline Moffitt Watts, 'Prophecy and discovery: On the spiritual origins of Christopher Columbus's "Enterprise of the Indies"', *American Historical Review* 90:1 (1985), pp. 73-102; Delno C. West, 'Christopher Columbus, lost biblical sites, and the last crusade', *Catholic Historical Review* 78:4 (1992), pp. 519-41.

[16] Zachary McLeod Hutchins, *Inventing Eden: Primitivism, millennialism, and the making of New England* (Oxford and New York, 2014), pp. 13-14.

This book therefore adopts a transatlantic approach to its study of prophecy and eschatology. Here it is necessary to justify the use of an Atlantic framework at the start of this volume. As readers familiar with debates in Atlantic history may have ascertained, the term transatlantic in this book's title makes use of one of David Armitage's three concepts of Atlantic history. In an important 2002 article, Armitage suggested that three approaches could be applied to the subject. 'Circum-Atlantic history' looks at the Atlantic as a whole, viewing it as a zone of 'exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission'.[17] 'Trans-Atlantic history' is a complimentary, rather than contrasting, method to this. It is more concerned with comparison between different contexts than simply focusing on the Atlantic as a homogenous 'world'. It is therefore made possible by the assumptions of a circum-Atlantic approach, in that meaningful comparisons can be made and similarities and differences drawn 'because they already share some common features by virtue of being enmeshed within circum-Atlantic relationships'.[18] 'Cis-Atlantic' history therefore concentrates on the history of a particular location within both the broad Atlantic context, and the comparative approach promoted by a trans-Atlantic position. For Armitage, all of these approaches work together in order to ensure a rounded history of the Atlantic world which accepts both similarities and differences in particular geographical, political, and social contexts. By using the term transatlantic this book does not therefore abandon a 'circum-Atlantic' or 'cis-Atlantic' approach. Rather it uses its transatlantic lens in order to draw out conclusions about the influence of both the wider Atlantic world on the prophetic

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[17] David Armitage, 'Three concepts of Atlantic history' in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds), *The British Atlantic world 1500-1800* Second Edition (Basingstoke, 2009), p. 18.

[18] Armitage, 'Three Concepts', p. 21.

and eschatological discourses it discusses, and the importance of local political and social conditions in shaping those prophetic positions in the first place.

At the outset, it is therefore important to set out a number of caveats about how this book will proceed in its approach. Much recent writing on the nature of Atlantic history has argued that abandonment, or at least a severe modification, of the paradigm is necessary. For example, Peter A. Coclanis has emphasised the way in which the Atlantic approach has 'blinded' historians to global developments in the period 1500-1800.[19] The concept could therefore be criticised for imposing an internationalist framework taken from the twenty-first-century world onto the early modern period. While Atlantic history first developed, in part, as a response to overly limited approaches to imperial history, it might also be thought to be recapitulating the forms of this discipline, in which the Atlantic world becomes a clearly delineated territorial area with its own distinct 'Atlantic' peoples and pseudo-empire.[20] Some have therefore recently claimed that the concept of the Atlantic world should be abandoned completely, in favour of focusing on relationships and causation without the quasi-national imperial idea of a 'world' being employed.[21] Yet the idea of the Atlantic world as a sphere in which ideas could be exchanged and modified still, as Janet L. Polansky has recently forcefully argued, serves as a helpful lens for historians to use when

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[19] Peter A. Coclanis, 'Atlantic World or Atlantic/World?', *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd Series 63:4 (2006), pp. 725-742.

[20] David Prior, 'After the revolution: An alternative future for Atlantic History', *History Compass* 12:3 (2014), p. 303.

[21] Prior, 'After the revolution', pp. 300-309.

examining those areas which bordered the Atlantic.[22] This is not to claim that a global

approach is not also important, particularly in recognising connections with Asia that were

developing over the early modern period. But it is to recognise, as Bernard Bailyn has

argued, that the Atlantic world was unique in the way it was viewed and understood by

early modern Europeans.[23] Neither is it to claim that the Atlantic world should be seen as

some sort of pseudo-empire in and of itself – although as Philip D. Morgan and Jack P.

Greene have noted, an Atlantic approach does allow an examination of imperial history

which takes into account connections and inter-related developments that benefits both

histories of empire and of the Atlantic more widely.[24] To avoid some of the difficulties that

have bene identified with the Atlantic world approach, it is therefore necessary to lay out

precisely how the concept is used in this volume, particularly in the ways in which the

dangers of totalising explanatory paradigms are avoided, and local differences across the

Atlantic emphasised.

It would certainly do this book's chances in the marketplace no harm were it to

boldly claim that prophecy could operate as a total explanatory paradigm for all major

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[22] Janet L. Polasky, *Revolutions without borders* (New Haven, CO., 2015).

[23] Bernard Bailyn, 'Introduction: Reflections on some major themes' in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault

(eds), *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent structures and intellectual currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge, MA.

and London, 2009), pp. 1-43. Bailyn particularly emphasises the way in which colonisation, views of native

peoples, and trade networks differed. He sees globalisation as anachronistic prior to the nineteenth, and

perhaps even the late twentieth centuries.

[24] Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene, 'Introduction' in Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene (eds), *Atlantic

History: A critical appraisal* (New York, NY., and Oxford, 2009), pp. 9-10.

developments within the Atlantic world in the period 1500-1800. As should be obvious,

however, no such totalising claim can be made. Not only did the impacts of different forms

of prophecy differ in the various contexts in which they were received, but prophecies

(often *the same* biblical prophecies) generated very different reactions at different times. As

Bailyn notes, Atlantic history must be viewed 'as process'.[25] By this he means that it is

inherently fluid, and the contributors to this book have recognised this. Each of the authors

has been alive to the particular challenges and historical contingencies in the contexts they

examine, while recognising that previous developments in other parts of the Atlantic world

helped to lead to change in the contexts they explore. This book therefore recognises the

importance of cross-cultural exchange of ideas from early in the history of Iberian

exploration of the Americas.[26] From the sixteenth century onwards, a flow of both ideas and

people can be seen between Spain, England, Africa, the Netherlands and the Americas. The

provenance of these ideas deserves some comment. By using the term 'transatlantic' in its

title, this book highlights that it focuses primarily on comparative contexts. With the

exception of Luís Filipe Silvério Lima's chapter, which concentrates particularly on the

Iberian and Brazilian contexts of early exploration, the majority of chapters deal with what

might be termed the British Atlantic – the interactions, ideas, and peoples which flowed

between Britain, Ireland, and the American plantations (both continental and Caribbean).

On one level, this focus might be seen as a limitation. However, contributors have been

clear that a focus on the British Atlantic world does not mean ignoring the wider circum-

Atlantic context in which it was situated. Iberian ideas and works had an important

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[25] Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic History: Concept and contours* (Cambridge, MA., 2005), p. 61.

[26] Lisa Voigt, *Writing captivity in the early modern Atlantic: Circulations of knowledge and authority in the Iberian and English imperial worlds* (Chapel Hill, NC., 2009), pp. 255-63.

influence on developments in the British Atlantic.[27] Dutch and German biblical

commentaries, as Jan Stievermann notes in his chapter, were important parts of prophetic

thought in the British Atlantic well into the eighteenth century. As Al Cummins argues in his

chapter here, the importance of interactions with Africa (increasingly a part of the British

Atlantic itself over this period) and indigenous Americans in shaping American beliefs should

not be overlooked either. A focus on the British Atlantic world should not, therefore, be

overly parochial, but instead embrace the wider contours of Atlantic thought. A further

advantage of this focus is that it offers the reader the chance to see how ideas within one

part of the Atlantic world could interact, change, and transform over time.

Such an approach also has advantages when tracing a particular theme, such as

prophecy, over the *longue durée*. Of course, this can also raise serious issues. For example,

Trevor Burnard has argued that historians should not conceive of the existence of a

distinctively British Atlantic world until the eighteenth century.[28] Yet as several contributors

to this book note, an argument can be made for adopting an Atlantic approach (to the

Anglophone world in particular) at a much earlier juncture. As Carla Gardina Pestana has

argued, both the awareness of different religious forms in meetings with newly encountered

people groups, and the practical challenges of trying to practice religion in new contexts,

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[27] Jose Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic* (Stanford, CA., 2006); Voigt,

Writing captivity.

[28] Trevor Burnard, 'The British Atlantic' in Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (eds), *Atlantic History: A critical*

approach (Oxford, 2009), pp. 111-15.

raised challenges for those of all persuasions in the Atlantic world.[29] In seeking to face these challenges, it is unsurprising that ministers, intellectuals, and ordinary people sought answers from a variety of sources, particularly those produced in other nations that had also wrestled with the same difficulties. For those in the British Atlantic, this meant an interaction with a range of Iberian and continental texts and explorers, and also demand in the growing print market for tales of newly discovered lands and peoples, stories of captivity, and news from the frontiers of empire. Thinking of prophecy in these terms is helpful, as Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow have argued, in that it enables us to see much more closely the connections between British and American thought, and the way in which events in one geographical arena impacted those in another.[30] Recognising these connections is not to presume that the content of prophecy, or indeed its political aims, was the same in different areas. The temptation when writing about Atlantic history is to downplay very real differences which emerged, and ignore the way in which ideas, institutions, and individuals were transformed as they moved through Atlantic networks, a point emphasised recently by Jeremy Gregory.[31] As John Elliott has argued, it is important that historians make it clear not

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[29] Carla Gardina Pestana, 'Religion' in David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds), *The British Atlantic World 1500-1800* Second Edition (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 71-91.

[30] Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow, 'Introduction' in Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow, *Anglo-American Millennialism, From Milton to the Millerites* (Leiden, 2004), p. x.

[31] Jeremy Gregory, 'Transatlantic Anglican networks c.1680- c.1770: Transplanting, translating and transforming the Church of England' in Jeremy Gregory and Hugh McLeod (eds), *International religious networks* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 127-30. On this point see also Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene, 'Introduction' in Philip D. Morgan and Jack P. Greene (eds), *Atlantic History: A critical appraisal* (New York, NY., and Oxford, 2009), pp. 10-12; Bailyn, *Atlantic History*, p. 62

only where the Atlantic world was marked by shared ideas, but also where ideas differed.[32]

It is therefore useful to remember Stephen A. Marini's point about the nature of

millennialism as a flexible form that we should expect to transform into new and

unexpected shapes: 'when one version of it has been employed by a religious or political

group, it has invariably been answered by another version mounted by a rival movement.

The opacity of millennial and eschatological symbols makes them the most contested of

Christian images'.[33] In other words, we should not be surprised if prophecy changes as it

moves from context to context. A helpful image for this process can be found in Kenneth

Mills' appropriation of art historian George Kubler's metaphor of the lighthouse to explain

religious change in the Atlantic world. Like a lighthouse's signal, religious ideas were relayed

through official channels (for example, the Church of England, Massachusetts Bay ministers,

or the Catholic Church). As they were shared, like the signal, these ideas could be

appropriated and reflected by others; or increasingly transformed and take on new and

unexpected aspects. Mills' point is that these new transmissions and appropriations of the

signal should be 'accepted as equals' to the original, rather than as 'imitations, copies,

satellites, or subsidiaries'. Such transformations therefore have the power to become more

potent in new settings than the original form.[34] As with all metaphors, there are some

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[32] John Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic world: Britain and Spain in America 1492-1830* (New Haven, 2006), pp. xi-xx

[33] Stephen A. Marini, 'Uncertain dawn: Millennialism and political theology in Revolutionary America' in Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow (eds), *Anglo-American Millennialism, From Milton to the Millerites* (Leiden, 2004), p. 163.

[34] Kenneth Mills, 'Religion in the Atlantic World' in Nicholas Canny and Philip Morgan (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic World* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 433-4.

problems with the image that is evoked here,[35] but Mills' central point is an important one: as contributors to this volume have recognised, the 'transformed' ideas should be taken seriously in their own right. In doing so, each author has recognised both the similarities between different parts of the Atlantic world, and the important differences between areas, people groups, and traditions as ideas have evolved. Crucially, however, they see the Atlantic context as vital in shaping these differences. As Susan Juster has noted, it is therefore 'still possible to speak of prophets... as inhabiting a transatlantic world'.[36]

II. Prophecy and the Atlantic World

Understandings of prophecy have therefore been important to, and contested within, scholarship on the Atlantic for some time. Before coming to the contents of the book, it is helpful to provide a brief sketch of some of the key events in which prophecy was involved, and the major historiographical debates surrounding them. While many of these themes are explored more fully in the chapters that follow, a brief overview here will help to orientate readers on the prophetic map.

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[35] The idea of religious ideas as 'transmissions', for example, might strike some readers as an overly hierarchical model for the way in which they are developed. Mills' appropriation of art history is helpful in suggesting ways in which historians might look to more contemporary art and media studies for models of cultural transmission.

[36] Juster, *Doomsayers*, p. 10.

Some early accounts of the New World were what Jose Cañizares-Esguerra's described as 'Satanic epics' which detailed the way in which the land was under the dominion of the Devil, and the natives' religion seen as a parody of the true faith. This negative reading of America was increasingly questioned following the work of Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas (c. 1484-1566), which criticised the behaviour and attitude of the Conquistadors.[37] This represented a valorisation of the natives which returned to the sort of Edenic position adopted by Columbus. Comparatively successful missionary efforts also helped some to believe that they were on the cusp of the millennium, with some explanations of this falling foul of the authorities. For example, Franciscan Gerónimo de Mendeita (1525-1604), whose *Historia eclesiástica indiana* (1597) was banned by the Church for its overt Joachimite expectations.[38]

It is clear that the use of prophecy as an explanatory paradigm in the early modern Spanish Atlantic was therefore heavily contested. Columbus's use of prophecy could be controversial, but it could also offer a legitimation of Spanish imperial ambitions. As Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster have recently pointed out, 'biblical narratives of expulsion, salvation and the apocalypse were thus deeply embedded in early modern imperial projects'.[39] Yet the Bible's prophecies, in their appeals for the downtrodden and the despised alien, and proclamations of judgement against the rich and powerful, could also be

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[37] Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, pp. 35-82.

[38] John Leddy Phelan, *The Millennial kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World: A study of the writings of Gerónimo de Mendieta (1525-1604)* Revised Edition (Los Angeles, 1970).

[39] Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster, 'Introduction' in Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster (eds), *Empires of God: Religious encounters in the early modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia, PA., 2011), p. 5.

employed as a powerfully subversive narrative. Prophecy, as a form of political legitimation, therefore remained a double-edged sword; it was narrative which could be easily poached by those on the margins, and redeployed to seek new political goals.

This sort of reworking of prophecy can be seen in its role in England's first colonial endeavours. Prophetic language could be used as a way of attempting to justify these overseas projects in terms of offering the potential to facilitate the end times conversions predicted in scripture. This could be directly contrasted with Spanish activities in America, demonstrating that England was engaging in conversion in a more humane method than the Spaniards, drawing on the 'black legend' of Spanish barbarity. The use of this trope in the promotional materials from English boosters for the endeavours in both Virginia and New England reveals something of the complex way in which ideas relating to prophecy could be exchanged in the early modern Atlantic world. Iberian works critical of Spanish actions in the Americas were often the source of these claims – and many of these contained Joachimite or other apocalyptic ideas.[40] The appeal of such texts could therefore develop in part through the shared prophetic interest in both England and Spain in the early seventeenth century, while also helping to maintain and further publicise it. From a more pragmatic

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[40] Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, pp. 1-33. See also Jose Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Typology in the Atlantic world: Early modern readings of colonization' in Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (eds), *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent structures and intellectual currents, 1500-1830* (Cambridge, MA. and London, 2009), pp. 237-64.

point of view, as Beth Quitslund has shown in her work on the Virginia Company in the 1610s and 20s, appealing to prophecy could also serve as a good way of raising capital.[41]

While Quitslund highlights the millennial appeal of the Virginia Company, perhaps the best known link between prophecy and English overseas expansion has been the supposed millennial motivations behind the Puritan migration to New England in the 1620s and 30s. This idea, which developed in the seminal work of Perry Miller, and was further expanded in Sacvan Bercovitch's research into New England Puritanism, has proved highly influential in research on both millennialism and the motivations of those who moved to New England in general. This position is often summed up in a phrase taken from John Winthrop's sermon 'A Model of Christian Charity', preached aboard the Arbella as it sailed to New England in 1630. Winthrop urged the migrants to consider that 'wee shall be as a citty upon a hill. The eies of all people are uppon us.'[42] To phrase this somewhat differently, those who fled to New England in search of the opportunity to worship as they believed God required, went on an 'errand to the wilderness', in which the aim was to construct and model the ideal godly society which would then spread across the globe. In this way, the

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[41] Beth Quitslund, 'The Virginia Company, 1606-1624: Anglicanism's millennial adventure' in Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow (eds), *Anglo-American Millennialism, From Milton to the Millerites* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 43-113. For a later example, on Thomas Thorowgood's use of prophecies of discovery of the lost tribes of Israel in New England as a way of funding John Eliot's missions in New England, see Kristina Bross, 'From London to Nonantum: Mission literature in the Transatlantic World' in Linda Gregerson and Susan Juster (eds), *Empires of God: Religious encounters in the early modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia, PA., 2011), pp. 123-142.

[42] John Winthrop, 'A modell of Christian charity', *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* 3rd Series 7 (1838), pp.31-48. Available online at https://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html.

errand could be seen as the fulfilment of the millennial prophecies of the Bible.[43] This

reading of Miller has been questioned, and it is certainly true that he does not place as

much emphasis on the 'city on the hill' motif that is emphasised heavily by some later

historians.[44] Nonetheless, when combined with the concept of the 'elect nation' which

developed from William Haller's work on national identity in late Elizabethan England,[45] the

idea that New Englanders viewed themselves as a people set apart by God for a millennial

mission could develop from Miller's work. Theodore Dwight Bozeman has heavily criticised

the notion that New England's founders consciously intended to establish an exemplar

colony, instead focusing on their own immediate religious interests.[46] This has found recent

support in Susan Hardman Moore's work on the number of colonists who made a speedy

return to Europe when the religious situation in England appeared improved.[47]

The millennial undertones of Miller's thesis were picked up by Sacvan Bercovitch in

his work on the American jeremiad tradition. Bercovitch argued that the jeremiad was a key

form of American cultural expression from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Rather than seeing it as an attack on the people's inability to live up to the special status

under God, Bercovitch read the jeremiad as reaffirming a sense of eschatological calling

which outlived the collapse of the New England Way to become a key part of American

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[43] Perry Miller, *Errand into the wilderness* (Cambridge, MA., 1956).

[44] See criticism from Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *To live ancient lives: The primitivist dimension in Puritanism* (Chapel Hill and London, 1988), pp. 81-119.

[45] William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the elect nation* (London, 1963).

[46] Bozeman, *To live ancient lives.*

[47] Susan Hardman Moore, *Pilgrims: New World settlers and the call of home* (New Haven, CO., and London, 2007)

identity. A sense of eschatological mission from New England settlers thus became central to American self-conceptions.[48] Bozeman fiercely opposed this reading, arguing that the early settlers failed to tie distinct eschatological meaning to the particular territory they inhabited. Instead, puritans tended to look backwards to the purity of the apostolic church.[49] While this historical controversy has rumbled on, with writers such as Avihu Zakai staunchly defending Bercovitch and the centrality of the millennial errand, and others such as Reiner Smolinski noting further difficulties with it,[50] increasingly nuanced positions have been adopted on the issue of late. Zachary McLeod Hutchins has recently suggested that the split between Bercovitch and Bozeman's position might be bridged by recognising the importance of the Edenic trope for early settlers – an image which could be both primitivist and millennial when employed in different contexts. As such, this concept points to the importance of considering the array of biblical images that could be used to form eschatological ideas, rather than limiting ourselves to those within specifically apocalyptic texts. Not only is it important to range outside of Revelation, Daniel, and Ezekiel when thinking about how prophecy was interpreted, but it is also helpful to think on a wider geographical, and even religious, scale. As Hutchins points out, the Edenic motif was active across Europe and the Iberian Atlantic, in discussions of creation, Christian life, and

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[48] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American jeremiad* (Madison, WI., 1978). See also his *The Puritan origins of the American self* (New Haven, CT. and London, 1975).

[49] Bozeman, *To live ancient lives*.

[50] Reiner Smolinski, 'Israel redivivus: The eschatological limits of typology in New England', *The New England Quarterly* 63:3 (1990), pp. 357-395; Avihu Zakai, *Exile and kingdom: History and apocalypse in the Puritan migration to America* (Cambridge, 1992).

prophecy.[51] Its influence in New England was not therefore simply an adaptation of a European idea, but a concept which had been filtered through Spanish, Portuguese, New Spanish, French, Dutch, and indigenous American geographical contexts. Along the way, ideas from folklore, European magic, native religion, and Islam (in Iberia) all contributed to it. We should therefore be aware of the interconnected nature of prophecy in early modern New England. As Jeffrey K. Jue has noted, New England Puritans unquestionably looked to Europe, rather than America, for end times events to play out, but this does not mean that they felt that they could play no role in the forthcoming struggle with Antichrist.[52] As several contributors to this book highlight, the geopolitics of prophecy raised complex questions for those who tried to understand their place within the spiritual geography of the future.

Nonetheless, while ideas circulated across the Atlantic world, for linguistic reasons it is true that the majority of the early settlers looked back to their home countries for information, ideas, and guidance. While the home country was sometimes a site of stability amongst the turmoil of the difficult process of early colonisation, at other times events in Europe could raise problematic questions. This was particularly the case for New England, which had always had a complex relationship to the homeland due to its founders' attitudes towards the English authorities at the time of their departure. There is no doubt that some interpreted events through an eschatological lens, and were motivated to return by the opportunity to fight directly against Antichrist in the 1640s.[53] In England itself, the battle

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[51] Hutchins, *Inventing Eden*, pp. 14-18.

[52] Jeffrey K. Jue, 'Puritan Millennialism in old and New England' in John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism* (Cambridge, 2008), pp. 259-276.

[53] Moore, *Pilgrims*, pp. 88-102.

against Laudianism and Charles I was often interpreted directly in apocalyptic terms, as has long been established.[54] Apocalyptic discourse in the period in England was pervasive, and it is important to realise that it was not limited to the groups later historians have labelled as 'radicals', but was part of mainstream discourse. The influence of the writings of largely conformist divines such as Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) and Jospeh Mede (1586-1639), which were legally published for the first time in the 1640s, provided additional justification for what might be termed a mainstream apocalyptic approach, as well as justifying apocalyptic expectation around particular dates in the 1650s. As these writers had long been used by New England divines such as John Cotton, their renewed popularity in England could further strengthen transatlantic ties.[55] Neither should the important links with millenarians in the Holy Roman Empire, the Netherlands, or France be ignored. Protestant internationalism, combined with apocalyptic news networks which sometimes included

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[54] The best general examination on the apocalyptic background and nature of the period 1630-60 remains Crawford Gribben's seminal *The Puritan millennium*. For a briefer introduction see Jue, 'Puritan millennialism' in Coffey and Lim (eds), *Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, pp.259-76. The following older works also remain valuable: Bryan W. Ball, *A great expectation: Eschatological thought in English Protestantism to 1660* (Leiden, 1975); Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the Reformation to the eve of the Civil War* (Toronto, 1978); Katherine Firth, *The apocalyptic tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford, 1979); Tai Liu, *Discord in Zion: The Puritan divines and the Puritan revolution 1640-1660* (The Hague, 1973); Peter Toon (ed.), *The Puritans, The millennium, and the future of Israel* (Cambridge, 2002 [1970]).

[55] On Brightman see Andrew Crome, *The restoration of the Jews.* On Mede see Jeffrey K. Jue, *Heaven upon earth: Joseph Mede (1586-1638) and the legacy of millenarianism* (Dordrecht, 2006).

Jewish as well as Christian writers, ensured that the study of the end times generally

avoided becoming overly parochial.[56]

While this more conservative apocalyptic tradition was important, it has often been

the more supposedly radical elements that have caught both historians' and the public's

imaginations. The Fifth Monarchy men, so called for their belief that they were called to

bring about the final monarchy predicted in Daniel 2:44, were often viewed in the decades

after the interregnum as evidence of the dangerous excesses that apocalypticism could lead

to. Yet while important, they were far from representative of all of those who held

apocalyptic beliefs – and indeed, were significantly less 'radical' than their enemies charged.

Their belief that they would be called to act for Christ and fulfil the prophecies depended on

a particular reading of providence, rather than a rash desire to fulfil prophecies.[57] As David

Farr has recently pointed out, for the Major-General and regicide Thomas Harrison, this

meant the bureaucratic engagements of government in the early 1650s, rather than leading

a crusade against Rome.[58] Nonetheless, the interpretation of the Fifth Monarchists in the

decades succeeding the Interregnum again shows the importance of adopting an

international approach to understandings of early modern prophecy. As Warren Johnston

notes in his chapter in this volume, Fifth Monarchist activity was later interpreted by

[56] Andrew Crome, 'The Jewish Indian theory And Protestant use of Catholic thought In the early modern
Atlantic' in Crawford Gribben and Scott Spurlock (eds), *Puritans and Catholics in the trans-Atlantic world 1600-
1800* (Basingstoke, 2015). See also Jason P. Rosenblatt, *Renaissance England's Chief Rabbi: John Selden* (Oxford,
2006).

[57] Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (London, 1972).

[58] David Farr, *Major-General Thomas Harrison: Millenarianism, Fifth Monarchism and the English Revolution
1616-1660* (Farnham, 2014).

reference to the Anabaptist rising in the German city of Münster under the supposed

messianic king John of Leiden in 1534-35. The polygamy, violence, starvation, and forced

communalism of the millennial kingdom John tried to carve out coloured later

interpretations of millennialism across the Atlantic world.[59] The regicide and desperate 1661

rising by Fifth Monarchist Thomas Venner seemed to cement this image of the danger of the

apocalyptic, and proved somewhat embarrassing for New England.[60]

There is nonetheless a danger in overemphasising the conservative nature of

prophecy in the period. In doing so, the potential for prophets to speak radically to the

status quo can be drastically limited, and one of the major appeals of prophetic discourse –

the potential to imagine change at a world historical level – can be undermined. Figures

such as Thomas Totney (TheaurauJohn Tany) in 1650s England, who saw himself as the

Jewish High Priest and believed that he would lead the ten tribes back to Palestine, might

appear eccentric, but his influences (drawing on Kabbalah, Jacob Boehme, alchemy, and

astrology) demonstrate once again the importance of the international flow of ideas in the

period. Similar points could be made about other prophets such as Joshua Garment, John

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[59] Returning to Hackett, it is interesting that Cosin's attack specifically compares the later prophet with John of

Leiden: 'And did not *Hacket* take vpon him to bee as great a *Prophet,* as *Iohn Matthewe,* or *Iohn* a*Leiden* his

successor? [...]Was not *Coppinger* likewise, as deepely bewitched as the people of *Munster,* when hee coulde

not perceiue, that *Hacket* did but dally with him, about particular intelligence of some treasons, supposed to

bee plotted by some great persons?' (Cosin, *Conspiracie*, p. 98).

[60] Yet as Farr points out, the Fifth Monarchists were only ever involved in two risings, both centring on the

eccentric one time New England resident Venner. See Farr, *Major-General Thomas Harrison*, pp. 251-6.

Reeves, and Lodowick Muggleton.[61] These prophets challenged the relatively tolerant faith

of the Protectorate, and the more controlled situation in New England. Gerard Winstanley

and the Diggers' well-known actions in creating a proto-millennial community at St.

George's Hill in April 1649, for example, set up a visible challenge to the status quo and

imagined an alternative in a way that openly challenged the government. Likewise, the

emergence of George Fox as a prophet within this milieu, and the subsequent Quaker

movement, pushed the limits of toleration.[62] When James Nayler appeared to appropriate

the mantle of Christ by riding into Bristol on a donkey while followers threw their garments

in his path, he was tried by parliament and narrowly escaped execution. Some Quaker

prophets in New England were not so lucky – Mary Fisher and Anne Austin were deported

from New England after preaching in Boston in 1656, while Mary Dyer was executed in 1660

for her repeated attempts at missionising. Neither was this limited to New England, as those

Quakers who travelled as prophetic signs to New Amsterdam discovered.[63]

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[61] See Ariel Hessayon, *"Gold tried in fire": The prophet TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution*

(Aldershot, 2007).

[62] On toleration see: John Coffey, *Persecution and toleration in Protestant England 1558-1689* (Harlow, 2000);

Eliane Glaser (ed.), *Religious tolerance in the Atlantic World: Early modern and contemporary perspectives*

(Basingstoke, 2014); Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable hatred: Tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500-1700*

(Manchester, 2006).

[63] On Quaker eschatology see Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *Early Quakers and their theological*

thought 1647-1723 (Cambridge, 2015) – particularly chapters by Douglas Gwyn, Carole Dale Spencer, Michael

Birkel and Stephen W. Angell, Sally Bruyneel, Pink Dandelion and Frederick Martin, Michele Lise Tarter and

Robynne Rogers Healey. Also: Sally Bruyneel, *Margaret Fell and the end of time: The theology of the mother of*

Quakerism (Waco, TX, 2010), Gribben, *Puritan Millennium*, pp. 215-19; Douglas Gwyn, 'Quakers, eschatology,

and time' in Stephen W. Angell and Pink Dandelion (eds), *The Oxford handbook of Quaker studies* (Oxford,

Given the excitement of the 1650s, and the prophetic hopes raised (and dashed) for

a variety of groups by the Restoration, the period from 1660-1700 has often been seen as

being marked by a trailing off of prophetic interest in the British Atlantic world. Yet as

Warren Johnston's recent work has shown for England, this was far from the case:

apocalyptic speculation may have been more conservative, and often even Royalist in

nature, but it did not disappear from the landscape.[64] The international networks that had

been developed over the course of the 1640s and 1650s continued to be used into the later

period, with letters on apocalyptic themes moving between England, the Netherlands and

New England to spread information about figures such as the candidate for Jewish messiah

Sabbatai Sevi and the armies of the lost tribes supposedly surrounding Mecca. As Marriott

Brandon has emphasised, these ideas spread through Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and

Conversos around both the Atlantic and Mediterranean worlds in the period.[65] Meanwhile,

conservative uses of apocalyptic prophecy were increasingly seen in scientific work over the

course of the later seventeenth century, whether in the works of Increase Mather in New

England (explored in Jan Stievermann's chapter), Cambridge Platonist Henry More, or in

2013), pp. 202-17; H. Larry Ingle, 'George Foxe, millenarian', *Albion* 24:2 (1992), pp. 261-78; Phyllis Mack,

Visionary women: Ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth-century England (Berkley, 1992); T.L. Underwood, 'Early

Quaker eschatology' in Toon (ed.), *Puritans, the millennium and the future of Israel* (Cambridge, 2002 [1970]),

pp. 91-103.

[64] Warren Johnston, *Revelation restored: The apocalypse in later seventeenth-century England* (Woodbridge,

2011).

[65] Marriott Brandon, *Transnational networks and cross-religious exchange in the seventeenth-century

Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds: Sabbatai Sevi and the lost tribes of Israel* (Farnham, 2015).

Isaac Newton's speculations on prophecy (both published and left in manuscript).[66] Yet

explosions of prophetic excitement could nonetheless still occur, whether linked to the

Glorious Revolution of 1688,[67] or to the uncertainty surrounding the Americas where wars

and witch trials were often read through an apocalyptic lens. Neither did this interest in

prophecy disappear at the start of the eighteenth century. The Camisard prophets who

arrived in London in 1706 (and quickly attracted an English following), remained a *cause*

célèbre. Their prediction that English follower Dr Thomas Emes would rise from the dead in

1708 was proven wrong, but the movement itself continued into the later years of the

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[66] See James E. Force **a**nd Richard H. Popkin (eds), *Millenarianism and messianism in early modern European culture Vol. III: The millenarian turn: millenarian contexts of science, politics, and everyday Anglo-American life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (Dordrecht, 2001); Sarah Hutton, 'More, Newton and the language of biblical prophecy' in James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (eds), *The books of nature and scripture: Recent essays on natural philosophy, theology and biblical criticism in the Netherlands of Spinoza's time and the British Isles of Newton's time* (Dordrecht, Boston, MA., and London, 1994), pp. 39-54;, Sarah Hutton, 'The seven trumpets and the seven vials: Apocalypticism and Christology in Newton's theological writings' in James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (eds), *Newton and religion: Context, nature and influence* (Dordrecht, 1999), pp. 165-78; Rob Iliffe '"Making a shew": Apocalyptic hermeneutics and the sociology of Christian idolatry in the work of Isaac Newton and Henry More" in Force and Popkin (eds), *The books of nature and scripture*, pp. 55-88; Frank E. Manuel, *The religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford, 1974); Michael Murrin, 'Newton's Apocalypse' in James E. Force and Richard H. Popkin (eds), *Newton and religion: Context, nature and influence* (Dordrecht, 1999), pp. 203-20; Reiner Smolinski, , 'The logic of millennial thought: Sir Isaac Newton among his contemporaries' in Force and Popkin (eds), *Newton and Religion*, pp. 259-89.

[67] Johnston, *Revelation restored*, pp. 189-224 ; Kevin Sharpe, 'Reading revelations: Prophecy, hermeneutics and politics in early modern Britain' in Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (eds), *Reading, society and politics in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 122-63.

century (with the Wesley brothers, amongst others, meeting prophets).[68] While it might be expected that such interests would fade as Enlightenment ideas of rationality become *de rigueur*, as recent scholarship has suggested, ideas of the miraculous and the seemingly 'irrational' did not disappear from the thought worlds of the majority of people in the eighteenth century.[69]

The most important manifestation of the continued importance of religion in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world were the Evangelical revivals which began to sweep both Britain and America in the 1730s and 40s. The rise of Evangelicalism was dependent, in part, on a variety of international networks, as W.R. Ward has convincingly shown. These networks did not just cross the Atlantic, but as Ward provocatively argues, can be seen in a wider global context.[70] His work also emphasises the importance of an eschatology which

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[68] Lionel Laborie, *Enlightening enthusiasm: Prophecy and religious experience in early eighteenth-century England* (Manchester, 2015); Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The history of a millenarian group in eighteenth-century England* (Berkley, CA., 1980).

[69] See Jeremy Gregory, 'Transforming the "age of reason" into "An age of faiths": or, putting religions and beliefs (back) into the eighteenth century', *Journal for Eighteenth Century Studies* 32 :3 (2009), pp. 287-305; Laborie, *Enlightening enthusiasm*; Phyllis Mack, *Heart religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and emotion in early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008); Phyllis Mack, 'The unbounded self: Dreaming and identity in the British Enlightenment' in Ann Marie Plane and Leslie Tuttle (eds), *Dreams, dreamers, and visions: The early modern Atlantic world* (Philadelphia, PA, 2013), pp. 207-225; Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven and London, 2006).

[70] W.R. Ward, *The Protestant Evangelical awakening* (Cambridge, 1992). Further helpful overviews of the revivals, and their international nature can be found in Mark Noll, *The rise of Evangelicalism: The age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester, 2004). The key work on the specifically transatlantic elements of Evangelicalism is Susan O'Brien, 'A transatlantic community of saints: The Great Awakening and the first

expected Christ's coming soon, but deferred it long enough to allow for genuine change to happen in the world.[71] This eschatology was passed across Atlantic networks of correspondence and shared religious interest, which tied believers together. Preachers such as George Whitefield, who proved popular both on frequent trips to America and in Britain, were figures around which wider communities could form.

It is not difficult to see why the revivals generated significant prophetic interest. Narratives of mass conversions and the sudden and radical changes that were seen in many individuals' lives, might seem to reflect the promises made for God's people that in the end times his spirit would be poured out in a powerful way (Joel 2). Jonathan Edwards was open to the possibility that he was viewing the first signs of the millennium at points throughout his career – heavily influenced by the commentaries of Moses Lowman, his notebooks on the apocalypse combined newspaper clippings with scripture they possibly fulfilled. For example, several articles from 1746 to 1758 were collected together under the heading of 'An Account of Events Probably Fulfilling the Sixth Vial on the River Euphrates' (Rev. 16: 12-

Evangelical network, 1735-1755', *The American Historical Review* 91:4 (1986), pp. 811-32. See also Carla Gardina Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia, PA., 2009), pp. 187-217.

[71] W.R. Ward, *Early evangelicalism: A global intellectual history, 1670-1789* (Cambridge, 2010). Ward's dating of Evangelicalism as prior to the revivals has remained controversial, clashing with David Bebbington's assertion that the movement was novel and a product of distinct eighteenth-century patterns of thought (Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Routledge, 1989)). For an overview of the debate, although overly focused on links with Reformed theology, see Michael A.G. Haykin and Kenneth J. Stewart (eds), *The emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring historical continuities* (Nottingham, 2008).

16).[72] As Stephen Stein has pointed out, however, Edwards was not vocal about his interest in prophecy: 'He kept conjectures to himself in the notebook... The millennium, a major subject of Edwards' private reflections, was noticeably absent as a leading topic in his early sermons, even on occasions when it would have served his announced ends'.[73] This once again raises the question of respectability and of whether apocalyptic speculation could be seen as conservative or radical. The fear of being seen as tending towards 'enthusiasm' remained a concern for Evangelicals, and a focus on prophecy could play into their opponents hands. Indeed, Edwards complained in a 1744 letter to William McCulloch that it was 'slanderously reported ... that I have often said that the millennium was already begun, and that it began in Northampton', a charge he vehemently denied.[74]

Yet for all Edwards' denials, elements of the early revivals did often appear to have a prophetic hue. The transatlantic 'Concert of Prayer' movement, which explicitly linked American Evangelicals with their Scottish counterparts, was often promoted in terms of prophecy. Edwards's own sermon endorsing the 'Concert', *An Humble Attempt*, was subtitled 'For the Revival of *Religion* and the Advancement of *Christ's Kingdom* on Earth, pursuant to Scripture-Promises and Prophecies concerning the *last time*'.[75] The project thus

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[72] Jonathan Edwards, *Notes on the Apocalypse* (1723) in *Works: Apocalyptic writings* (WJE Online), Ed. Stephen J. Stein, Volume 5, pp. 254-85.

[73] Stephen J. Stein, 'Introduction' in Jonathan Edwards, *Works: Apocalyptic Writings* Volume 5, p.19.

[74] Quoted in Stein, 'Introduction', p.29.

[75] Jonathan Edwards, *An humble attempt to promote explicit union of God's people in extraordinary prayer* (Boston, 1747).

served as a fascinating indication of the way in which believers on both sides of the Atlantic saw themselves as playing a key role in fulfilling the prophecies of Revelation.

The Revivals might therefore be helpfully seen as kairotic moments, as world-historical change and largescale conversions seemed possible due to the way in which events were being played out. Signs of a willingness to embrace the possibility of prophetic fulfilment in the period are even visible in John Wesley's reluctance to break from fellow preacher George Bell when he predicted the end of the world for 28 February 1763, due to Bell's claim to Christian Perfection.[76] Wesley himself accepted and reprinted parts of Johann Albrecht Bengel's millenarian commentaries on Revelation, and while Charles's interest in the subject has been overstated, he nonetheless shared some apocalyptic interests with his brother and other early Methodists.[77] As Jonathan Downing examines in his chapter in this volume, revivalism and prophecy could go hand in hand.

If revivalist prophecy was politically quietist, however, as the tumultuous events of the last quarter of the eighteenth century unfolded, eschatological interests once again showed their potential for inspiring controversy and justifying acts of rebellion. The

[76] David Hempton, *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven, CO., and London, 2005), pp.34-41. On Bell see Kenneth G.C. Newport, 'George Bell, prophet and enthusiast', *Methodist History* 35:2 (1997), pp. 95-105.

[77] Much of the focus of Charles Wesley's apocalyptic interest rests on the interpretation of a letter dated April 25 1754 in the Methodist Archive at the John Rylands Library Manchester, containing clear millennial predictions focusing on 1793 as the year of the millennium's consummation (see Kenneth G.C. Newport, *Apocalypse and millennium: Studies in biblical eisegesis* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 119-149). However, this letter, while in Wesley's hand, is a transcription of parts of a 1754 pamphlet *An account of the remarkable productions of Mr. David Imrie, minister of the gospel at St. Mungo in Annandale* (Edinburgh, 1754).

importance of language drawn from the book of Revelation and other apocalyptic portions of the Bible has often been highlighted in examinations of the American War of Independence. This developed from its use in New England, where prophecy justifying God's providential destruction of antichristian enemies had been a regular part of explaining natural disasters such as earthquakes, and conflicts from King Philip's War to more recent conflicts such as the Seven Year's War.[78] Although there has been disagreement between historians as to how common apocalyptic rhetoric was in the lead up to the revolutionary war,[79] from 1776 onwards it became increasingly prominent as Britain became viewed in the Manichean terms that had once been applied to the Catholic Church.[80] Prophecy was therefore seen as being fulfilled, and an independent America was imagined to serve a millennial role as an example to the world, and shelter for the oppressed. As Nathan O. Hatch has influentially argued, in this milieu ideas of a divine covenant and a millennial destiny could combine to produce a sense of 'civil millennialism': a combination of millennialism and eighteenth-century political theory which he saw as foundational to American political identity.[81] Even where this has assertion has been questioned, it has been recognised that apocalyptic texts remained important as a justification for war.[82]

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[78] Ruth Bloch, *Visionary Republic,* pp. 3-21.

[79] For arguments on the limit of apocalypticism in the period see Melvin B. Endy, 'Just war, holy war, and millennialism in Revolutionary America', *William and Mary Quarterly* 3rd series 42:1 (1985), pp. 3-25; Harry Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and religious culture in colonial New England* (New York and Oxford, 1986), pp.306-7.

[80] Pestana, *Protestant Empire*, pp. 223-5; Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, pp. 53-74.

[81] Nathan O. Hatch, *The sacred cause of liberty: Republican thought and the millennium in revolutionary New England* (New Haven, 1977). For a counter argument see Gerald R. McDermott, 'Civil religion in the American Revolutionary period: An historiographical analysis', *Christian Scholar's Review* 18:4 (1989), pp. 346-62.

Where Hatch saw millennialism continuing throughout the post-revolutionary period, other scholars (including both Bloch and Miller) have noted a shift away from prophetic discourse post-1783. Stephen Marini has helpfully suggested that such a move may have been inevitable as moral and political failures among newly independent Americans led to the unavoidable conclusion that the millennium had not yet dawned. Yet, as he argues persuasively, millennial fascination continued to proliferate among those on the margins such as Quakers, Free Will Baptists, and Shakers.[83] Such groups, as with the Shakers, often had their origins in (or close links with) Europe, while transatlantic networks continued to move correspondence and religious ideas between the old and new worlds.[84] Prophets, such as Jemima Wilkinson mentioned at the start of this introduction, therefore presented an apocalyptic discourse at odds with the civil millennialism that Hatch has argued for. As Bloch noted, these transatlantic connections applied specifically to both apocalyptic and politically radical ideas, categories which often merged. International friendships between figures such as Joseph Priestley and Richard Price in England with Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin in America are important to note, not to mention Tom Paine's transatlantic interests.[85]

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[82] James P. Byrd, *Sacred scripture, sacred war: The Bible and the American Revolution* (Oxford, 2013), pp.143-63.

[83] Stephen A. Marini, 'Uncertain dawn: Millennialism and political theology in Revolutionary America' in Richard Connors and Andrew Colin Gow (eds), *Anglo-American Millennialism, From Milton to the Millerites* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 159-76.

[84] David Hempton, 'International religious networks: Methodism and popular Protestantism, c.1750-1850' in Jeremy Gregory and Hugh McLeod (eds), *International religious networks* (Woodbridge, 2012), pp. 143-164.

[85] Bloch, *Visionary Republic*, pp. 103-4.

These revolutionary relationships did not go unnoticed in England, where events in America were followed with interest, and often formed part of a criticism of nascent imperial practices.[86] This condemnation could chime with that found in the apocalyptic portions of the Bible, demonstrating the continuing flexibility of prophecy as political critique. Criticism of the institutions of slavery, imperialism, and the nature of British politics were therefore evident in a number of English prophets who arose in the aftermath of the French Revolution, responding to the increasing limits resulting from Pitt's 'reign of alarm'.[87] Most prominent of these was Richard Brothers (1757-1824), Prince of the Hebrews and 'nephew of the Almighty' who believed that he would restore the Jews to Palestine, be granted George III's crown, and rebuild Jerusalem.[88] In many ways, Brothers can be seen as the archetypal transatlantic prophet. Born in Newfoundland and serving in the British Navy in the American wars, Brothers's exploits were not only of interest in London. Indeed, his *Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times* (1795) went through eighteen editions in the United States, as compared to four in London, in addition to Dublin and Paris printings. As such, Brothers can be seen as part of what Deborah Madden has described as 'creative,

[86] Jack P. Greene, *Evaluating empire and confronting colonialism in eighteenth-century Britain* (Cambridge, 2013), pp. 200-33.

[87] Kenneth R. Johnston, *Unusual suspects: Pitt's reign of alarm and the lost generation of the 1790s* (Oxford, 2013).

[88] The best treatment of Brothers is Deborah Madden, *The Paddington prophet.* See also John Barrell, 'Imagining the king's death: The arrest of Richard Brothers', *History Workshop Journal* 37:1 (1994), pp. 1-32; Iain McCalman, *Radical underground: Prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 50-72 ; Jon Mee, *Dangerous enthusiasm: William Blake and the culture of radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 20-74 .

visionary world' which saw events in France, America and Britain as prophetically connected.[89]

Brother's title as the predominant English prophet was taken over by the Devonshire prophet Joanna Southcott (1750-1814), who saw herself as the 'woman clothed in the sun' (Rev 12:1) and attracted international attention and a wide following until her death at the age of 64, supposedly pregnant with 'Shiloh', the predicted redeemer.[90] Southcott, as Deborah Madden discusses in her chapter in this volume, stole many of Brothers's followers, building on the existing interest in him as a way of establishing her own prophetic identity. She remains the most prominent of a number of female prophets in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, who used prophecy as a way of expressing their gender identity and responding to the challenges they faced in an industrialising society.[91] Yet Southcott's ministry also made canny use of the press and emerging public sphere. As Juster has argued, this led to an increased promotion for prophets across the Atlantic world, but it also raised serious problems for them. When prophecy assumed the language of reason, it could appear to be constructed and therefore inherently false; however, when this language was rejected, prophecy appeared as meaningless 'enthusiasm' to its detractors.[92]

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[89] Madden, *Paddington prophet*, p. 107.

[90] On Southcott see Francis Brown, *Joanna Southcott: The woman clothed in the sun* (Cambridge, 2002); Philip Lockley, *Visionary religion and radicalism in early industrial England: From Southcott to socialism* (Oxford, 2013); Matthew Niblett, *Prophecy and the politics of salvation in late Georgian England: The theology and apocalyptic vision of Joanna Southcott* (London, 2015).

[91] Anna Clark, 'The sexual crisis and popular religion in London, 1770-1820', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 34 (1988), pp. 56-69.

[92] Juster, *Doomsayers*. See especially pp. 1-20 and 216-59.

This book ends its study with Southcott, but this should not be taken to imply that prophecy ceased to be important in the Atlantic world in the period after 1800. As Crawford Gribben has noted, the transatlantic pattern of prophecy can be traced into and beyond this period – through the growing interest in premillennialism in the early nineteenth century, to the use of prophecy as an explanatory paradigm for the US Civil War, to the incredible influence of British and Irish dispensationalism on American evangelicalism in the later nineteenth century.[93] As with any historical periodisation, an argument could be made for extending the period looked at in this book, and indeed for taking it forward as far as the present day where prophecy continues to beguile. 1800 is not a *terminus ad quem* for the topics examined in this book, then, and the curious reader is encouraged to continue to explore its themes into later periods.

III. The Book

Each contributor to this book therefore offers their own insights and impressions on the way in which prophecy developed in the transatlantic world. These contributors come from a range of disciplinary contexts (history, literature, religious studies) and from across the Atlantic world itself (Brazil, Ireland, Britain, the United States). Contributors therefore were not asked to argue for any particular position on the role of prophecy, and some

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[93] See Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism*. For an excellent recent examination of prophecy in the United States from the mid-nineteenth century to the present see Matthew Avery Sutton, *American apocalypse: A history of modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA. and London, 2014).

would disagree with positions adopted by other authors. Nonetheless, each chapter highlights the importance of adopting a transatlantic approach when examining prophecy. While it is understandable that the reader will focus on those topics of particular interest, reading each of the chapters in turn will allow a greater appreciation of the sheer variety of transatlantic prophecy.

In the first chapter, Luis Filipe Silvério Lima explores a topic which has often been overlooked in Anglophone studies of millenarianism – the development of apocalyptic thought in Iberia and South America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Lima's article is a wide-ranging overview of the theme, demonstrating the way in which millenarian impulses could help solve some of the trickier questions raised by new discoveries, as well as driving both imperial expansion and native opposition to it in the period. The appeal of an empire fulfilling prophecies of the Fifth Monarchy is shown to have been a recurring idea in Spanish and Portuguese works, while at the same time ideas of apocalyptic election were applied by the 'Santidade do Jaguaipe' in their rebellion. A central theme of Lima's chapter is the way in which millennial ideas adapt freely to their wide ranging uses, both structuring and absorbing a variety of political and theological concerns. As he argues, they serve as 'the common grammar and vocabulary in the early modern Iberian world'.

Jeffrey K. Jue then offers a useful guide to help readers navigate the often confusing world of early modern Protestant exegesis. His chapter charts the hermeneutical shifts driving prophetic speculation in early modern Europe and America, demonstrating the way

in which medieval exegesis shifted into more historicist forms as the sixteenth century progressed. These developments were driven both by local events (such as the Marian exile), wider political upheavals (such as the Thirty Years War) and trends within developing Protestant thought.

John Kuhn's contribution examines a controversial and oft-debated portion of George Herbert's 'Church Militant' – the poet's discussion of religion's departure from England to America. While this passage may be well-known, it is seldom located within its immediate context of Herbert's *The Temple*, or wider debates about Anglo-American eschatology. Kuhn manages to contextualise the poem within both of these, arguing persuasively that Herbert expresses a sense of frustration and of being 'left behind' by the movement of religion. This is not to claim that for Herbert the millennium would come in America, although Kuhn argues that the poet was engaging with this position, but to express that all temporal religious institutions must ultimately fade away, with Christ returning to a world that would be as dark and faithless as that which he found at this first coming.

Edward Simon focuses on a different poet: the New England writer Anne Bradstreet and the millennial themes in her 1642 poem 'A Dialogue between Old England and New'. Simon argues that Bradstreet embraced a prophetic persona to condemn sin in England, with New England chastening her homeland for her sin and willingness to ignore her religious responsibilities. Nonetheless, this is not a poem about the translation of blessings from the old World to the New. Rather, Bradstreet sees a repentant England restored to a

powerful position in which she will defeat Rome and the Ottoman Empire, and play a central role in converting the Jews. While Bradstreet is usually seen as a conservative figure, Simon argues that her thought displays similarities to the ideas which Fifth Monarchists and Anna Trapnell would promote in the 1650s. The blurred lines between radicals and conservatives, and the importance of viewing Bradstreet in the context of a wider Atlantic prophetic role claimed by many women, are two of the particularly helpful suggestions to emerge from Simon's work.

Chris Caughey's chapter moves to focus on radicalism. He looks at radical prophecy in the 1640s and 50s through the figure of Antichrist. The description of a prophet as 'radical' very much depended on the political and religious position of the person assigning the label, and he demonstrates the way in which this caused problems both for the English parliament and for New England ministers. Where those who had fled to New England had departed so that they could practice what they saw as a pure form of Christianity, Caughey demonstrates the way in which religious change in England had a direct impact on the plantations, particularly as magistrates struggled to deal with Quaker prophets.

Andrew Crome looks at the way in which shifting understandings of the role that the Jews would play in end times events impacted upon eschatological debate on both sides of the Atlantic. An increasing focus on Palestine was part of a geographic turn in the study of prophecy. The restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland was central to this, as commentators argued that prophecies of a Jewish return had not been fulfilled at the end of

the Babylonian exile, and should not be applied spiritually to the Christian church. This fuelled an interest in finding the 'lost tribes' of Israel in America from some European Christians, but also the discovery of their own local geographic contexts encoded in Revelation. Ironically, while commentators argued that references to Jerusalem and Palestine had to be taken literally, at the same time they found typological allusions to Rome, Boston, and London predicted as having key roles in the coming apocalyptic trials.

Moving into the later seventeenth century, Warren Johnston's chapter builds on his ground breaking work on later seventeenth-century apocalypticism through an exploration of the way in which eschatology was linked to radicalism in the period. After the initial chaos of Venner's uprising in 1661 caused most dissenting groups to refuse its radical implications, apocalyptic symbolism and rhetoric revived in later years and was used as a way of condemning the Anglican hegemony. Johnston charts the way in which prophetic symbols from Daniel and Revelation could be used in a variety of contexts in order to defend non-conformity and attack supposed Catholic influences and plots. While focusing on England, Johnston's chapter nonetheless highlights the Atlantic networks sustaining prophetic speculation. Ideas developed in England, Scotland and on continental Europe, and he suggests that the use of prophecy by English groups was akin to the way in which it was then being employed in New England.

Outside of the world of theological debates, Al Cummins examines the ways in which English occult and alchemical traditions influenced popular prophecy in late seventeenth-

and early eighteenth-century America. He finds a continual public demand for prophetic

material in almanacs, which often adopted distinctly millennial positions. Yet prophecy is

more than end times speculation, and he fruitfully explores instances of shifting conceptions

of astrology, folk prediction, and divination as part of a general prophetic interest. This is

placed against a backdrop of English debates on magic and 'cunning folk', New England fears

of Satan, witch hunts, and changing scientific understanding. While contact with Native

Americans did change some of these English practices, settlers initially often ignored the

prophetic and occult knowledge that might be gained from them. This changed as the

eighteenth century progressed, leading to what Cummins describes as a 'melting cauldron'

of occult, astrological and prophetical beliefs by the turn of the nineteenth century.

Jan Stievermann's chapter makes use of his fascinating recent work on a scholarly

edition of Cotton Mather's *Biblia Americana* (1663-1728) to examine Mather's commentary

on the Canticles (or Song of Songs) in depth for the first time. Stievermann offers a

comparative reading in which Mather's work is compared to that of his grandfather, John

Cotton. As is well-known, Cotton held to a historicist reading of Canticles, in which it was

seen to contain the history of Israel and the church in allegorical form. Although initially

sceptical about this form of exegesis, Mather eventually came to follow it himself. However,

where Cotton found the pattern of a Congregationalist millennium encoded in the book, his

grandson was more sceptical about the potential for the gradual progression towards the

millennium on earth. Although his thoughts on Canticles were heavily based of the work of

continental millennialist Johannes Cocceius, he rejected the early commentator's optimism

at the end of his commentary. Thus Stievermann argues that where John Cotton might be

seen as a prototypical postmillennialist, Mather might serve as an important precursor to modern premillennialism.

Jonathan Downing takes up this theme by looking at the way in which a number of key figures during the first 'great awakening' understood prophecy. For preachers such as Jonathan Edwards, John Wesley, and George Whitefield, prophecy was both a powerful rhetorical form and a problematic discourse which could be linked back to the radicalism of the 1640s and 50s. Downing therefore provides a fascinating overview of the way in which these preachers walked a fine line between claiming prophetic authority and straying into enthusiasm. This often led to ambivalence in the face of being proclaimed prophets by their auditors, but could also result in uncertainty over how to react to extreme manifestations of the Holy Spirit as a result of their preaching. This ambivalence continued into their views of the last days, with millennial language being used, but often directly disavowed to avoid charges of enthusiasm.

Deborah Madden closes the book with her examination of three key prophets of the 'Southcottian visitation': Richard Brothers, Joanna Southcott, and George Turner. While each had their differences, she places them in the context of the uncertainties and revolutionary tensions of the late eighteenth century, examining their approach to authority, theology, and Jerusalem. While Brothers emphasised an imperialistic physical return to Jerusalem with England's 'hidden Jews', Southcott viewed Jerusalem as a spiritual state, and was seemingly unconcerned with ideas of a literal return to Palestine. As Madden notes,

Jerusalem represents an interesting imaginative arena in which issues of moral and spiritual geography, imperialism, and gender could all be imagined.

The contributors to this book do not claim to have offered the last word in the study of transatlantic prophecy and eschatology. Indeed, as noted above, many areas have been left unexamined. But the range of fascinating approaches demonstrated in the chapters that follow aim to encourage other historians to examine the questions of prophecy and eschatology in still greater depth in future, and to reiterate the importance of a transatlantic approach in so doing.