The Restoration of the Jews in Transatlantic Context, 1600-1680

Andrew Crome

Writing in 1615 from Harwich in Essex, Church of England minister Thomas Draxe was drawn to consider the future of the Jewish people. Would the Jews, he wondered, 'bee restored into their countrey'? Considering the theological and logistical challenges of such a restoration, Draxe concluded that 'It is very probable. First, all the Prophets seeme to speak of this returne. Secondly, they shall no longer bee in bondage. Thirdly, God having for so many ages forsaken his people shall the more notably shew them mercy'.[1] For Draxe, the literal restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland of Palestine was based on God's mercy and justice, but most importantly on the stable foundation of unfulfilled Old Testament prophecy.

This focus on the importance of a literal fulfilment of prophecy might be taken to suggest that Draxe was far from conventional in his thinking, marking his views as a signpost towards radical interpretations of biblical prophecy in mid-seventeenth-century England.[2] Yet Draxe remained resolutely conformist in his thought. Two years after he wrote about

[1] Thomas Draxe, *An alarum to the last iudgement* (London, 1615), p. 81.

[2] On this see Crawford Gribben, *The Puritan millennium: Literature and theology 1550-1682* Revised edition (Milton Keynes, 2008) and Ariel Hessayon, '*Gold tried in fire': The prophet TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot, 2007).

Jewish restoration, he penned an open appeal to 'those of the Separation (or *English Donatists*)'. If they could not be reconciled to the Church of England, Draxe suggested that 'for the avoiding of scandall, and in expectance of some prosperous successe' that they 'remove into *Virginia,* and make a plantation there, in hope to convert infidels to Christianitie'.[3] Given that Harwich was at the time the home port of *The Mayflower*, Draxe's words, for all their orthodoxy, had ironically prophetic overtones.

Draxe offers a helpful introduction to the important role that the idea of Jewish restoration played in a transatlantic context. For while his mind moved towards Palestine to look for the fulfilment of prophecy, his focus on America initially appears purely financial and practical. Virginia might be a useful dumping ground for unrepentant separatists, but also a place of economic opportunity and Christian flourishing.[4] Yet his hope that separatists might convert 'infidels' in America suggests that Draxe could still conceive of a role for radicals in fulfilling God's prophetic plans. For Draxe, the conversion of the Jews was to be intimately linked to the conversion of those 'infidels' he imagines separatists evangelising: 'why may not (specially after the generall calling and conuersion of the Iewes...) the

[3] Thomas Draxe, *Ten counter-demaunds propounded to those of the separation, (or English Donatists) to be directly, and distinctly answered* (London, 1617), sig. A2^{ii}r.

[4] This might be seen as part of the millennialist marketing of Virginia traced by Beth Quitslund. See '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.

Americans, West Indians, and other Nations; yea even in the Turkes Dominions, be enlightned?'[5]

The central aim of the chapter is to unpack something of this hope for conversion which linked North America, England, and imaginings of the Holy Land in the early modern period. It therefore attempts to provide an overview of the process through which the idea of Jewish restoration linked into wider prophetic speculation in the British Atlantic world. While an exhaustive examination of the theme across the period 1500-1800 is impossible due to issues of space, its influence will be broadly outlined and a number of writers analysed in greater detail. Jewish restorationism can be examined with particular reference to the way in which it impacted upon ideas of the other, national mission, and the prophetic geography of the Bible's apocalyptic books. Each element will form part of this chapter's exploration of the theme.

I. Jewish Restoration in Context

The idea that there would be a large-scale conversion of the Jewish people to Christ prior to the end times had long been a part of Christian eschatological belief. Romans 9-11, particularly Paul's confident statement in Romans 11:26 that 'all Israel' would eventually be saved, was the most important biblical support, but the promise of an end time conversion

[5] Draxe, *Alarum*, p. 29.

could be found across scripture. Unfulfilled prophecy relating to the reunification of the ten lost tribes of Israel with the two remaining tribes of Judah (Ezk. 37) and the sealing of '144,000 of all the tribes of the children of Israel' (Rev. 7:4) could be taken as implying that conversion was to be expected. On the Day of Judgement, wrote Augustine, 'even the Jews will certainly repent, even those Jews who are to receive "the spirit of grace and mercy"'.[6]

While Luther and Calvin notably denied the likelihood of a mass Jewish conversion, the belief remained strong in reformation Europe and flourished in England. As John Bale noted in his 1545 commentary on Revelation, *The Image of Both Churches*, 'he that hath dispersed Israell, shall bringe him againe to his folde'.[7] The marginal notations of the 1560 Geneva Bible promised a great end-times Jewish conversion based upon Romans 11: 'He sheweth that the time shal come that the whole nation of ye Jewes thogh [*sic*] not every one particularly, shalbe joined to the church of Christ.' [8] John Foxe similarly claimed that God would 'vouchsafe to reduce [Jews] againe into his owne familie, with his elect Saints, and make [them] partakers of his gladsome Gospell'.[9] These beliefs were very different from claiming that there would be a restoration of the Jews to Palestine. As Foxe further noted,

---

[6] Augustine, *City of God*, trans. H. Bettenson (Harmsworth, 1972), p.960 (XX.30). See also Jeremy Cohen, 'The mystery of Israel's salvation: Romans 11:25–26 in patristic and medieval exegesis', *Harvard Theological Review* 98:3 (2005), pp. 247-81.

[7] John Bale, *The image of both churches* (London, 1570), I.142. See also I.96-99.

[8] *The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition* (Madison, WI., 1969), New Testament, f. 75.

[9] John Foxe, *A sermon preached at the Christening of a certaine Iew* (London, 1578), sig. M1r.

such hopes were the Jews a 'shew of a false shadow... a fantasticall hope of a terrene kingdome, whereof they had never any one word promised by God'.[10]

Yet ideas of restoration might find their way into Christian discourse through radicals such as Roger Edwards, who wrote to John Dee and Bishop Cooper of Lincoln in the 1580s regarding his conviction that he would lead the Jews back to Palestine, or Ralph Durden who shared a similar belief.[11] The minister Francis Kett, executed as a heretic in 1589, included in his list of aberrant beliefs the idea that Jesus had physically returned to Palestine and was preparing to gather the Jews there.[12]

Regardless of these controversial links, ideas of a restoration of the Jews to Palestine began to become more mainstream over the early seventeenth century. The seeds of this can be seen in the work of former Brownist Henoch Clapham, who in his 1596 *Briefe of the Bible* suggested that '[Jews] dreamed that *Israel* should have restored to them a Kingdome not onely spirituall, such a dreame cannot be infringed: nay, reade the Prophets attentively,

[10] Foxe, *Sermon*, sig. C1v.

[11] British Library MS 353, ff.192-230. See also James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 142-45; Richard W. Cogley, '"The most vile and barbarous nation of all the world": Giles Fletcher the Elder's *The Tartars Or, Ten Tribes* (ca. 1610)', *Renaissance Quarterly* 58:3 (2005), p. 785.

[12] Robert O. Smith. *More desired than our owne salvation: The roots of Christian Zionism* (Oxford, 2013), pp. 65-6. See also Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., 'From eschatology to Arian heresy: The case of Francis Kett (d.1589)', *Harvard Theological Review* 67 (1974), pp. 459-73.

and they insinuate a Kingdome not onely spirituall'.[13] A more influential figure was Bedfordshire minister and biblical commentator Thomas Brightman (1562-1607), whose commentaries on Revelation, Daniel, and Song of Songs focused upon a physical restoration of the Jews which would see them granted dominion over the world after Christ had defeated the Satanic forces of Pope and Turk. 'What, shall they return to *Jerusalem* againe?', asked Brightman, 'There is nothing more certaine, the Prophets do every where directly confirme it and beat upon it'.[14] Draxe's own shift from the standard position which denied Jewish restoration to his belief in its literal fulfilment is attributable to Brightman's influence, and his book generated considerable interest despite being banned from being printed in England until the 1640s.[15]

Brightman's influence, which grew among puritans in the 1630s thanks to his assertion that the Church of England was the 'lukewarm' Church of Laodicea referred to in Revelation 3, had a transatlantic impact. Combined with his suggestion that the Jewish return to Palestine would begin in 1656, his work seemed particularly well suited to the

[13] Henoch Clapham, *A briefe of the Bible drawne first into English poesy, and then illustrated by apte annotations* (Edinburgh, 1596), pp. 182-3.

[14] Thomas Brightman, *A revelation of the Revelation* (London, 1644), p.544. For more on Brightman see Andrew Crome, *The restoration of the Jews: Eschatology, hermeneutics and early modern national Identity in the works of Thomas Brightman* (Cham, 2014).

[15] See Crome, *Restoration*, pp. 131-65.

times (as well as offering a useful justification for those leaving England).[16] After his arrival in Boston, John Cotton made extensive use of the work in sermons on Revelation and the Song of Songs to suggest that Jewish restoration was imminent, looking forward to a time when the Jews would convert and return to a gloriously restored Jerusalem.[17] Likewise, fellow New England minister Peter Bulkeley anticipated that 'all nations must be gathered to *Jerusalem*, to joyne with the Church of the *Jewes* in the worship of God'.[18] A form of Judeo-centric eschatology was of central importance in the New England plantation.[19] Ephraim Huit tied a rejection of Jewish restorationism to the false theology of the Laudian regime, and wrote in his commentary on Daniel of 'the Iewes... to be restablished into their former kingdome with greate glory and large command'.[20] As Increase Mather's 1669 *Mystery of Israel's Salvation* suggested, the idea of a Jewish restoration to the Holy Land should be seen as part of established belief in New England.[21]

At the same time, the belief found renewed popularity in England. Amidst the eschatological excitement of the 1640s and 50s on both sides of the Atlantic, the idea that

---

[16] In arguing that the Church of England was the Church of Laodicea in Rev. 3, Christ's warning that he was about to 'spew thee out of my mouth' (Rev. 3:1) could be applied directly to impending judgement.

[17] John Cotton, *A brief exposition of the whole book of Canticles* (London, 1642), pp. 195-262.

[18] Peter Bulkeley, *The gospel covenant or the covenant of grace opened* (London, 1646), p. 6.

[19] Richard W. Cogley, 'The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the restoration of Israel in the "Judeo-Centric" strand of Puritan millenarianism', *Church History* 72 (2003), pp. 304-22; Smith, *More desired*, pp. 117-40.

[20] Ephraim Huit, *The whole prophecie of Daniel explained, by a paraphrase, analysis and briefe comment* (London, 1644), p. 63.

[21] Increase Mather, *The mystery of Israel's salvation* (n.p., 1669). Of course, the fact that Mather felt the need to write shows that the theory was not universally accepted. Indeed, he admits that for some it was viewed as a 'seeming novelism' (sig. C4^{i}v).

the Jews might be preparing to return to Palestine was driven by both contemporary events and the growing freedom which accompanied the collapse of the Star Chamber and press censorship.[22] These speculations were not limited to one political or religious group, covering instead the full spectrum of opinions. The idea worked itself out in the preaching of luminaries such as John Owen and Jeremiah Burroughs, who preached on the return to 'the very land of Canaan itself'.[23] Independent minister William Strong told his congregation that the Jews 'shall be brought into their own land, and they shall dwell there, they shall dwell in their owne citie as in days of old'.[24] Meanwhile, Fifth Monarchists such as John Tillinghast could look forward to the pouring of the sixth vial of God's judgement upon the Euphrates, at which point 'the Jews... shall return to their own land and convert to Christ'.[25] Some such as Thomas Totney, who renamed himself TheaurauJohn Tany in response to his divine visions, took things further. In publications with titles such as *I Proclaime from the Lord of Hosts the Returne of the Jewes from their Captivity* (1650), Tany saw himself as a new Jewish High Priest, who would lead his people back to Palestine.[26]

By the middle of the seventeenth century, a concept of Jewish restoration to Palestine was therefore an established part of eschatology in both England and New England. But as the variety of figures that made use of it suggests, it was also an idea that could have particularly powerful political and theological implications. It is tempting to view

[22] Gribben, *Puritan millennium*, pp. 49-58.

[23] Jeremiah Burroughs, *An exposition of the prophesie of Hosea* (London, 1643), p. 117.

[24] William Strong, *XXXI select sermons, preached on special occasions* (London, 1656), p. 286.

[25] John Tillinghast, *Generation work* (London, 1655), Part II, p. 38.

[26] For more on Tany see Hessayon, '*Gold tried in fire'*.

the growth of speculation on the eschatological role of the Jews in a specifically English context, as a response to the chaos of the wars that raged in the three kingdoms in the 1640s and 50s. However, to do so would be to ignore the important international, and particularly transatlantic, dimension of the nature of debates on Jewish restoration. Instead, it is more profitable to examine the question through taking a wider geographical perspective which incorporates the entire transatlantic world.

A first reason for taking an Atlantic approach to the question of Jewish restoration is obvious, but has nonetheless often been overlooked. The debate about Jewish restoration was not limited to England, or indeed, to the British Atlantic world. Discussions of restoration relied on reports from America of natives who might be Jews,[27] on Spanish speculation on the role of *conversos* and Jewish ancestry of Indians,[28] while English, German and Dutch writers were in regular correspondence on the nature of prophecy.[29] This correspondence involved not only Protestant and Catholic writers, but also Jews. The transatlantic network that connected New England minister John Eliot with London-based divine John Dury and Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel in the 1650s was only the most

[27] Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The ten tribes: A world history* (Oxford, 2009).

[28] Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors: Iberianizing the Atlantic, 1550-1700* (Stanford, 2006).

[29] Johannes Van den Berg, 'Joseph Mede and the Dutch millenarian Daniel Van Laren' in Michael Wilks (ed.), *Prophecy and eschatology* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 111-22.

obvious example of these interactions.[30] I have examined these sorts of networks elsewhere, and they will not be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.[31]

Second, a focus on Jewish restoration raised questions of space and spiritual geography. The main thrust of the Reformation had been desacralising in terms of its attitude towards sacred spaces.[32] Shrines and other pilgrimage sites were no longer to be revered, as God was to be sought in his word rather than the externals of the world. Yet as Alexandra Walsham has recently shown, the landscape continued to have sacred connections for both Protestants and the remaining Catholic population in England during the seventeenth century. Biblical prophecy was one of the elements that could drive a resacralisation of the landscape, and concentrate on particular areas as uniquely holy.[33] While the basis of God's restoration of the Jews might be seen to be the land covenant he

[30] For full discussions of the circumstances surrounding the conference see Andrew Crome, 'English national identity and the readmission of the Jews, 1650-1656', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 66:2 (2015), pp. 280-301; Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Britain, 1656-2000,* (Berkeley, 2002), pp. 15-27; David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982) ; David S. Katz, *The Jews in the history of England* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 107-44; David S. Katz, 'English redemption and Jewish readmission in 1656,' *Journal of Jewish Studies* 34 (1983), pp. 73-91; Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews,* pp. 55-62, 167-94.

[31] Andrew Crome, 'The "Jewish Indian" theory and Catholic/Protestant intellectual networks in the early modern Atlantic world' in Crawford Gribben and Scott Spurlock (eds), *Puritans and Catholics in the trans-Atlantic world, 1600-1800* (Basingstoke, 2015).

[32] Carlos M. N. Eire, *War against the idols: The Reformation of worship from Erasmus to Calvin* (Cambridge, 1986).

[33] Alexandra Walsham, *The reformation of the landscape: Religion, identity and memory in early modern Britain and Ireland* (Oxford, 2011).

made with Abraham, he was nonetheless specific as to where that land would be: Palestine. The debate on Jewish restoration therefore questioned the geographic arena in which apocalyptic prophecies might play out, and suggested God's concern for one area over all others.

This leads to a final reason for adopting a less-localised view. Ironically, at the same time as some writers were insisting that promises to the Jews had to relate to specific areas of land in the Middle East, the tendency to read the geography of their own local surroundings into prophecy began to emerge. The 'great city, which spiritually is called Sodom or Egypt' (Rev. 11:8) could just as easily be Paris or London as it could be Rome or Constantinople. This focus on spiritual geography raised questions of the role that different parts of the world could be expected to play in the end times script of Daniel and Revelation. In turn, it could raise anxiety. Had England lost its chance to be involved in God's plans to destroy Rome and restore the Jews? What part could the American plantations be expected to play in them? In other words, how did conceptions of land and territory from scripture's apocalyptic texts relate to understandings of 'land' in the Atlantic world, and what did these say to interpretations of 'the land' in Palestine? Where Walsham has written about the way in which understanding of space rather than time was the more important category for the early modern memory, prophecy offered an opportunity to combine both space and time as a way of exploring future geographies.[34]

[34] Walsham, *Reformation of the landscape*, p. 7.

Of course, these international networks and concerns should not suggest that early modern thought on these questions was not also influenced by national (or indeed local) events. For example, the antinomianin controversy in New England could be placed alongside the tumultuous events in Europe as dual signs of the coming fall of antichrist.[35] However, ideas of Palestine as a distinctly 'special' place, finding one's own land coded in biblical apocalypse, and international eschatological networks combined to raise important questions of nationhood and identity.

II. The Centrality of Palestine

Palestine continued to have a particularly strong hold over the English imagination. As Eva Holmberg has recently highlighted, it was one of the most popular areas for early modern writers to discuss. Descriptions tended to merge two tropes: pity for the state of the land, which was seen to have been judged and rejected by God, combined with awareness and sometimes even grim celebration that God had punished the Jews for their deicide.[36] In Thomas Fuller's evocative phrasing: ' The stump indeed stands still, but the branches are withered; the *Skeleton* remains, but the favour and flesh thereof is consumed. *Iudea* is, and is not, what it was before; the same in bulk, not blessing; for

[35] Karyn Valerius, '"So manifest a signe from heaven": Monstrosity and heresy in the Antinomian controversy', *The New England Quarterly* 83:2 (2010), pp. 179-99.

[36] Eva Johanna Holmberg, *Jews in the early modern English Imagination* (Aldershot, 2011).

fashion, not fruitfulness; the old Instrument is the same, but it is neither strung with stock, nor plaid upon with the hand of skilfull husbandry. The *Rose of Sharon* is faded, her leaves lost, and now nothing but the prickles thereof to be seen.'[37] Such readings also included an attack on the Ottomans, considered incapable of keeping the land in an acceptable condition.

The idea that Palestine itself was to be the site of the excitement of Armageddon and the New Jerusalem was one that was familiar to writers producing works about the land. Fuller raised this as one of the imagined objections to his decision to discuss geography in his 1650 *Pisgah-sight of Palestine*: 'describing this Countrey is but disturbing it, it being better to let it sleep quietly, intombed in its owne ashes. The rather, because the *New Ierusalem* is now daily expected to come down, and these corporall (not to say carnall) studies of this terrestriall *Canaan,* begin to grow out of fashion, with the more knowing sort of Christians.'[38] The quotation is revealing in what it suggests about attitudes towards the land as dead and abandoned, memorialised only through its deadened ashes. Richard Baxter suggested that for most Jews a return to Palestine 'instead of an exaltation, it would be a banishment' describing the land as: 'very full of mountains, rocks and deserts, oft infested with famines'.[39]

[37] Thomas Fuller, *A Pisgah-sight of Palestine* (London, 1650), p. 16

[38] Fuller, *Pisgah-sight*, p. 3.

[39] Richard Baxter, *The glorious Kingdom of Christ described and clearly vindicated* (London, 1691), p. 69.

Yet Palestine could still capture the imagination, and travel narratives and works of geography emphasised the nature of the land and its connection to the early days of Christianity. Fuller argued that his work was designed to act as an aid to theological reflection, with geography serving as an imaginative tool through which seventeenth-century readers could better appreciate scriptural texts.[40] Samuel Purchas may have explained his description as part of a process of mapping out unfamiliar cultures and landscapes, but he also recognised that any reflection on the nature of Jews and Judaism also had an eschatological element – he apologised that his extensive relation of Jewish customs must necessarily be expanded by a discussion of the conversion of the Jews as per Romans 11.[41] Fuller, writing at a period when eschatological speculation was a more common part of daily discourse, was even more explicit, dedicating a section of his work to 'Of the Jews, their repossessing their native countrey'.[42]

An increased interest in the land and ancient customs was a natural corollary of a detailed focus on the Old Testament and increasing willingness to use it as a model for faith, practice, and personal experience. A side-effect of this was that commentators such as Brightman, Draxe, and Cotton were willing to question the idea that prophecies of a restoration to Palestine in the Hebrew Bible should be applied spiritually to the Gentile church or to Christ's first coming. Combined with a developing interest in interpreting the

[40] Fuller, *Pisgah-sight*, p. 3.

[41] Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his pilgrimage. Or relations of the world and the religions observed in all ages and places discouered, from the creation vnto this present* (London, 1613), p. 183.

[42] Fuller, *Pisgah-sight*, p. 194.

text in a way that would have made sense to the original readers, this meant that when prophecies referred to a restored Jewish nation that was exactly what they meant. As Joseph Mede wrote, when scholars 'wrest the plaine prophesies touching things which shall be at his second coming of Christ to his first, the Iewes laugh at us, and they are hardened in their infidelitie.'[43]

This concern over providing a consistent hermeneutic therefore emerged repeatedly in the writings of figures on both sides of the Atlantic. This was at its strongest in the 1640s and 50s, but continued into the later seventeenth and eighteenth century. Neither was this new – it had its roots in Brightman's work, where he had reminded readers tempted to allegorise prophecies of restoration that they 'must not start from the naturall signification but where there is necessitie of the figurative here nothing inforceth [*sic*] to leave the proper: but contrariwise there is a necessitie to reteine it'.[44] As Jeremiah Burroughs argued, such prophecies had not been fulfilled in the past, so were 'yet certainly to come, when the fulnesse of the Gentiles shall come in, & the Jews be converted'.[45] Preaching to parliament in 1645, William Gouge argued that '*the recalling of the Jewes* is most literally and plentifully fore-told by the prophets. Many apply sundry prophecies that tend that way to the delivery of the Jews from the *Babylonish* captivity; and others to the spirituall *Israel*, consisting of *Gentiles*. But assuredly, such prophecies as foretell the re-uniting of *Judah* and *Ephraim*

[43]Joseph Mede, *The key of the revelation* (London, 1643), II, p. 135.

[44] Thomas Brightman, *A Most Comfortable Exposition of the Last and Most Difficult Part of the Prophecie of Daniel* (Amsterdam, 1635), pp. 64-5.

[45] Burroughs, *Prophesie of Hosea*, p. 105.

together, have especiall reference to the fore-said *recalling of the Jews*'.[46] While Jews and Gentiles were equal in God's sight, the prophecies pointed to fact that 'God will have a very glorious church there, specially in Jerusalem before the end of the world come'.[47] William Strong thus argued that the Fifth Monarchy would be instituted by the Jews in Palestine: 'who are every where called the holy people, not of the Gentiles, *Dan* 8.24 and 12.7 and therefore it is they must take the kingdome and possesse it, and it shall be given to them'.[48] As Edmund Hall wrote, it would be nonsensical should the prophecies not be applied to the Jews. Given that those Jews who initially heard prophecy presumed that it related to a restoration to the land, it made no sense, he argued, to interpret them any differently:

> If these prophecies do nothing concern the restauration of the Jewes in these latter dayes, then to what purpose did God send his prophets to sing songs in their ears, if it nothing concerned them? Certainly these prophecies were prophesied amongst them to no purpose; if all those prophecies belong to the Gentiles, then certainly God would have sent his prophets amongst them, but they principally concerned the Jewes, and therefore they were prophesied amongst them, and to them, to whom they belonged.[49]

This hermeneutic basis was repeatedly the reason given for a focus on the land by American writers as well. As Huit wrote in his *Whole Prophecie of Daniel Explained* (1644),

---

[46] William Gouge, *The progresse of divine providence* (London, 1645), p. 29.

[47] Burroughs, *Prophesie of Hosea*, p. 117

[48] Strong, *Sermons*, p. 288.

[49] [Edmund Hall], *Lingua testium* (London, 1651), pp. 6–7.

by mistakenly applying prophecies of Jewish restoration to the first coming of Christ, commentators fundamentally misunderstand prophecy in its literal sense.[50] Bulkeley argued that such prophecies had to be applied to Palestine: 'let those scriptures be examined which speake of their conversion, and it will appeare, that they speake... punctually concerning their inhabiting owne land, and their building and dwelling in their own cities.'[51] Preaching in 1666, Increase Mather went so far as to claim that the Spirit 'more frequently useth these literal expressions, that so a mystical interpretation might not be looked upon as sufficient'.[52] Geographical locations of restoration were therefore not irrelevant:

> We should let the Lord have no rest in heaven, till *Jerusalem be made a praise in the earth*? [sic] And when will that be? Verily when *Jerusalem* shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in *Jerusalem*.[53]

This approach took the complex prophecies which had often been applied as spiritual allegories, and returned them instead to the world of politics and geography. A focus on the land of Palestine as a contemporary geographical reality therefore became an inevitability. The instituted one of the most important later debates on the topic, as Richard Baxter and Increase Mather responded to one another across the Atlantic in the later seventeenth century. Baxter, who had always been uncertain of apocalyptic speculation,

---

[50] Huit, *Whole prophecie of Daniel,* pp. 196-200.

[51] Bulkeley, *Gospel covenant*, p.16.

[52] Increase Mather, *The mystery of Israel's salvation, explained and applied* (n.p., 1669), p. 128.

[53] Mather, *Mystery*, p. 180.

came to the topic late and was angered by what he saw as an overly-literal approach to the topic.[54] Those who argued for a literal millennium at Jerusalem were 'the grossest feigners of all the rest, well did *Jerom* [*sic*] say, that the millenaries fetch their errour from the Jews, and would set up Judaism by it.'[55] Such misinterpretation failed to realise that Romans 11 had been fulfilled in the adoption of all believers as children of Abraham and that Judea was of a comparable state to the Isle of Man.[56]

Baxter chose to dedicate his book on the subject to Mather due to the American minister's learned nature. For those who supposed that millenarians should be equated with the Independent (and slightly radical) Thomas Beverley, who Baxter also attacked in the work, the puritan elder gave an important reminder that 'the chief writers for the millennium are conformists (and men of greatest learning and piety among them)'.[57] Mather was pleased at the dedication, although he was less happy with the contents of Baxter's work – having sent 'three thousand miles to obtain it' he was left disappointed in its denial of the millennium and Jewish restoration.[58] Baxter's failure was once again

[54] William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the millennium: Protestant Imperialism and the English Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), esp. pp. 27-75.

[55] Baxter, *Glorious kingdom*, p. 9.

[56] Baxter, *Glorious kingdom*, pp. 58-60.

[57] Baxter, *Glorious kingdom*, sig. A2v. Baxter had been imprisoned with Beverley and the two wrote against one another civilly. Beverley's *The thousand years kingdom of Christ* (1691) and *The universal Christian doctrine of the Day of Judgment* (1691) contained answers to Baxter's *Glorious kingdom* and *A reply to Mr Tho. Beverley's answer* (1691).

[58] Increase Mather, *A dissertation concerning the future conversion of the Jewish nation* (London, 1709), p. 7.

hermeneutic. Building on this to defend his interpretation of the first resurrection as literal, an exasperated Mather asked 'How can a man then take a passage of so plain, and ordinarily expressed words... in any other sense than the usual and literal?'[59] The use of the literal sense meant that a focus on Jerusalem became a central element of biblical prophecy. This meant that writers had to work out how the Jews were going to get there, and what was going to happen to the Ottomans who currently possessed the land when they did.

This usually resulted in a twofold response which managed to simultaneously ignore and demonise the current inhabitants of the Holy Land. For most commentators, Palestine was treated as if it had been left abandoned, awaiting the restoration of the Jews since Roman times. As Baxter noted in exasperation, 'must all that now possess [the land] be robbed of their habitations and estates, to make room for our Jews?'[60] This was combined with a much more active geopolitical awareness of the requirements for a Jewish return. As Nabil Matar has noted, the Jews often fulfilled a key role of destroying the Ottomans in Judeo-centric works. This was to continue a long pattern of associating the fall of the Ottomans with the end times, but added a distinctly Judeo-centric twist in viewing Jews as the force through which God would work. Brightman had seen the Jews as the 'Kings of the East' who would cross the Euphrates at the pouring out of the sixth vial of God's judgement.[61] The geography, however, could range further afield. In 1651, John Dury was imagining converted Jews marching through Egypt, and avenging themselves on both the

[59] Mather, *Dissertation*, p. 19.

[60] Baxter, *Glorious kingdom*, p. 61.

[61] Brightman, *Revelation*, pp. 542-558.

Ottomans and the Inquisition who 'kept [them] out of the Holy Land and their beloved city *Jerusalem*'.[62] Huit hinted that they might be involved in the downfall of the Roman Church.[63] Matar has seen this focus on the Jews as agents for achieving Protestant aims as a symptom of orientalism and emerging colonialism, and it was certainly the case that the Jewish action against the Ottomans was seen as a way of explaining how the Muslim empire might be defeated. [64] Nonetheless, as Richard Cogley has noted, this sort of criticism fails to recognise that the majority of Judeo-centrists viewed the restored Jewish state in Palestine as being functionally superior to the West, rather than a colonial outpost.[65] Strong therefore emphasised that the Jews would be above all other authorities and Christ 'shall in more special manner be... *King of the Jews*.'[66]As Mather wrote, 'the *Israelitish* nation shall then be acknowledged and respected in the world above any other nation or people'.[67]

This focus on the Jews therefore established Palestine as a special area of God's focus, and highlighted the extent to which God was still intimately concerned with geography. An emphasis on the 'literal' reading of scripture guaranteed this. Yet at the same time, and somewhat ironically, this highlighted a tension – if God was concerned with

---

[62] John Dury in Thomas Thorowgood, *Iewes in America* (London, 1650), sigs. E3^{i}r-E3^{i}v.

[63] Huit, *Whole prophecie of Daniel*, p. 63.

[64] Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558–1685* (Cambridge: C.U.P., 1998), pp. 167–83.

[65] Richard W. Cogley, 'The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Restoration of Israel in the "Judeo-Centric" Strand of Puritan Millenarianism', *Church History* 72:2 (2003), p. 331..

[66] Strong, *XXXI select sermons*, p. 281.

[67] Mather, *Dissertation*, p. 58.

particular locations, then what did this have to say to writers in England and America, and God's relationship to them?

III. Geographical Tensions

While interest in Jewish restoration may have focused upon Palestine, it would be wrong to claim that this meant that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation were simply seen to be concerned with the Holy Land. Eschatology formed one of the important ways of viewing the new discoveries in America and the subsequent plantations established there. Columbus's focus on the role of prophecy in his discoveries and the links he made to the liberation of Jerusalem have been well documented,[68] but the question of Jewish return to Palestine raised new geographical issues which could be linked to the new world.

Where were the Jews going to return from? Brightman's suggestion that the Euphrates would be dried to allow them passage suggested that their pilgrimage would be from the East, a view based on the apocryphal book 2 Esdras. Here he was drawing on a strand of Jewish tradition linked to the discovery of the 'lost' tribes of Israel. In c. 722 BCE, the ten tribes that made up the northern kingdom of Israel (in contrast to the southern kingdom of Judah) had been exiled following the Assyrian conquest. Their fate was a

[68] See Christopher Columbus, *The book of prophecies* ed. Roberto Rusconi, trans. Blair Sullivan (Berkeley, 1997).

mystery. As Zvi Ben-Dor Benite has recently documented, the possible location of the tribes had fascinated both Jewish and Christian writers from the early church onwards, and often led to opportunities for dialogue between them.[69] As Brandon Marriott argues, these eschatological ideas connected to the tribes explicitly allowed for dialogue across both the Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds.[70]

The majority of writers argued that the lost tribes were located somewhere in Asia, perhaps amongst the Tartar tribes of Russia, a view held by the Elizabethan ambassador to Russia, Giles Fletcher, and circulated in manuscript until finally published by his grandson in 1677.[71] Some, however, were willing to go so far as to suggest that the discovery of America was a providential act through which the true location of the tribes would be revealed. This was a suggestion that had been found in a number of Iberian works, which had noted supposed cultural and linguistic similarities between Jews and American Indians.[72] The Norwich minister and Westminster divine Thomas Thorowgood's enthusiastic exposition of

[69] Zvi Ben-Dor Benite, *The ten lost tribes: A world history* (Oxford, 2009). See also Tudor Parfitt, *The lost tribes of Israel: The history of a myth* (London, 2002), pp. 1-25.

[70] Brandon Marriott, *Transnational networks and cross-religious exchange in the seventeenth-century Mediterranean and Atlantic worlds: Sabbatai Sevi and the lost tribes of Israel* (Farnham, 2015).

[71] This is printed in Samuel Lee, *Israel redux: or The restauration of Israel, 2 treatises* (London, 1677).

[72] This theme was explored by writers such as Joannes Fredericus Lumnius, Peter Martyr d'Anghiera and Gilbert Genebrard. See Amy Sturgis, 'Prophesies and politics: Millenarians, rabbis, and the Jewish Indian theory', *Seventeenth Century* 14 (1999), pp. 15-23. However, Lee Earnest Huddleston argues that Martyr did not fully espouse the theory (*Origins of the American Indians: European concepts, 1492-1729* [Austin, TX. and London, 1967], p. 33).

this so-called 'Jewish Indian theory' resulted in two books over the course of a decade, confusingly both titled *Jews in America*, despite their different content.

The use of this theory was important in an Atlantic context for two reasons. First, it served as a way of dismissing an Iberian and English eschatological interpretation in which the Americas were seen as a demonic territory breeding the forces of Gog and Magog that would be involved in a Satanic rebellion at the millennium's conclusion. This concept had Iberian roots, particularly in the work of the Franciscan Juan de Torquemada, who suggested that Satan had led the Americans to the new world in a Satanic parody of the Christian story. The history of South Americans, and the at once familiar but uncanny difference in their religious rites and histories, suggested a deliberate inversion of Christianity.[73] Joseph Mede had espoused a version of this thesis when he responded to William Twisse's question of whether America might be the site of the New Jerusalem. Satan had led heathen nations into America with the express purpose of being 'God's ape' in setting up a kingdom out of the reach of the word of Christ. His purposes had been frustrated when the Spaniards had come, and might be further dashed by the New England colonists, even if their aim of conversion of natives was fanciful: 'though we make no Christians there, yet to bring some thither to disturb and vex him [Satan]'.[74] Locating the lost tribes in America would not only answer eschatological criticism of the type offered by Mede, but on a more practical level it

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

[74] This is laid out in a letter to William Twisse of 23 March 1634/5. See Joseph Mede, *The works of the pious and profoundly learned Joseph Mede* (London, 1672) pp. 798-803. On Torquemada's influence see Cañizares-Esguerra, *Puritan Conquistadors*, pp. 100-104.

might also generate financial support for the plantations, and give hope to the evangelistic efforts of the colonists which were supposedly one of the major reasons for the existence of the New England settlements.

A second use of the theory came in the way it supported a trend for identifying one's own nation in the apocalyptic sections of scripture, something that appears frequently in the work of Judeo-centric writers in the period. Again, this could be traced back to Brightman. While focusing on the literal return of the Jews to Palestine, at the same time he had emphasised the distinctly English fulfilments of some of the text. Baxter had referred to Brightman's commentaries despairingly, seeing the earlier commentator as responsible for the deluded claim that 'almost half the *Revelation* spake of *England*.'[75] While this was undoubtedly an exaggeration, Brightman did adopt a looser interpretation of geography than his insistence on a literal interpretation of the land of Israel might initially suggest. The winepress of Revelation 14, which overflowed with blood for 1,600 furlongs, was thus equated with the flow of goods taken from monasteries by the English government in the Henrician reformation. Geographically this led Brightman into difficulties, for as he acknowledged, 1,600 furlongs equated to roughly 200 miles, which fell somewhat short of the length of England. The solution, he suggested, was to remove the north from the calculation as it 'is more desert, and unmanured neer the borders, which... *their crue of religious Monks, Fryars and Nunnes,* was afraid of, as being in a colder aire, then that they

[75] Richard Baxter, *A paraphrase of the New Testament* (London, 1685), f. 292v.

could endure it, who delight in the most champion and pleasant places of the Land; We shall see a marvellous consent even in this circumstance also.'[76]

This sort of approach might initially appear to be a strained reading of the text, but it can also be seen as a natural counterpoint to the renewed geographical focus that writers were placing upon Jerusalem and Palestine. On the one hand, none of this was entirely new. A historicist interpretation of prophecy always encouraged specific identification with particular territories and historical figures as writers worked through the narrative. It was common, for example, to find the ten kings who initially support the Beast (Rev. 12, 13) connected to their specific geographical locations. Yet the Judeo-centric focus on Palestine threatened to focus the entire book on the Levant, and leave little room for gentile involvement in the narrative of prophecy. Brightman's work thus moved away from the literal interpretation of geography – the land that was plagued by blood became England rather than Palestine. Confusingly, prophetic geography was relatively malleable and applicable in different contexts when applied to the past, but usually literal when applied to the near future. In England, this led a number of writers to promote a distinctly English interpretation of many of Daniel and Revelation's prophecies, while at the same time focusing upon Jewish restoration to Palestine. Much of this was driven by the chaotic events of the 1640s and 1650s, which seemed to place England at the centre of efforts to destroy

[76] Brightman, *Revelation*, p. 503

the power of Antichrist.[77] Enemies of Cromwell such as Edmund Hall made similar claims, but with different political implications: thus the slaying of the two witnesses was the destruction of 'a lawful magistracy and ministry', the name 'Oliver Cromwell' could be calculated as 666, while the sixth vial referred to a literal restoration of Jews to Palestine.[78] Here again, the tension between the literal geography of Palestine and the imagined geography of the apocalypse in England came into play. On the one hand, as has already been shown, Hall argued that the prophecies of restoration must be literal: 'If these prophecies do nothing concern the restauration of the Jewes in these latter dayes, then to what purpose did God send his prophets to sing songs in their ears'?[79] On the other, he claimed that that Christ's return to the Mount of Olives should be read as referring to England and Scotland, which would be reunited at Cromwell's future fall, an event he dated (somewhat optimistically) to 1651.[80]

The discussion of geography in these works often also led to contemplation on the prophetic role of New England. Hall, for example, suggested that New England was now experiencing an evangelistic success that was denied to England itself. This could be seen as

---

[77] See Gribben, *Puritan millennium;* Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English apocalyptic visions from the Reformation to the eve of the Civil Wars* (Toronto, 1978); Katherine R. Firth, *The apocalyptic tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530-1645* (Oxford, 1979).

[78] Edmund Hall, *Manus testium movens, or a presbyteriall glosse upon many of those obscure prophetick Texts* (London, 1651), pp. 27-45.

[79] Edmund Hall, *Lingua Testium, Wherein Monarchy is Proved 1. To be Jure Divino 2. To be Successive in the Church* (London, 1651), pp. 6-7.

[80] Hall, *Manus testium movens*, p. 81 [misl. 77].

part of a *translatio imperii*: 'God... is now calling his ministers away to some greater harvest... In New England the harvest begins to increase upon those few labourers hands... And here in old England men despise the ministers... really, I much fear 'tis evening with England'.[81] This sense of political shift was driven in part by his belief in the Jewish Indian theory.[82] Thorowgood showed a similar enthusiasm in connecting the restoration of the Jews with a providential role for New England. Arguing that the English, while Jutes and Angles in ancient Germany, had originally received their faith from the Jews, he claimed that God had arranged things so that the favour was returned: 'from this second *England* [i.e. old England] God hath so disposed the hearts of many in the third, New *England*, that they have done more in these last few yeares towards their conversion, then hath been effected by all other nations and people that have planted there since they were first known to the habitable world'.[83]

While these writers found a distinct apocalyptic role for New England, in terms of seeing the settlements as key in bringing about the conversion (and thus promoting the restoration) of the Jewish people, New England writers often expressed a distinct sense of unease about the role of their plantations in the apocalypse. As Susan Hardman-Moore has noted, the sense that prophetic events were unfolding back in Europe was both depleting the population and raising difficult questions about New England's purpose.[84] John Cotton's

[81] Hall, *Manus tesitum movens*, p. 89 [misl. 85]

[82] Hall, *Lingua testium*, p. 8.

[83] Thorowgood, *Jews in America* (1650), sig. b2r.

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

1642 sermon on the resurrection of the churches linked this longed for event with the 'calling home of the Jewes', tying it in with the pure church state in New England.[85] Bulkeley skilfully tied together events in England with both developments in New England and the restoration of the Jews. Turning to England first, he congratulated and warned that 'the light is now coming, and the glory of the Lord is now rising upon thee... make much of it'. New England, rather than looking jealously at England should remember that they were more richly blessed than any other people: 'thou enjoyest many faithfull witnesses... thou hast many bright starres in thy firmament... the Lord looks for more from thee, then [*sic*] from any other people'. Part of this process of faithfulness in both locations would be to hasten the fall of Rome, an event necessary for the return of the Jews to Palestine. Thus both New England and old were called to be faithful not just in active opposition to the Devil, but also in prayer for Jewish conversion and restoration: 'If it were but our enemies beast, we were bound to helpe it out, how much more these that have been the people of God, and have such promises made unto them?'[86]

Increase Mather similarly argued that the American plantations had to have some part in the fulfilment of prophecy. While Brightman had found England's geography detailed in the prophecy, Mather found suggestive references to New England's role in Robert Parker's *Exposition of the Powring Out of the Fourth Vial*, written at some point in the 1610s, but unpublished until 1650. Parker, who was revered in New England as a trail-blazing Congregationalist, had written against Brightman's interpretation of the vial as judgement

[85] John Cotton, *The churches resurrection* (London, 1642), p. 8.

[86] Bulkeley, *Gospel covenant*, pp. 14-19.

on Rome. Instead, he argued that the vial represented a form of judgement on a Protestant prince or state, which would suffer burning before going on to attack Rome as the judgement in the fifth vial.[87] This prince or state, suggested Parker, would be in a state of wilderness before God used it: '*John* is placed in a wildernesse to see *Romes* ruine; it is a signe that *Romes* ruine shall arise out of some Countrey reduced to a wildernesse'. Significantly, he tied this wilderness state to the restoration of the Jews: 'so when *John* is to see the beauty of the *Jewish* Church, he is carried to a great high mountain to see it, *Apoc.* 21.10 to wit, because this Church shall be set on high like a mountain, *Isaiah* 2.2'.[88]

The implication of this in 1650 was that England represented this state, although the paratext surrounding this material, in the form of an end note probably written by Thomas Gataker, warned against taking political action in response to a belief that the prophecies were being fulfilled.[89] Mather carefully reworked this. The country burned with fire and reduced to a wilderness could easily be England, as he noted by reference to the Great Fire of London which was then recent news to those who heard his sermons. Yet the nature of the 'wilderness' also invited comparisons to New England: 'God hath led us into a

[87] Robert Parker, *An exposition of the powring out of the fourth vial mentioned in the sixteenth of the Revelation* (London, 1650), pp. 7-9.

[88] Parker, *Exposition*, p .9

[89] Gataker wrote the preface here, and it seems possible that he also contributed the closing 'annotations'. As the annotator notes: ' it is not safe for any men, to ground any action upon presumption or confidence that now the time is come when things shall be fulfilled, and that it doth belong to them to execute the Wrath of God against *Papists* or any others, whom they imagine to be designed by the Holy Ghost.' Parker, *Exposition*, p. 15.

wilderness... who knoweth but that he may send down his Spirit upon us here, if we continue faithful before him? These then are motives to stir us to search into these mysterious truths.'[90] Mather therefore imagined a compound identity, in which New England could become the impetus driving apocalyptic events – not through direct actions, but through prayer. Like John who had been taken into the wilderness to witness Rome's fall, so New Englanders could expect a role in apocalyptic events through being brought into a wilderness to see and support European Protestants through prayer and study of the Bible. 'What a solemn charge is here', he concluded, 'that we should pray continually every night and every day, and that we should let the Lord have no rest in heaven, till *Jerusalem be made a praise in the Earth*'.[91] Mather's rhetorical work managed to have things both ways. England's geography was found within Revelation as the state damaged by burning and purging, while New England took the position of John, watching on from the wilderness while God achieved his purposes in Europe and Asia. Prayer became a way for New Englanders to contribute both to these endeavours and to the restoration of the Jews. This echoed a theme with an established history in the plantation. It recalled, for example, William Hooke's 1645 assertion that New England's churches acted as 'regiments or bands of souldiers lying in ambush here under the fearn and brushet of the Wildernes... to come upon God's enemies with deadly fastings and prayers, murtherers that will kill point blanke from one end of the world to the other.'[92]

[90] Mather, *Mystery*, p. 164.

[91] Mather, *Mystery*, p. 178.

[92] William Hooke, *New-Englands sence of Old-England and Irelands sorrowes* (London, 1645), p. 19.

The sort of exegesis offered by Mather therefore offered a way of preserving the apocalyptic geography of the old world, while also writing in New England. Given this interest, it might appear surprising that few New England commentators supported the Jewish Indian theory. Those pushing it tended to be boosters of the plantations publishing in England, while it gained little traction in the plantations. Thus the series of tracts publicising New England evangelisation of natives issued by the New England Company from 1649 onwards often referred to the theory, as did Thorowgood in his volumes dedicated to the claims of Jewish-Indian ancestry. At the same time in New England, John Cotton suggested that the lost tribes were in China.[93] Although 'apostle to the Indians' John Eliot held hopes that those he preached to might be of Jewish extraction, he appears to have abandoned this belief by 1656, writing to Thorowgood that 'your labours and letters have drawn me forth further that way, than otherwise I should have gone... give me leave to hear and observe in silence, what the Lord will teach others to say in this matter'.[94] The reasons for this reticence to embrace the theory may stem from a variety of reasons, including a desire to keep apocalyptic events focused on Rome and Jerusalem, fear of the implications of recognising Native Americans as a 'superior' Jewish power, and a familiarity with the natives which made their Jewish ancestry appear unlikely.[95] Yet New England's backers recognised the potential financial value of keeping the theory alive. As Kristina Bross has recognised, ministers in New England allowed such publications to 'feed the religious

[93] Cotton, 'The Sixth Vial' in *Powring Out*, p. 21.

[94] Eliot, quoted in Thorowgood, *Jews in America* (1660), p. 34.

[95] Claire Jowitt, 'Radical identities? Native Americans, Jews and the English Commonwealth', *Seventeenth Century* 10:1 (1995), pp. 101-119; Amy Sturgis, 'Prophesies and politics', pp. 15-23.

fantasies of metropolitan supporters' even when 'openly skeptical about the Christian Indians' Jewish origins'.[96]

IV. Conclusion

The idea of Jewish restoration to Palestine can be seen as rooted in a self-consciously 'literal' interpretation of prophecy, and linking a diverse range of eschatological positions. Tied to a political and hermeneutical moment at which scripture's readers were attempting to find their own geographical surroundings in apocalyptic prophecies, it might be seen as part of a geographical turn in apocalyptic interpretation that took place during the early modern period. This had two, seemingly contradictory, elements. First, a firm focus on Palestine and a constant reminder that when God said 'Jerusalem' he meant 'Jerusalem' in prophecy. Second, however, commentators found their own nations encoded under other names and places in these same books of scripture. The Mount of Olives might be England and Scotland, the land of 1,600 furlongs England with its 'northern parts' cut off, and the wilderness of Revelation 12 New England. Given this setting, it is unsurprising that writers in both England and New England were interested in the apocalyptic implications of the New World.

[96] Kristina Bross, 'From London to Nonantum: Mission literature in the Transatlantic World' in Susan Juster and Linda Gregerson (eds), *Empires of God: Religious encounters in the early modern Atlantic* (Philadelphia, 2011) p. 136.

Yet this was not necessarily as the sort of millennial errand that Perry Miller identified.[97] Instead, the Judeo-centric prophecy that was shared by writers in both old and New England meant that the central apocalyptic focus remained on the Holy Land. While William Twisse may have speculated that New England could be the location of the New Jerusalem, the major writers in the early plantation largely eschewed such thoughts. As Mather wrote, prophecy would never be fulfilled until '*Jerusalem* shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in *Jerusalem*'.[98] Regardless, the expectation of Jewish conversion offered a shared structure of prophetic speculation and could be used by writers on both sides of the Atlantic to understand the role of the New England in the coming conversion of the Jews: whether this was (for English writers) in the conversion of Native Americans who might be secret Jews, or for New Englanders in supporting Jewish restoration through prayer and fasting.

This interaction reveals something of the complex dynamic play of geography and transoceanic relationship involved in early modern prophetic discourse, and explains the continuing confusion in terms of interpreting references to land in apocalyptic texts in literal or allegorical forms. This contextual battle continued later, for example in Jonathan Edwards' work. In his *Notes* on the apocalypse, Edwards wrestled with a belief that God would act 'that nothing might hinder the Israelites returning to their God and their land'[99] and an

[97] Perry Miller, *Errand Into the Wilderness* (Cambridge, MA., 1956).

[98] Mather, *Mystery*, p. 180.

[99] Jonathan Edwards, *Notes on the Apocalypse* (1723) in *Works: Apocalyptic Writings* (WJE Online), Ed. Stephen J. Stein, Volume 5, p. 116.

argument that America might find itself described in the Book of Revelation.[100] The temptation to look back to the old world and see Revelation as referring to the Holy Land, clashed with the desire to find his own familiar geographical markers described in prophecy. This was not unique to Edwards – it is an issue which continues to the present day, with contemporary dispensationalists focusing on Palestine while simultaneously asking about America's role in prophecy.[101] This is not to claim a direct link between the early modern beliefs discussed here and contemporary prophecy, but it is to highlight that discourses of discovery, geography, and Jewish restoration, continue to raise questions that were being addressed in the transatlantic prophetic discourse of the seventeenth century.

[100] Stephen J. Stein, "Introduction" in Jonathan Edwards, *Works: Apocalyptic Writings* (WJE Online), Ed. Stephen J. Stein, Volume 5, p. 26.

[101] See for example Mark Hitchcock, *101 Answers to the Most Asked Questions about the End Times* (Sisters, OR., 2001), pp.31-5.