

# Prophecy in the Age of Revolution.<sup>1</sup>

Deborah Madden

Protestant interpretations of Biblical prophecy, its imagery, language and structure, have inspired multiple re-enactments of the Bible's archetypes in numerous subcultures and geographical contexts.<sup>2</sup> More generally, this tradition has produced dissenters, missionaries, prophets, radicals, writers, artists and composers, who, from Mede, Milton and Bunyan, through to Handel and Blake, have created many different millennial visions. Metaphorical appropriations of Jerusalem and the 'Promised Land' have featured heavily in the Anglo-American cultural and literary imagination, where the 'homeland' has also been visualised in golden utopian hues.<sup>3</sup> More controversially, perhaps, is where covenantal Protestantism has literally built 'moral geographies' and 'elect' communities, thereby providing a materialist

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter has been re-worked from an earlier monograph on Richard Brothers, *The Paddington prophet: Richard Brothers's journey to Jerusalem* (Manchester, 2010). My thanks to the commissioning editor for granting permission to re-use the monograph for this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Elbourne, *Blood ground: Colonialism, missions and the contest for Christianity in the Cape Colony and Britain, 1799-1853* (Montreal and Kingston, 2002), p. 18.

<sup>3</sup> The utopian tradition differs significantly to millenarian and millennialist uses of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The distinctions between millenarian, millennial and millennialist go beyond the scope of this chapter. For a fuller discussion of this, see Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 193-4.

rationale for prophetic, millennial, mystical, or republican ways of life on both sides of the Atlantic.

Perhaps the most prominent example of trans-Atlantic prophetic millenarianism can be seen in the Shakers under Mother Ann Lee, who, in 1774, set sail for colonial America with a small group of believers. Flourishing under the spiritual outpouring of the evangelical Great Awakening, this group was one of the earliest amongst many other Protestant sects to settle in what would later become known as the 'burned over district' of New York state. It is this deeper history of trans-Atlantic millenarianism, which was harboured by Anglo-American Protestantism, that gave impetus to the so-called 'Southcottian' and Christian-Israelite millenarian prophets, where attempts were made to actualise Biblical prophecy in both Britain and the United States. Broadly speaking, the 'Southcottian' framework contains a series of 'Visitations', or visionary prophets, between 1790 and 1950.<sup>4</sup> By 1821, under the spiritual direction of John Wroe (1782-1863), distinctive features of the Southcottian 'Visitation' scheme were systematised and consciously repeated in a number of geographical contexts, giving it a transnational identity that was rooted in trans-Atlantic millennialism.

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<sup>4</sup> For full details about all of Southcottian prophets in the 'Visitation', see Gordon Allan, 'Southcottian sects from 1790 to the present day', in Kenneth G.C. Newport and Crawford Gribben (eds), *Expecting the end: Millennialism in social and historical context* (Waco, TX.,2006), pp. 213-36; Philip Lockley, *Visionary religion and radicalism in early industrial England: From Southcott to Socialism* (Oxford, 2013) and Philip Lockley and Jane Shaw (eds), *The Southcottians: A modern millennial movement*, forthcoming with I.B. Tauris.

This chapter will map out the distinct, but interconnected, prophetic narratives set down by the first three 'Visitations' within the Southcottian scheme, Richard Brothers (1757-1824), Joanna Southcott (1750-1814) and George Turner (d.1821). Taken together, these early prophets form an interesting constellation of theological ideas that can tell us a lot about the political, intellectual and cultural shifts taking place in Britain during the 1790s and 1800s. Their respective theologies capture Britain's emerging sense of national purpose and burgeoning Empire following the loss of its American colonies and in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars. Furthermore, each of these prophets continued to exert influence over the development of Christian Israelite theology within the broader context of Anglo-American Protestantism well beyond their own lifetime. For example, following directly on from George Turner after his death in 1821, John Wroe offered a coherent Christian Israelite movement that was more pragmatic and workable whilst promising a global pre-millennial foretaste of what they could expect at the end of time. This enabled him, unlike Brothers, Southcott or Turner, to implement and make concrete, in microscopic form, his vision of a Christian Israelite future – a ground-plan – that could be repeated around the Anglo-sphere world in America, Australia and New Zealand. In this sense, despite substantial differences in their theology, Wroe's Christian Israelite movement shared many of the same material features that marked Shaker, Mormon and Millerite communities that had grown out of the age of democratic revolutions.

We will see how the prophetic narratives of Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott interpreted different passages from Revelation within this context. Moving from a relationship of peaceful co-existence to competitive rivalry, Brothers and Southcott mined the profoundly eschatological possibilities of Revelation, believing that they alone were God's chosen

instrument. Following a pre-ordained period of apocalyptic destruction, their prophetic ministry would usher in the new millennium on earth. The millenarian expectations of George Turner interacted powerfully between these competing prophets, as he oscillated from being Richard Brothers's chief conduit, to Joanna Southcott's most trusted supporter. It was Turner, in fact, who took leadership and steered the Southcottian movement after her death in 1814. Furthermore, it was Turner who would incorporate Christian Hebraic themes that would be institutionalised by later Southcottian prophets across the Atlantic world.

### **I. Protestant Biblical Prophecy: Millenarianism and Sacred Geography**

A yearning for the Promised Land is a well-established tradition that is as old as the Bible itself; a recurring motif in the scriptures, it can be seen in the nomadic religious practices of Abraham and the ancient Israelites, who, devoted and obedient to Yahweh, separated themselves by living on the fringes of civilisation. Recent scholarship has attested well to the renewing power of this yearning in terms of Protestant covenantal theology and its seemingly limitless capacity in the Atlantic world to visualise, imagine, create and re-create the Promised Land and the New Jerusalem.<sup>5</sup> A specifically Protestant tradition of internalising, re-enacting

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<sup>5</sup> Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The story of American Christian Zionism* (New York, NY., and Oxford, 2008); Victoria Clark, *Allies for Armageddon: The rise of Christian Zionism* (New Haven, CT., 2007); Eitan Bar-Yosef,

and actualising Biblical archetypes has ensured that both its literal and metaphorical significance forms part of Anglo-American religious, cultural, national and even racial identity.<sup>6</sup>

A providential framework for this national identity in Britain was initially secured by the Church of England's independence from Rome during the Elizabethan Settlement and vernacular translations of the scriptures, namely the King James Bible of 1611. With its 'true' reformed Church – as opposed to Roman Catholicism – Britain was God's 'elect' nation with a sacred mission in the story of global salvation. In its earliest usage, the 'nation' articulated the notion of divine election and a 'covenanted' people who retained an exalted role distinct from the rest of humanity. The message of salvation therefore becomes the responsibility of God's chosen, though, significantly, what Reformation theologies revealed to many, was that God's Covenant of Grace with one set of people could be claimed over and above another.

Orthodox Christianity posits that Christ's incarnation, death and resurrection heralded the New Covenant. This was instigated by the Last Supper, but continues to be accessed by Christians through baptism, faith and the Eucharist. During the end times, or Christ's 'Second Coming', the living and the dead are judged before his New Covenant inaugurates the new

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*The Holy Land in English culture 1799-1917* (Oxford, 2005); Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road map to Armageddon?* (Leicester, 2004); Burke O. Long, *Imagining the Holy Land* (Indiana, IN., 2002).

<sup>6</sup> Bar-Yosef, *Holy Land in English culture*, p. 11; Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen peoples: Sacred sources of national identity* (Oxford, 2003); Colin Kidd, *The forging of races: Race and scripture in the Protestant Atlantic world 1600-2000* (Cambridge, 2006); Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven, CT., 1992).

heaven and new earth. Christian nations, communities, groups and even individuals could thus claim for themselves authentic witness over other claimants to the Covenant of Grace, evidenced most powerfully in the 'Godly' communities established during the 1620s and 1640s by Puritan settlers in the New World. As newly democratised polities, these settler communities eschewed the Church of England's ecclesiastical power, with some separatist Puritans rejecting it altogether.

Biblical typologies and prophetic narratives revolving around a covenantal faith in the newly restored Jerusalem and Holy Land were harvested by many Reformation theologies. In England and America this type of covenantal Protestantism found its fullest expression in Puritan congregationalism, though its currency within Calvinism meant that its reach was interdenominational and included Presbyterians and Baptists, as well as a plethora of millennialist sects and individuals 'dissenting' or breaking away from the Anglican fold. Accordingly, the relationship between God and humanity becomes formulated as a distinct Covenant of Grace originally set down in the Old Testament and fulfilled by Christ. This covenant carries its own 'signs' for God's chosen or elect in a myriad of contexts. Thus, for Brothers, but also Southcott and Turner, the Old Testament was not simply a series of Christological pre-figurations, but a history of how God's covenant was revealed to those specifically chosen.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Murray Roston, *Prophet and poet: The Bible and the growth of Romanticism* (London, 1965), pp. 47-8.

For Southcottian millenarians this elect status is further evidenced by the Book of Revelation which foretells Christ's Second Coming and the 'sealing' of God's 144,000 elect into the millennial kingdom (Rev. 7:1, 14:1) – the new heaven and new earth. This number pertains to an 'ingathering' of Israel's 'lost tribes' in the Old Testament, which are also referred to in Revelation 7:1-8 – hence an insistence by the more literal-minded millenarians like Richard Brothers to suggest that only 144,000 of God's elect could claim salvation.<sup>8</sup> Brothers held that this elect was Britain's 'hidden' Jews who had descended from Israel's lost tribes. These tribes, which he believed had settled mainly in Northern Europe, would be gathered together at the appointed time for one final journey to the Promised Land. Emphasis here on Britain's 'hidden' or 'invisible' Jews means that Brothers continues to be regarded as father of the British-Israelites, though he was by no means a straightforward Anglo-Israelite and, in fact, it was George Turner who provided a more exacting mechanical framework for these ideas. Furthermore, modern British-Israelites have been particularly testy about this repeated assertion, which they rightly say is based on historical ignorance.<sup>9</sup>

Brothers proclaimed that he was 'Nephew of the Almighty' with a genealogical lineage that could be traced through the Biblical line of Judah. This was taken as revealed evidence of

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<sup>8</sup> This figure refers to Israel's twelve tribes in the Old Testament, though in Revelation (7:1-8) the tribes of Ephraim and Dan are replaced by Joseph and Levi.

<sup>9</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 297-8.

his prophetic mission to fulfil the covenant during Christ's Second Coming. To undertake this mission, Brothers would be revealed in 1795 as 'Prince of the Hebrews': Shiloh, the man-child of Revelation (Rev. 12:5), who would literally take the Jews back to rebuild Jerusalem.

Brothers's unique interpretation of human redemption during the end times is clearly some distance from orthodox Christianity, which makes no 'prediction' about when Christ's return will take place and finesses the literal number of 144,000 in terms of a universal message of salvation – open to Jew and Gentile alike.

Millenarians claiming elect status believed that spiritual transformation during the end times would take as its starting point their 'authentic' apperception of the New Jerusalem, which is situated where they, as God's chosen, were dwelling. This is why some millennial groups make no claim for a literal location of Jerusalem, whilst others insist upon a physical migration to the Holy Land during the millennium. The specific location of the restored Jerusalem was therefore open to contestation between different millennialist sects or individuals. This rich history of millenarianism within the wider Protestant tradition has thus created competing visions of Jerusalem, simultaneously mystical, republican, and patriotic. The varied appropriations of Revelation, but also the scriptures in general, thus makes Protestant Christianity inherently divisive – an aspect that was, of course, anticipated, feared and condemned by the Papacy.

Whilst Protestantism was certainly an important factor in the construction of a distinctively British identity, the nature of this was open to interpretation. The sheer variety of denominations on the Protestant spectrum created innumerable sectarian divides, which, though rooted in the Reformation, continued to affect British political life up until the nineteenth century when religious tests and legal restrictions barring nonconformists and dissenters from public life were finally removed. Sectarian division was most apparent between Anglicans and nonconformists. This was notable in Britain's colonies, where Protestant migrants, travellers and settlers carried with them highly individualised variants of a much larger Protestant culture.<sup>10</sup> For many Protestant settlers and missionaries, the New World offered the same millennial promise as the sacred geography of the Holy Land and was quite literally 'the land of milk and honey'.

When tackling the complicated issue of national identity and sectarian difference, the reciprocal influences of religion and politics over migratory habits and cultural practice are difficult to determine. An example of this can be seen in the case of Richard Brothers, who was himself a product of the colonial New World. His prophetic ministry was an intricate matrix of theological commitment, patriotic loyalty, and colonial superiority, which nevertheless did not preclude a searing political and moral criticism of Britain's imperial expansion and slave trade. Brothers, who is the very first prophet in the so-called Southcottian 'Visitation' scheme, used

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<sup>10</sup> Elbourne, *Blood ground*, p. 26.

the bloody and apocalyptic images of Revelation to denounce Britain's colonial trade in slaves and her imperial ambitions in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

In this, he shared much in common with the radicalism of Blake – both Brothers and Blake had been forged in the fires of revolutionary ferment created by American Independence and French Jacobinism. Brothers criticised Britain's sin of slavery, though he also imbibed its maritime colonial confidence when explicating detailed plans to literally conquer the Holy Land. Undoubtedly, this confidence was determined by a successful career as an officer in the British Navy, but also his childhood in Newfoundland, which was an established British colony; Newfoundland was, of course, Britain's first step into the New World in 1583. Brothers's prophetic ministry was premised on an unshakeable faith in the spiritual enlightenment of elect followers and the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy as divined by him acting as God's instrument. The note of Jacobin radicalism sounded in his early prophecies should not obscure the strong assumption of religious, cultural, and colonial authority implied by his desire to literally rebuild Jerusalem in Palestine.

The global spread of Judeo-Christianity has meant that the sacred territory of the Holy Land has been imagined, envisioned, and actualised in a range of historical, social and

geographical contexts.<sup>11</sup> Given Britain's strong tradition of providential history of election and divine covenant, it should come as no surprise that use of such Biblical typologies can be discerned amongst a more marginal group of millenarian prophets gathered together under the aegis of what is now referred to as the 'Southcottian Visitation'. This Visitation scheme is a retrospectively applied theological system of belief in the prophetic gifts held by specific messengers such as Brothers, Southcott, and Turner, who, so it was believed, were typologies related to the trumpeting angels in Revelation (Rev. 8-11).<sup>12</sup> The scheme was first devised by John Wroe, though utilised again by subsequent prophets and believers. All of the messengers, or prophets in the scheme, were thought to signal the latter days before God's promise of restoration for His elect.

The prophets listed in the Southcottian Visitation disseminated their own individualised message, though, after Brothers, this was rooted in the bigger corpus of Joanna Southcott's millennial texts and substantially added to by later prophets following in her tradition. Dissemination was achieved primarily through biblically inspired writings and divine 'communications', but often supplemented by poetic verse, songs, architectural designs,

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<sup>11</sup> This reach has been captured in Newport and Gribben (eds), *Expecting the end* and Crawford Gribben, *Evangelical millennialism in the trans-Atlantic world, 1500-2000* (Basingstoke, 2011).

<sup>12</sup> See Lockley and Shaw (eds.), *The Southcottians: A modern millennial movement*, forthcoming with I.B, Tauris.

domestic interior spaces, sacred objects, clothing, and religious rites.<sup>13</sup> The recurring use of poetry and song amongst Southcottian prophets might usefully be regarded as what Benedict Anderson refers to as ‘unisonance’: ‘the echoed physical realisation of the imagined community’, where members are brought together in a vision which seeks to extend its reach over thousands of years.<sup>14</sup> Evidence of this can be seen in Brothers’s poetry, which he used to imagine the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its extended territory. For Brothers, Jerusalem would literally represent an act of shared faith that was vivid and tangible. His printed descriptions thus sustained a clear sense of collective purpose, irrespective of any empirical evidence to the contrary. This is perhaps pertinent, given that his detailed descriptions of Jerusalem were written from the punishing confines of an asylum.

Taken together, Brothers, Southcott, and Turner cover an important phase of British history; these prophets believed that they were witness to the apocalyptic age foretold in Revelation. Political ferment at home and abroad ignited apocalyptic expectations amongst English Jacobins and reformers, as well as artists, poets, and writers. Drawing on a rich tradition of millenarian exegesis, those with an apocalyptic cast of mind turned to the prophetic books of

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<sup>13</sup> The cultural materialist features of Southcottianism were most apparent in the movement initiated by prophets listed later in the scheme, John Wroe (1782-1863) and James Jezreel (1851-1885), but were clearly influenced by Richard Brothers. See, Lockley, *Visionary religion*.

<sup>14</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origins and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983), p. 145; Smith, *Chosen peoples*, p. 19.

Daniel and Revelation to make sense of contemporary events, whilst nourishing an expectation for great transformation. The line between political agitation and millenarian anticipation was by no means clear cut and, in fact, the language of prophecy was scrutinised by government authorities during the 1790s to seek out its revolutionary inflection. This conflation had the potential, as Jon Mee has amply demonstrated, to breed a virulent form of 'dangerous enthusiasm'.<sup>15</sup> The king-killing visions that led to Brothers's arrest in 1795 were regarded as highly symbolic because they excited in the public a desire for radical change. To 'imagine' the King's death, as John Barrell reminds us, was an act of treason itself.<sup>16</sup>

Brothers and Southcott believed that it was through their prophetic declarations that Britain would be saved from the danger of home grown radicalism and Napoleon's invading troops. As Britain struggled to foster national purpose following the erosion of its American colonies and the upsurge of Jacobinism inspired by the French Revolution, prophets like Brothers, Southcott, and Turner occupied a contradictory place between millenarianism, radicalism, national identity and colonialism during the 1790s.

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<sup>15</sup> Jon Mee, *Dangerous enthusiasm: William Blake and the culture of radicalism in the 1790s* (Oxford, 1992) and *Romanticism, enthusiasm and regulation: Poetics and the policing of culture in the romantic period* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>16</sup> John Barrell, *Imagining the king's death: Figurative treason, fantasies of regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 504-50.

## II. Revelation Re-aligned: The Prophetic Narratives of Richard Brothers,

### Joanna Southcott and George Turner, 1790-1820

All of the prophets listed in the Southcottian Visitation scheme started out as Anglicans before they took a dramatic shift towards millenarianism. Their route through to biblical prophecy, however, was informed by very different forms of religious dissent. Richard Brothers came under the mystical sway of Emanuel Swedenborg during the 1780s, when London was awash with cheaply printed visionary texts.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, Joanna Southcott's millenarianism was informed by Methodist dissent, though Methodism had not yet separated from the Church of England and was still nominally Anglican. Similarly, Turner's attraction to Brothers's prophetic declarations in 1794 was motivated by his involvement with Methodism in Manchester, Leeds, and Lancaster.

Brothers's prophetic call promised spiritual enlightenment and a differently ordered reality for those who believed. From this perspective, his messianic and damning indictment of

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<sup>17</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 48-9; Iain McCalman, *Radical underworld: Prophets, revolutionaries and pornographers in London, 1794-1840* (Cambridge, 1988); Mee, *Dangerous enthusiasm and Romanticism, enthusiasm and regulation*; Christopher Burdon, *The Apocalypse in England: Revelation unravelling, 1700-1834* (Basingstoke, 1997); Barrell, *Imagining the king's death*; Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA., 2003).

King George III in his first published work, *Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times* (1794), threatened to carry revolutionary implications. One month after the second volume of *Revealed Knowledge* was published in 1795 the government arrested Brothers for ‘treasonable practices’. Broadsheet commentary and pamphlet debates were intensified by the fact that *Revealed Knowledge* elicited the support of a prominent MP and renowned scholar, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed.<sup>18</sup> Yet although Brothers utilised the rhetoric of radicalism for these early prophetic works, he was operating from a completely different basis. Like Tom Paine, Brothers believed that Britain was teetering on the brink of destruction and penned a powerful commentary on what was taking place in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Unlike Paine, however, he was not convinced that parliamentary or radical politics could provide a satisfactory and thoroughgoing solution to the problems facing Britons.<sup>19</sup>

In his appearance and demeanour Brothers did not conform to expectations of what a religious ‘enthusiast’ should look like – usually ‘enthusiasts’ who conflated reason and revelation bore the marks of such madness in their physical appearance.<sup>20</sup> Observers were troubled by the fact that this ‘prophet’ was disarmingly handsome, well-spoken, mild mannered, and even ‘polite’. As an ex-Lieutenant who had served in the British Navy, he impressed those quick to brand him an enthusiast, which served only to arouse further curiosity

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<sup>18</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 18.

<sup>19</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 74.

and comment. He became a fashionable topic of conversation in salons and drawing rooms, which is how Joanna Southcott first came to hear about the 'Paddington prophet' whilst working as a servant in Exeter. In April 1795 *Harrison's Lady Pocket Magazine* carried a portrait of the Prince of Wales, Richard Brothers, and the Italian Opera House in the Haymarket.<sup>21</sup>

William Sharp, a renowned engraver, pledged his support for 'the Man whom God has appointed' by producing a handsome engraving, which stood in stark contrast to James Gillray's famous caricature of Brothers as 'Prophet of the Hebrews', printed on 5 March 1795, the day after he was arrested for treason. His gentlemanly attire, admired by many, convinced others that, if not an 'enthusiast', Brothers must certainly be a very clever and designing 'impostor' – someone who deliberately set out to exploit the credulity of those with a weak or superstitious mind. Set against the backdrop of 'dangerous enthusiasm' stoked up by the French Revolution, the visionary quality of Brothers's writings, combined with its anti-war rhetoric and quasi-republican idiom, produced palpable fear. This fear, real or imagined, was nevertheless used with expedient political efficiency to strengthen William Pitt's resolve when attempting to quash radicalism in London, potently illustrated by the introduction of repressive legislation between 1794-95. Brothers's arrest served as a useful public example; following a Privy Council

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<sup>21</sup> Garrett, *Respectable folly*, p. 199; Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 74.

hearing and medical inquiry, he was deemed criminally insane and in May 1795 confined to Fisher House, a private asylum, for eleven years.<sup>22</sup>

Brothers's startling claim to be 'Nephew of the Almighty', with his promise to literally restore the Jews to their homeland and visionary hopes for a renewed Jerusalem, formed part of an effective riposte to the Babylonian London of Pitt's administration. This rhetoric was channelled into perfecting an alternative 'plan of the estate': God's own city. His obsession with sacred Hebraic imagery and poetry saw him set down a vivid topography of the Promised Land in his *Address to the Members of his Britannic Majesty's Council* (1798) and *Description of Jerusalem* (1801), both of which were written from the confines of Fisher House. When depicting his detailed architectural vision of Jerusalem, Brothers adopted an almost static neo-classical form of prose and poetry to convey specific Hebraic themes. In this, his style was more intellectually grounded and controlled than the formless, mystical, visionary, and deeply personal communications of Joanna Southcott or George Turner. His theological, intellectual, and literary interests drew from a deep well of Protestant piety, a tradition that could also find itself aligned during this period with 'Hasidism', a compelling force within European Judaism, which privileged the charismatic, primitive faith of the Jewish homeland over and above a legalistic framework developed by *Haskalah* Enlightenment scholars or learned Rabbis.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 143-7.

<sup>23</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 65.

Like Blake, Jerusalem offered Brothers a 'discursive space' where spiritual, religious, political, intellectual, and creative liberty could flourish. Blake created a mythic congruence between London and Jerusalem to envisage a 'prelapsarian' and druidic past, where humanity is free once more. Importantly, his city is located in both Britain and Israel. Blake's Jerusalem, which is an emanation of Albion, exposes the multi-layered nature of redemption that is simultaneously personal and collective. His concept is suggestive of a spiritual state of existence, which will be re-established in England's 'green and pleasant land'. This vision, which is in no way metaphorical – it is visionary – nevertheless turns away from the literal site of Jerusalem in a move that is the complete reversal of Brothers's colonial expansion.<sup>24</sup> Here, Blake shared with Joanna Southcott an 'inward' and spiritual vision of Jerusalem. Southcott, the Devon-born prophetess, came to national prominence in 1801 when she claimed to be the 'Woman Clothed with the Sun' in the Book of Revelation.

Morton Paley has suggested that Blake can hardly have been unaware of Brothers's description of Jerusalem, which was published as work on his own Jerusalem was getting underway.<sup>25</sup> Brothers's intention, on the other hand, was to literally rebuild Jerusalem as another London in a specific geographic space, reconstructing its neo-classical buildings and

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<sup>24</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 194-6.

<sup>25</sup> Morton Paley, 'William Blake, the Prince of the Hebrews and the woman clothed with the Sun', in Morton Paley and Michael Phillips (eds), *William Blake: Essays in honour of Geoffrey Keynes* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 260-93.

thoroughfares on a correspondingly postmillennial scale. For Brothers, London is located in Jerusalem and functions as its municipal desideratum. The extent to which Brothers was influenced by the scale of neo-classical architectural works being undertaken in London at this time, such as John Soane's Bank of England, can be seen in his plans.<sup>26</sup>

As was the case for Southcott and Turner, Brothers claimed a burden of responsibility for the Jews, whose rejection of Christ had brought salvation to the Gentiles. The Jews were owed a debt of gratitude, but their conversion to Christianity would finally rid the world of evil, thereby completing salvation for the elect.<sup>27</sup> To undertake this mission, Brothers would literally take the Jews back to Jerusalem to expedite the millennium. On this, he shared something in common with Napoleon who developed a similar interest in the Holy Land and Jewish repatriation. Furthermore, this type of speculative genealogy was already popular from the late eighteenth-century onwards in Britain.<sup>28</sup>

The overtly Hebraic themes deployed by Brothers were less important to Joanna Southcott who was concerned to emphasise the pivotal role played by a woman – herself as

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<sup>26</sup> For how Brothers's vision was linked to contemporary architecture and culture, see Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 191-217.

<sup>27</sup> Nabil I. Matar, 'Milton and the idea of the restoration of the Jews', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 27 (1987), pp. 109-124 at 110.

<sup>28</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 57-62.

second Eve – in the same eschatological story. It was Turner who provided a framework for these Christian Hebraic ideas, though his views were inconsistent and subject to revision. For example, under Southcott's influence, he believed that Jewish Restoration was more symbolic than real, stating in July 1812 that Israel merely represented the community of those faithful she had already sealed, as opposed to the actual Promised Land envisaged by Brothers.<sup>29</sup> As Turner's prophetic ministry began to gather its own momentum in 1818, he found himself reverting to a more literalist position, which closely resembled that set down in Brothers's *Description of Jerusalem*.<sup>30</sup>

Brothers believed that the Jews were symbolic carriers or signs but, unlike Southcott who engaged with the Jewish community living in the East End of London, he did not believe that direct involvement with contemporary Judaism was necessary. In addition to this, although Brothers thought there was a greater preponderance of Israel's lost tribes amongst the British population, he parted company with other Anglo-Israelites in his insistence that England was not the Jewish homeland. He also suggested that individuals of high rank and status selected by him had descended from the tribe of Judah, which, of course, was not amongst those tribes that were lost.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> George Turner, *A Book of wonders; Revealed to George Turner, the servant of God* (London, 1817), p.69.

<sup>30</sup> George Turner, *Wonderful prophecies by George Turner, the servant of God, being a call to the Jews to return* (London, 1818-20), 2 vols. 1:pp. 6-9.

<sup>31</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 57-60.

Brothers's writings post-1795 retain the same anger and heightened sense of injustice concerning the corruption and immorality of modernity as he sees it, though the self-consciously marginal, displaced, and millenarian prophet of *Revealed Knowledge* becomes God's powerful agent: the appointed king and ruler of a new 'Hebrew Constitution' in postmillennial Jerusalem. In this context, Brothers is presented adorned with imperial robes, as seen in an engraved image printed by another disciple and supporter, John Finleyson [Finlayson], and included in the posthumously published *New Covenant Between God and His People* (1830). The culmination of Brothers's prophetic journey is presented as being consummated in the strange birth-marriage to his 'woman clothed with the sun' and 'Queen of Israel'. Brothers is the bridegroom prophesied in Revelation (19:7) and his marriage represents a new covenant promised by God. It was this interpretation of Revelation that first embroiled Brothers in a theological and eschatological conflict with the prophetess and 'woman clothed with the sun', Joanna Southcott.

Turner's spiritual orientation towards Brothers had come to him as he experimented with devotional and ecstatic forms of Methodism in Manchester, Yorkshire, and Lancashire. An examination of Turner's journals for those years between 1795 and 1801 show that many of his divine 'communications' came to him via Methodist ministers. This theological and social context provided him with much needed spiritual nourishment, and, having seen John Wesley some years before in Leeds, Turner firmly believed that 'the Lord shone' upon the people called

Methodists. At a Methodist Conference in Manchester during July 1795 he watched in both awe and adoration as the preachers, some of whom he knew personally, lifted their faces 'up towards heaven...their eyes wide open, intensely praying...'<sup>32</sup>

This image stayed with Turner and he recalled it in 1801 during a vision or 'apparition' in which Wesley himself appeared.<sup>33</sup> Turner eventually spoke out against Methodist preachers when, despite his best efforts, they refused to acknowledge the prophecies of Richard Brothers and, later, Joanna Southcott. Nevertheless, his close connection with Methodism attracted many rank-and-file members to Southcott's cause in the years following 1802 when he ceased being Brothers's supporter. Later, Turner would adopt the Methodist model of its Conference and centrally organised bureaucracy when structuring his own Southcottian movement in 1814.

It was Brothers's move from being a simple prophet or instrument carrying God's message to the self-fashioning cultivation of a Solomonic personality, which led Southcott and, eventually, Turner, to denounce him as an angel of light who had become like Napoleon and Satan's puppet. The conflation Southcott made between Brothers and Napoleon was particularly apposite; calling as they did on the powers of darkness, these men were in league

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<sup>32</sup> George Turner, *Communications of the Holy Spirit of God*, (Leeds, 1817-18).

<sup>33</sup> MS. 'Letter from George Turner, Regarding the Rev. John Wesley's apparition' (3 December 1801), Panacea Society [PS], PN.103, 75.

with the Antichrist. They had come at this tumultuous time to challenge God's authority and keep humanity in spiritual bondage. In the eschatological war between good and evil, Satan was making his presence felt in the work of Brothers and Napoleon.<sup>34</sup>

For Southcott, the age-old battle between God and Satan, which had its origins in Genesis, was now drawing to a dramatic close, as prophesied powerfully in Revelation. Southcott's apocalyptic vision of how God would defeat Satan, and His judgement on Man's disobedience since the Fall, involved a role that was assigned to her alone. She penned a letter to Nathaniel Brassey Halhed in 1802, shortly after her move from Exeter to London, explaining Revelation in terms of Genesis, stating that the scriptures have been revealed in their perfect form to one who was 'ordered to begin at the last and go back to the first'.<sup>35</sup> As the bride prophesied in Revelation (19:7), Southcott was making herself 'ready to declare unto all men the coming of the Lord', who would place a crown of twelve stars upon her head and place the moon at her feet.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 269.

<sup>35</sup> MS. Southcott, 'Communication given to Joanna Southcott with a Letter to Mr Halhed concerning Richard Brothers' (2 June 1802), [PS], PN. 222, 340-346 at 344; Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, p. 255.

<sup>36</sup> MS. Southcott, 'Communication given to Joanna Southcott with a Letter to Mr Halhed', 342, 343.

Genesis was the *fons et origo* around which the competing hermeneutics of Revelation offered by Brothers and Southcott revolved. In *Revealed Knowledge* Brothers had dismissed the idea that the 'woman clothed with the sun' represented a second Eve, believing instead that she was birth mother and consort to him as King of Israel.<sup>37</sup> The patriarchal nature of this theology, present in his first published work, was restated in his *Dissertation on the Fall of Eve* (1802). This was Brothers's public riposte to a private letter that had been sent to him at Fisher House by Southcott. On 7 June 1802 Southcott wrote to Brothers expressing serious doubts about the authenticity of his revealed knowledge. *Dissertation on the Fall of Eve*, an exegesis of Gen. 3:13, was written specifically to correct this rival and nemesis. Keen to make a distinction between his divinely ordained mission and the claims of a woman displaying defective learning and reasoning, the *Dissertation* deploys every marker of rational, Lockean language against his 'enthusiastic' opponent.

Southcott's primary concern with the complicating issue of gender remained within a theologically orthodox interpretation of the serpent as Satan in the Creation story. For Southcott the Devil was in the detail of Man's mischief, hell-bent on offending God with pride and vanity – characteristics that had seen Adam wrongfully blame Eve for their exile from Paradise. As the second Eve, Southcott would absorb this injustice in the form of bodily

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<sup>37</sup> Brothers, *Revealed knowledge*, ii. p. 55.

salvation by giving birth to the man-child, Shiloh. By contrast, Brothers took a more global perspective by locating the root of evil, Original Sin, in human institutions.<sup>38</sup>

Brothers saw how the relationship between Man and God was expressed as a structural formation in Genesis. He did not see Genesis purely in terms of an allegory. Rather than apportioning blame to Adam, Eve or, in fact, Satan, Brothers believed that it was the very conjunction of finite and infinite, humanity and divinity, which produced the evil of temptation, disobedience and pride.<sup>39</sup> Like Blake, Brothers saw evil, not as some original act of disobedience, but as a naïve misuse of very human faculties.<sup>40</sup> He regarded the serpent as merely acting as a powerful place-marker for Original Sin. In this sense, the viper had been retrospectively personified by man-made theological and cultural histories of the demonic. His solution was to clear layers of corruption that had accrued since the Fall by rebuilding Jerusalem from its foundations.

Before her move from Exeter to the metropolis in May 1802 Southcott had expressed only a passing interest in Brothers, claiming, in fact, that she had not read any of his work.<sup>41</sup> On

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<sup>38</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 249-60.

<sup>39</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 249-60.

<sup>40</sup> John Beer, 'Blake, Coleridge, and Wordsworth, Some cross-currents and parallels 1789-1805', in Morton Paley and Michael Phillips (eds), *William Blake: Essays in honour of Geoffrey Keynes* (Oxford, 1973), pp. 231-259 at 246.

<sup>41</sup> Frances Brown, *Joanna Southcott: The woman clothed with the sun* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 109.

arrival, she found his ever-faithful but much depleted circle of supporters lacking in organisation, bereft as they were of practical leadership: Brothers was incarcerated indefinitely and his supporter Halhed lived as a recluse. Southcott immediately took matters in hand by throwing herself into obtaining Brothers's liberty. One week after her arrival, she gathered together the so-called 'Seven Stars' to help petition for Brothers's release. The 'Seven Stars', most of whom were Brothers's supporters, met the prophetess when they travelled to Exeter in December 1801 to authenticate Southcott's communications and prophecies. These men, who felt called by God to judge her prophetic works, included George Turner, Peter Morrison, Thomas Foley, Stanhope Bruce, Thomas Webster, William Sharp and John Wilson.<sup>42</sup>

Much of the groundwork for her support in London had already been laid in the correspondence that took place between Southcott and these men in 1801. Indeed, Brothers's supporters actually believed Southcott had been providentially sent to them. Through her, God would vindicate and liberate their leader. For Southcott, adroit management of this discipleship worked in tandem with a private correspondence to Brothers in which she questioned the authenticity of his revelations and theology.<sup>43</sup> Southcott's machinations effectively put an end to Brothers's mission well before his release in 1806; by 1808 she had gained a very sizeable following of her own and continued to exert influence over those she 'sealed'. Brothers never

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<sup>42</sup> Brown, *Joanna Southcott*, pp. 117-126, 174-190.

<sup>43</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp.249-60.

regained his credibility as a prophet and, with the exception of Finleyson, lost all of his followers to Southcott.

Before 1801 Turner remained confident that those prophecies declared by Richard Brothers in 1794 would come to pass. By 1802 the picture had changed with Southcott's arrival and Turner was soon gravitating towards her camp.<sup>44</sup> It could be said that Turner understood better than either Brothers or Southcott how the spirit of prophecy functioned theologically. This was how he could remain faithful to Southcott's prophetic promises in December 1814 when followers struggled to comprehend the failure of her predictions following her unexpected death. Southcott astonished her contemporaries in February of that year with an announcement that, at the age of 64, she was going to give birth to a baby: Shiloh, the man-child prophesied in Revelation. A post-mortem conducted by physicians established with clinical certainty that Southcott had not, in fact, been pregnant or due to give birth before her death. Following this bitter disappointment amongst her followers, Turner gave reassurance, direction and prophetic continuity to her flock by telling them that God's word and promise would stand: the birth of Shiloh, Southcott's spiritual child, would come to pass during his prophetic ministry.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> George Turner, *Communications of the Holy Spirit of God* (Leeds, 1795), p. 19.

<sup>45</sup> Turner, *A book of wonders*, p. 102; Deborah Madden, 'A Southcottian Methodist: The prophetic odyssey of George Turner', forthcoming in Lockley and Shaw (eds.), *The Southcottians*.

In January 1815 Turner declared that he, as God's newly appointed servant, could 'reveal' the mystery of Southcott's spiritual vocation and legacy, whilst providing some clues about her death. Turner suggested that both Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott were instruments through which the Spirit of prophecy had worked. Now God was utilising a new instrument, George Turner, to carry forward His covenant. With this message, Turner initiated an umbrella organisation under which Southcottians, Turnerites, and followers of Brothers gathered. He managed to win over a large proportion of her followers in the North and South-West of England, though it was also the case that key members of Southcott's inner circle regarded his bid for leadership as opportunistic. This division became even more acrimonious when Turner claimed to have experienced a spiritual encounter with the prophetess in February 1815.<sup>46</sup>

Following Southcott's death, Turner revisited and re-introduced particular Hebraic themes that had been set down by Brothers, though he placed much heavier emphasis upon tracing Jewish lines of descent and sought to identify exactly what distinguished Southcottian followers from the profane multitude. He carried this out in a fairly rigorous fashion; 'speaking in the Spirit', these origins were divined by Rebecca Woods, a Southcottian follower from the West-Country, but transcribed by her amanuensis, Ann Searle. The transcripts were

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<sup>46</sup> Turner, *A book of wonders*, pp. 110-11; Madden, 'A Southcottian Methodist'.

authenticated in London by a 'witness', Samuel Gompertz, who was Secretary and Treasurer to Turner's committee, which was based in Granby Gardens, Lambeth.<sup>47</sup> Gompertz, a converted Jew from London's East End, had served as assistant preacher at one of Southcott's chapels in the city.<sup>48</sup> He sent a number of lists or rolls with the names of Turner's followers to Searle and Woods for clarification. These genealogies were underpinned by Turner's austere directive for followers to observe the Mosaic Law. Turner's ministry made selective use of Brothers's Christian-Hebraic ideas, though these were subverted into a prophetic narrative that further enhanced Southcott's legacy as the 'Woman Clothed with the Sun'.<sup>49</sup>

### **III. Conclusion**

It is in the crevices between millenarian Protestantism and political radicalism that the theological narratives offered by Brothers, Southcott, and Turner intersect so powerfully. The appropriation of a female redemptrix by Turner in 1802, for example, takes place at a time when discussions about the moral influence of a specifically feminine sensibility reached its height in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. When Southcott claimed that only

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<sup>47</sup> This can be seen in letters from Ann Searle addressed to Samuel Gompertz. See, MS. [PS], PN. 237, 241, 243; Madden, 'A Southcottian Methodist'.

<sup>48</sup> Harrison, *The second coming*, p. 250 n. 24.

<sup>49</sup> Madden, 'A Southcottian Methodist'.

woman could do the work of deliverer where man had so miserably failed – and here she had Brothers clearly within her sights – this tonal register chimed in with a much broader evangelical religious and literary culture. The pious redemptive female was frequently invoked and envisioned to heal those violent revolutionary forces wrought by political, economic, and social turmoil. Both community and nation could entrust women with familial, domestic, moral, and spiritual affairs, matters of the heart which would yield positive results beyond the confines of her feminine sphere, seen most notably in philanthropic campaigns revolving around the transatlantic slave trade, missionary work and, at a more localised level, Anti-Corn Law Leagues. It has been observed that this configuration of gender politics worked its influence over artisans and factory workers to such an extent that socialist radicalism amongst the British working class was noticeably ‘muted’ as a result.<sup>50</sup> Southcott, who disliked political radicalism, nevertheless utilised popular discourses around political agitation to formulate a specifically feminine piety by way of galvanising her prophetic mission in the public sphere.

The prevalence of this domestic ideology remains difficult to gauge with any degree of accuracy, though many of Southcott’s followers felt reassured by a prophetic narrative which

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<sup>50</sup> Catherine Hall, *White, male and middle class: Explorations in feminism and history* (Cambridge, 1992); Anna Clark, *The struggle for the breeches and the making of the British working class* (Berkeley, CA., 1995); Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family fortunes: Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850* Revised edition (London, 2002), p. 117. See Lockley’s *Visionary religion* for a full synthesis of the secondary sources concerned with the discussion amongst feminist social historians here.

orientated itself towards local concerns and grievances felt by ordinary folk – as opposed to any ambitious restorationist claims to literally rebuild Jerusalem. In this, Southcott's moral critique blended millenarianism with an incipient British patriotism that contrasted markedly with the global covenantal theology of Brothers.<sup>51</sup> Her interest in operating at a more parochial level has led Eitan Bar-Yosef to suggest that Southcott, like Blake, envisaged the New Jerusalem residing, not in the literal Holy Lands, but at the very heart of England. For this reason, he says, Southcott might easily be regarded as 'a prophetess against Empire'.<sup>52</sup> Whilst the tenor of this argument can be taken in good faith, it is also true that Southcott's metaphorical and literal figurations of Jerusalem are not so easily determined. Nor were her concerns purely local and Southcott's millennial perspective ultimately offered a global mission for her elect.<sup>53</sup>

The Southcottian prophetic narratives and moral geographies envisioned by Brothers, Southcott, and Turner fitted within a much larger context of Protestant millennialism and biblical prophecy located within Britain and America. Key factors can account for the continued global reach and appeal of Southcottian theology on both sides of the Atlantic, such as the legacy of Puritan covenantal theology, combined with the democratic revolutions in America

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<sup>51</sup> Kevin Binfield, 'The French, the 'long-wished for revolution', and the just war in Joanna Southcott', in Adriana Craciun and Kari E. Lokke (eds), *Rebellious Hearts* (New York, NY., 2001), pp. 135-59; Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp.194-5.

<sup>52</sup> Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture*, p. 60.

<sup>53</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp.194-5.

and France. These latter cataclysmic upheavals were regarded by prophets and millennialists living through the age of democratic revolution as signs that Revelation was unravelling.

The backdrop of Evangelical revivalism and development of industrial capitalism also played a major role in the spread of nineteenth and twentieth century Southcottianism, but specifically the emergence of Southcottian Christian Israelite theology.<sup>54</sup> In the context of Britain's expanding empire, the confluence of Evangelicalism and industrialisation had a profound impact on the formation of identities that were more sharply defined in terms of class and gender. The eschatological and Christian Israelite theologies enacted by later Southcottian prophets like John Wroe reflect this, as well as an individualist desire for self-discipline, improvement, and cleanliness, which sought, in an ideal earthly world, to express religious commitment through thrift and hard work. In other words, good Protestant values. When blended with the spiritual renewal of millennialism, this extended into an eschatological belief in the salvation of the elect promised by Christ's Second Coming – a missionary message spread by later Christian Israelites right across Britain's colonies.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Lockley, *Visionary Religion*; Deborah Madden, 'The emergence of Southcottian Israelite theology', forthcoming in Lockley and Shaw (eds.), *The Southcottians*.

<sup>55</sup> Lockley and Shaw (eds.), *The Southcottians*.

Richard Brothers, Joanna Southcott, and George Turner each attempted to negotiate and renegotiate changing conceptions about self, class, and gender during the 1790s and 1800s. To be sure, they did so within a prophetic narrative that now seems bizarre, idiosyncratic, and self-willed. Yet the prophetic narratives bequeathed by these Southcottian prophets stood at the nexus of an inherited discourse about the divine purpose of a covenantal religion in national and global terms. Their theological ideas were put forward at a time when many in the Anglo-American world wanted to explore, either literally or metaphorically, a restored Jerusalem.

Evidence of this can be seen in the growth of travel literature concerned with the Holy Land during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This popular genre offered a vivid sense of what Hilton Obenzinger refers to as ‘sacred theatricality’, where the traveller imagines they are re-enacting Biblical scenes.<sup>56</sup> Clarke Garrett has also noted the important place of ‘sacred theatre’ in terms of creating quasi-ritualistic activities that could produce a public space for collective conversion experiences – amply tried and tested by evangelical revivalism.<sup>57</sup> Undoubtedly, the popularity of this genre attests well to the Biblical literacy of Britain’s Protestant print culture. Like the Bible itself, such travelogues created vivid imaginary spaces where readers could engage with both the metaphorical and literal Holy Land. These popular texts evinced and confirmed Scriptural authority and, as Jacques Le Goff has observed, the Bible

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<sup>56</sup> Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain and the Holy Land mania* (Princeton, 1999).

<sup>57</sup> Clarke Garrett, *Spirit possession and popular religion from the Camisards to the Shakers* (Baltimore, M.D., 1987).

was an extremely effective instrument for the production of sacred memories with profound historical consequences.<sup>58</sup> The intersection between scripture, memory, and history, frequently ritualised as sacred memories, produced an extended network of religious, colonial and cultural codes common to the Protestant tradition. When combined with ideas of eschatological missionary purpose, these codes continued to extend their influence across the Anglo-American world during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

As the first prophet in the Southcottian scheme, it was Richard Brothers's topography of the Holy Land that instigated a cartography of belonging. His physical and moral geography created a sacred space which, because of its alleged divine provenance, inspired loyalties that were much stronger than those historically situated in his own day. Thus an examination of Southcottian Biblical prophecy, with its associated sacred geography, demonstrates the extent to which the Holy Land paradigm offered Western Protestant culture an origin around which various rhetorical, metaphorical, and literal figurations of Jerusalem were envisaged. These figurations saw a convergence of national, political, cultural, and religious interests, which were linked to Jerusalem functioning as a literal or spiritual space and where Judeo-Christian prophecy would ultimately be fulfilled at the end of time. The rich religious and literary soil in

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<sup>58</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *History and memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York, NY., 1992), pp. 68-71; Hilary M. Carey, 'The vanished kingdoms of Patrick O'Farrell: Religion, memory and migration in religious history', *Journal of Religious History*, 31:1 (2007), pp. 40-58.

which this paradigm is rooted yields particularly fruitful results in terms of investigating the relationship between millenarianism, nationalism, and imperial expansion in the years following the American and French revolutions.

Richard Brothers and Joanna Southcott utilised specific Biblical archetypes from Revelation to enact different prophetic narratives against a background of eschatological expectation during the 1790s. Southcott was the female prophet and 'woman clothed with the sun' bursting upon the metropolitan scene from the provinces. Brothers was Shiloh and would-be King of Jerusalem, established in London but desperately working to retain his wavering followers whilst confined to an asylum. Their different roles and expectations of exactly how Revelation would unfold translated into a series of interconnected conflicts, which were theological, political, and gendered – though never personal. George Turner attempted to mollify these differences by synthesising the characteristic features of Brothers's Christian Hebraism.<sup>59</sup>

In so doing, Turner hoped to create an organisation that paid due acknowledgement to its spiritual mother, thus providing much needed continuity to Southcottians, whilst incorporating significant changes of his own. Brothers's role as the singular, romantic, and heroic prophet, writing his own future with a creative, rhetorical, and inseminating power, was

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<sup>59</sup> Madden, *The Paddington prophet*, pp. 288-91.

a narrative no longer available to Turner. This was largely due to Southcott's highly effective strategy for emasculating Brothers by demolishing his patriarchal interpretation of Revelation, thereby retaining woman's place in the story of redemption. It was a move that insulated Southcott's prophetic claims and protected her legacy amongst those who subsequently joined the movement after her death. Turner's response was to revive the millenarian urgency of Southcott's cause by deriving practical efficiency from those available structures of Methodist bureaucracy with its committee-led forms and procedures that had influenced his early dalliances with prophecy.

Their interpretative strategies, harvested by Protestant covenantal theology, gave Brothers, Southcott, and Turner an unstinting conviction that Revelation offered humanity a narrative of liberation and salvation. Each believed that the prophetic parts of scripture could only be understood, at God's command, through the interpretative facilities of His chosen prophet. For this reason, despite sometimes deploying the rhetoric of political radicalism, all three were inherently autocratic, seeking to establish an authority that was based exclusively on their strong charismatic leadership. With their potent blend of prophetic freedom, which they blended seamlessly with restriction and autocracy, it might very well be said that Brothers, Southcott, and Turner were authentic prophets of the Napoleonic era.

