Seventeenth-Century English Millennialism

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Introduction

Since the late 1960s, scholars working on millennialism have been particularly attracted to the often-volatile political and religious situation that developed in England during the 1600s. The transition from the House of Tudor to the House of Stuart, bloody civil wars, republic, regicide, Restoration, and 'Glorious Revolution' mean that the century has frequently been seen as transformative within British history. The importance of religion in so many of these political controversies—with official policies ranging from persecution of dissenters to unprecedented tolerance (and back again)—has prompted extensive work on the ways in which new theological ideas developed and old ones reappeared in the period. The emergence of distinct Christian groups that later formed the backbone of modern denominationalism (e.g., Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Baptists), as well as 'radicals' (e.g., Quakers, Fifth Monarchists, Muggletonians) has made the period a fruitful area of study. Millennialism was a key part in many of these groups' beliefs and the surrounding controversies. Examining the topic in the seventeenth-century context reveals distinctive positions, but also provides insight into broader questions within millennial studies around the appeal of the belief, its link to political upheaval, and the role of inspired prophets.

The European Background

As Jeffrey K. Jue has noted, millennialism in seventeenth-century England did not appear in a vacuum (Jue 2006). English writers drew on both the continental tradition and international religious developments in order to articulate their positions. The sixteenth-century European background is therefore crucial to understand the changes that took place.

During the early years of the Reformation, the majority of English writers shared the general antipathy towards millennialism evident in both Lutheran and Reformed branches of Protestantism on the continent, adopting an Augustinian scepticism towards millennialism. Following the lead of the 1530 Augsburg Confession, the Forty-Two Articles of the Church of England (1553) concluded that those 'that go about to renew the fable of heretics called Millenarii be repugnant to Holy Scripture and cast themselves headlong into Jewish dotage' (Article XLI). Millennialism was linked in the mainstream Reformation with the bloodshed, communism, and polygamy of the 1533–1535 Anabaptist rising in the German city of Münster

(Driedger 2018).

From the mid-sixteenth century, however, there was an increasing interest in studies of the book of Revelation. Although early reformers, including Luther, had sometimes expressed doubts about its canonicity, by mid-century, Revelation was a key weapon in attacking Catholicism. The book was used to portray the papacy, as an institution (rather than any particular pope), as the Antichrist and the church as the Whore of Babylon (Backus 2000). This theme was embraced enthusiastically in English commentaries such as John Bale's *Image of Both Churches* (1545), which read Revelation to show how it contained an overview of church history until the return of Christ. This 'historicist' interpretation became the majority Protestant position.

The restoration of Catholicism in England under Mary I (reigned 1553–1558) only enhanced this interest. It exposed exiled English Protestants to European apocalyptic interpretation, while the persecution of Protestants in England provided a new set of martyr narratives. Many exiles brought these experiences, and an interest in the Apocalypse, back to England at Elizabeth I's accession. Most notably, John Foxe (1516/17–1587) crafted an extensive English martyrology in his *Actes and Monuments* (1563) in which he adopted an apocalyptic historical framework.

A further exilic influence came through the Geneva Bible, an English translation with annotations originally produced in the Swiss city in 1560. The most popular Bible translation (even after the appearance of the King James Version in 1611), its annotations on Revelation became increasingly historically specific. The 1599 version used the detailed historical notes of Huguenot minister Franciscus Junius, originally published in his 1592 French commentary. Readers were provided with a table of events described in Revelation and their dated historical fulfilments, with the section for the final fall of the Antichrist left blank for the reader to complete when the event transpired.

While all of these works were apocalyptic rather than strictly millenarian, their interpretations of the thousand years of Revelation 20 had important political implications. Junius represented one tradition, dating Satan's binding to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Foxe, in placing the same event at Constantine's conversion in 324 CE, affirmed the importance of a godly monarchy to God's plans. While neither interpretation was explicitly millenarian, the increasing emphasis on specific historical application of the text helped to foster a more expectant attitude that would ultimately develop in that direction in the next century. Further impetus came through an emphasis on both historical and mathematical accuracy in interpreting prophecy, most importantly in the Scottish commentator John Napier's *Plaine Discovery of the Whole Revelation* (1593) (Corrigan 2020).

Early Seventeenth-Century Tradition

The dating of the millennium in the historicist tradition raised a number of potentially troubling issues for Protestants. As historicist interpretation usually saw the millennium as a literal thousand-year period located in the past, both Junius's and Foxe's dates were problematic. The earlier date of 70 CE suggested that Satan had been 'set free for a short time' (Revelation 20:4b) in ca. 1070, a period of almost 600 years by the seventeenth century. Alternatively, linking the millennium's commencement with Constantine's conversion raised the question of why papal power had grown so powerful in the very period in which

Satan was supposedly kept from 'deceiving the nations' (Revelation 20:3).

One solution was proposed by Thomas Brightman (1562–1607), whose posthumously published 1609 commentary on John's Apocalypse suggested that Revelation 20 described two separate millennial periods—the first, following Foxe's approximate dating from ca. 300–ca. 1300, and the second marked by the gradual Christianisation of the world from 1300 until an unspecified point in the future. The full consummation of the millennial period would come when the Jewish people overthrew the Ottomans, returned to Palestine, and enjoyed empire over the world (Brightman 1644). Although Brightman is sometimes identified as a postmillennialist, modern divisions between pre-, post-, and a-millennialism are unhelpful in describing the seventeenth-century context. His schema had elements of what would later be parts of both pre- and post-millennialism.

Brightman's works were published in Germany and the Netherlands but nonetheless influenced interpretation in Britain and Ireland, including Archbishop of Armagh James Ussher, who adopted his dual-millennial scheme (Gribben 2008, 92–106). Brightman's focus on Jewish restoration also became a pervasive theme in English millennialism that continued for the next three hundred years.

As Brightman had challenged the standard Protestant view of the millennium, later commentators pushed further, leading to the eventual reappearance of premillennialism in the Protestant mainstream. In Germany, Herborn professor Johannes Piscator (1546–1625) argued for a future millennium in his 1613 commentary on Revelation, sparking a major controversy. He was followed by fellow scholar and encyclopaedist Johann Heinrich Alsted (1588–1638), whose 1627 *Diatribe de Mille Annis Apocalypticis* provided a detailed defence of the premillennial position forged in the heat of the Thirty Years' War (Hotson 2000).

Aside from a couple of brief and ill-judged expeditions, England avoided involvement in that continental conflict. For many of the more radical sort of Protestants, there were nonetheless major challenges to face at home. The rise of Archbishop Laud in the Church of England seemed to move English ecclesiology closer to Rome, while Charles's period of personal rule, forced loans, and ship money caused wider political concerns in some quarters. The Laudian ascendancy in the church disapproved of apocalyptic commentary and discouraged publication of any work proclaiming that the pope was the Antichrist.

Alsted's work appeared at the same time that Joseph Mede (1586–1638), the figure most often associated with the re-emergence of premillennialism in England, was writing his *Clavis Apocalyptica* (1627). Mede complicates the picture of the millenarian as a firebrand or radical that was popularised in path-breaking scholarship such as Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972). Mede was a moderate Cambridge scholar, sympathetic to the Laudian innovations in the Church of England. He was not a puritan. Like puritans, however, Mede was strongly anti-Catholic and convinced that the pope was the Antichrist. This won his work puritan admirers, and guaranteed his positive reception well into the nineteenth century.

Mede's approach to Revelation was novel. Initially developed briefly in the 1627 book, an enlarged 1632 edition of *Clavis* laid out his millennial scheme in detail. His interpretation developed around 'synchronisms,' which compared seemingly disparate parts of Revelation in order to locate those prophecies that 'run along in the same time, as if thou should call it an *agreement in time or age*' (Mede 1643, 1. Emphasis in original). Using the synchronisms allowed Mede to offer a mathematically exact and

detailed breakdown of the various prophecies in Revelation into tangible history. The millennium would see the miraculous conversion of the Jews to Christianity, while the entire period was made synonymous with the Day of Judgement.

There are a number of points to note about this developing tradition. Writers were keenly aware that they were part of a wider European discussion. Both Brightman and Mede had written their works in Latin, appealing to an educated European audience and avoiding controversy at home by not using the vernacular. Much of this work also had an apologetic aim. It developed in response to Catholic writing on Revelation, particularly attempts by figures such as Cardinal Robert Bellarmine and Jesuit Francisco Ribera, who adopted a futurist perspective in order to disprove the assertion that the contemporary papacy could be Antichrist. Finally, while these works were all rooted in detailed scriptural exegesis, they also used a wide variety of other sources in order to support their conclusions. These included the pseudo-prophecies of the Sibylline Oracles, Kabbalah, and ancient Pagan texts that might provide evidence for their exegesis.

The Civil Wars

The political status quo collapsed in England, Scotland, and Ireland in the early 1640s. The rise of the covenanters in Scotland and subsequent disastrous 'Bishops' Wars' left Charles I financially exposed and forced him to call the first parliament in over a decade. As the power of Laud and the bishops subsequently collapsed, so the system of censorship that had restricted the publication of apocalyptic works for the previous decade crumbled. This led to a significant increase in the range and volume of work coming from the London presses, particularly in the form of pamphlet literature. Complex scriptural commentaries by John Napier and Thomas Brightman received pithy verse popularisations that reimagined these scholars as prophets while often sensationalising their content (Crome 2011).

Ultimately, rebellion in Ireland and increasing tension between king and parliament led England to descend into civil war in 1642. The lead up to, and early years of, the civil wars saw Parliament ordering several apocalyptic commentaries printed for the first time in England, including Brightman's *Revelation* and an English translation of Mede's *Clavis* prepared by MP Richard More. They joined influential millenarian works such as *A Glimpse of Syon's Glory* (probably by either Jeremiah Burroughs or Thomas Goodwin), and John Archer's *Personall Reign of Christ upon Earth* (1642). As the latter noted, the hope of the millennium was 'our harvest of joy and gladnesse, and Christ pardon us our so much neglect of it hitherto' (Archer 1642, 59).

The momentous challenges and changes of the period appeared to offer hope for millennial change in the world. For puritans, the antichristian structures of English life seemed to be giving way. Greater knowledge and understanding of the book of Revelation was itself proof of this. As prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly, William Twisse remarked in his 1643 preface to Mede that the 'increase of knowledge, which these latter times have brought forth, appears in nothing more remarkeably [*sic*], than in the interpretation of this mysterious booke, the Revelation of Saint *John*' (Twisse in Mede 1643, sig. A3r).

The Westminster Assembly aimed to produce a truly reformed Church of England, and establish new statements of belief and orders of worship. As Crawford Gribben has noted, the Assembly itself was often tinged with millennial hopes, especially in its early days from the Independents and Scottish

Commissioners (Gribben 2008, 115–27). The fruits of this can be seen in the *Directory for Public Worship*, the new liturgical manual replacing the Book of Common Prayer. The preacher's pre-sermon prayer was to beseech God 'for the Propagation of the Gospell and Kingdome of Christ to all Nations, for the conversion of the Jewes, the fulnesse of the Gentiles, the fall of Antichrist, and the hastening of the second comming of our Lord; For the deliverance of the distressed Churches abroad, from the tyranny of the Antichristian faction, and from the cruell oppressions and blasphemies of the Turke' (*Directory* 1644, 20).

Although it succeeded in publishing the *Directory*, Shorter and Longer Catechisms, and an influential confession of faith, the Westminster Assembly failed in the longer term to secure a lasting Presbyterian settlement in England. The influence of the Independents increased over the later 1640s through the formation and success of the New Model Army, and found its apogee in the expulsion of Presbyterian MPs in Pride's Purge and the resultant execution of Charles I in January 1649. The ascendancy of the New Model Army, and the shockwaves that followed the king's trial and execution, unsurprisingly led to a number of millenarian hopes and innovations.

This included military statements, such as the English army's declaration at Musselburgh when invading Scotland in 1650. The Scots' condemnation of the regicide and support of Charles II appeared to the English as obstacles to the coming kingdom of Christ. Charles I 'and his Monarchy was one of the ten horns of the Beast spoken of, *Revel.* 17.12, 13, 14, 15' (*A Declaration* 1650, 12). The army prayed 'that those that fear the Lord in *England* and *Scotland* may become one in the hand of the Lord, and joyn together in the advancement of the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and throwing down, and trampling upon the Seat of the Beast' (*A Declaration* 1650, 15). Other factions within the army might use millennial rhetoric for more potentially subversive causes. For example, some Leveller writings used apocalyptic and millenarian language in arguing for broader political freedoms and the expansion of the franchise.

Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) himself was not averse to millennial speculation, such as in his opening speech to the Nominated Assembly in 1653 (examined below). This interest has led historians to link millennialism to policy decisions at other times. Steven Pincus has argued that the first Anglo-Dutch War (1652–1654) was driven by an 'apocalyptic' foreign policy determined to involve the Dutch in a millennial crusade against Rome, albeit one that was abandoned by the end of the conflict (Pincus 1996). Cromwell's 'Western Design' to conquer Hispaniola in 1655 may have been partly an attempt to fulfil predictions from the book of Revelation, a view promoted in letters between Cromwell and New England divine John Cotton (Kupperman 1988, 91–92). The expedition's failure led to a providential crisis for Cromwell as he struggled to work out his role in God's wider plan (Worden 1985, 125–46). His support for the readmission of Jews to England the following year, and his backing of the millenarian rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, can be understood against this backdrop as an attempt to aid the fulfilment of God's promises and reclaim his blessing (Crome 2018, 102–4).

A more direct intervention was evident in the writings of Gerrard Winstanley, leader of the Diggers, or 'True Levellers' as they preferred to be known. A tailor originally from the North West town of Wigan, Winstanley pioneered a controversial form of millenarian politics that infuriated many of his contemporaries. Believing that the kingdom of Christ was in the process of appearing in England, he argued that this required the end of private property and the formation of new communities to renew the earth. This necessitated action, and in April 1649 the group began digging up St George's Hill in Surrey and preparing the common land for planting. This was a form of realised eschatology. As they declared: 'all the Prophecies, Visions, and Revelations of Scriptures, of Prophets, and Apostles, concerning the calling of

the Jews, the Restauration of Israel; and making of that People, the Inheritors of the whole Earth; doth all seat themselves in this Work of making the Earth a Common Treasury' (Everard et al. 1649, 16). For the Diggers, Christ's second coming took place within the individual and would result in the transformation of the world.

The response to this was negative. Although the Council of State viewed the whole affair with bemusement, angry locals forced the Diggers to move to Cobham, where their community was destroyed in April 1650. Winstanley himself appears to have settled into local society, serving as a churchwarden and later becoming a Quaker. Both he and the Diggers have fascinated Marxist historians, who have viewed the movement as proto-Communist, a position now rejected by most recent writers as anachronistic (Hessayon 2011, 88–112).

The Later Interregnum

Although a convenient organisational tool, a hard and fast division between the 1640s and 1650s is impossible when tracking the development of millennialism. Most of the millenarian groups that appeared throughout the latter decade were present in some form during the turmoil of the civil wars. Yet the execution of the king, as the Diggers argued, appeared to represent a fundamental transformation of English life that opened up the possibility of further (and perhaps ultimate) change.

One group who hoped for this change were the Fifth Monarchists. Named for their belief that the end of the four earthly monarchies that preceded Christ's kingdom was at hand (Daniel 2), they have often been portrayed as revolutionary firebrands due to their fierce rejection of any earthly king besides Jesus. However, this did not necessarily mean that they were unwilling to work with existing power structures if they believed that they shared their aims.

Unlike the Diggers, the Fifth Monarchists did not have a clearly defined set of aims; they are better seen as a 'radical alliance, rather than as a sect or denomination' (Capp 2008, 17). Broad areas of shared concern included a rejection of infant baptism, campaigning for the abolition of tithes, and working for the restitution of the judicial aspects of the Mosaic Law. Above all, government should be in the hands of the 'saints'—that is, the Fifth Monarchists themselves. Some, such as John Tillinghast (ca. 1604–1655), called for the government to sanction an apocalyptic crusade from England against Rome. The stone that destroys the earthly monarchies in Daniel 2 was '*no other than the Gentile-Churches, who shall strike first at the Roman Monarchy*' (Tillinghast 1654, 74. Emphasis in original).

The peak of Fifth Monarchist influence came in 1653 when the 'Nominated Assembly' replaced the Rump parliament. Popularly dubbed the 'Barebones Parliament' after Fifth Monarchist member Praisegod Barebones (ca. 1598–1679/80), the Assembly was always a stopgap measure until a more cohesive constitutional settlement could be arranged. Although only twelve of 140 members were recognised as Fifth Monarchists, more were sympathetic (Bradstock 2011, 117–23). Oliver Cromwell's opening speech to the Assembly in July 1653 aimed to stoke the millennial expectations of members: 'And why should we be afraid to say or think, that *this* might be the door to usher in the things that God has promised; which has been prophesied of; which He has set the hearts of his people to wait for and expect... you are at the edge of the Promises and Prophesies' (Cromwell 1845, 212–13. Emphasis in original). These hopes proved ill-

founded. Concerned by moves to abolish tithes, the moderate members voted their own dissolution on 13 December 1653 and handed power to Cromwell.

Fifth Monarchists took this as a sign of Cromwell's apostasy, with some branding him as the Antichrist. After the collapse of Barebones, the government was concerned by the plans of the group and set up extensive surveillance networks. As Bernard Capp has argued, the contours of the movement emerged more clearly as 'a reaction to fading, not rising expectations' (Capp 1972, 58). However, attempts to force the millennium into being were rare. A planned rising against Cromwell failed in 1657, with a more notorious effort attempted by one of the (now released) plotters at the Restoration. Thomas Venner's Fifth Monarchist rising in January 1661 resulted in several days of fighting, the brief seizure of St Paul's, and around fifty dead. His actions offered the authorities further justification for restrictions on dissenters in the years that followed.

Alongside these groups, a number of individual prophets emerged to proclaim their own important roles in fulfilling Revelation. Providing further evidence for the range of intellectual traditions informing apocalyptic thought in the period, these prophets drew on ideas from astrology, alchemy, Kabbalah, and the continental mysticism of Jacob Boehme, along with biblical exegesis. For example, the goldsmith Thomas Tany (ca. 1608–ca. 1659) received a vision in November 1649 that led him to claim that he was called to restore the Jews to Palestine. Now renamed as 'TheaurauJohn Tany,' in the following years he published numerous works, circumcised himself, and courted notoriety when publicly burning a Bible, attempting to storm parliament, and erecting tents on the banks of the Thames to gather the Jewish tribes. While his actions may appear bizarre, Ariel Hessayon has demonstrated the deep roots of his millennialism in wider European currents of thought (Hessayon 2007).

Tany's assertions were disputed, notably by John Reeve (1608–1658) and his cousin Lodowicke Muggleton (1609–1698), who claimed to be the two witnesses of Revelation 11. The Muggletonians, as they came to be known, survived as late as 1979, although their numbers were always small. As Andrew Bradstock points out, the Muggletonians were not explicitly millenarian, looking instead for a heavenly reign of Jesus and destruction of the earth (Bradstock 2011, 143). This highlights the importance of continuing to make clear distinctions between prophecy, apocalypticism, and millennialism when examining the seventeenth century, something that has not always been apparent in studies of the period.

Prophecy also provided a way for some women to involve themselves in politics. This was not entirely novel in the 1650s, drawing from a long line of female mystics and visionaries stretching back to antiquity. While there were some notable examples earlier in the seventeenth century (most famously Lady Eleanor Davies [1590–1652], who wrote commentaries on Daniel and Revelation, defaced Lichfield Cathedral, and declared herself metropolitan of all England in 1636), the interregnum provided a range of new opportunities. Following the logic of Joel 2:28–29, which promised that in the 'last days...your sons and daughters will prophesy,' female prophecy could itself be a sign of the imminence of the millennium.

Occasionally, prophecy could be at the behest of officials, such as when the prophet Elizabeth Poole was summoned before the council of officers to advise on whether or not they should press for the king's execution in 1648 (Polizzotto 2016, 31–63). More usually, prophets spoke against the established authorities. This could be expressed in print, such as in the Fifth Monarchist commentator Mary Cary's *Little Horns Doom and Downfall* (1651), where she saw Daniel as predicting the apostasy of the Rump parliament following Charles's death, concluding that the millennium would fully commence in 1701.

Perhaps the most notable example of the politically active prophet was Anna Trapnel (*fl*. 1642–1660), who began making predictions favourable to the New Model Army in 1647, later glorifying Cromwell as England's Gideon. A Fifth Monarchist by the early 1650s, she lost faith in Cromwell with the collapse of Barebones and the foundation of the Protectorate. While the Fifth Monarchist Vavasor Powell was on trial for treason in 1654, Trapnel entered an ecstatic trance in which she prophesied for eleven days, condemning Cromwell and proclaiming 'the calling of the Jews, the overthrowing and shaking of all nations' (Trapnel 1654, 10). The propagandist Marchamont Nedham wrote to Cromwell stating that Trapnel had thrown London into an uproar. Her prophecies during this period were printed, and she remained active as a travelling preacher and prophet over the coming years.

The most concentrated number of female prophets were part of the longest-lasting new religious movement to emerge out of the tumult of the 1650s: the Society of Friends, popularly known as the Quakers. Already an itinerant preacher, in 1652 George Fox (1624–1691) received a vision directing him to gather a new group dedicated to witnessing to the inner light. Labelled Quakers for the shaking under the Spirit seen at early meetings, the Friends (as they preferred to be known) dedicated themselves to evangelism and reinterpretation of traditional theological positions.

The Quaker focus on internal experience applied to their understanding of the millennium. The Friends did not deny Christ's second coming, but viewed it as an internal event that took place within each believer. It was thus simultaneously present for some hearers, and future for others. The group were also notorious for their confrontation with society, a conflict they described in apocalyptic terms as the 'Lamb's War'. This led to Quakers engaging in public preaching, confrontational prophetic signs (such as going naked to demonstrate spiritual innocence), and condemnation of clerical authority. In 1656 a key Quaker leader, James Nayler (1618–1660), entered Bristol in imitation of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event judged to represent his messianic pretensions and which led to brutal judicial punishment.

Authorities' fears of Quakers were fuelled by their rapid growth: from 5,000 in 1654 to 20,000 in 1657, and between 40–60,000 in 1660. Their successful recruitment from other minority Christian groups, such as the Baptists and Fifth Monarchists, also caused worries, with their emphasis on internal revelation resembling both the immanent millennialism of the Diggers, and the visionary dangers of Anabaptist Münster to critics. The comparatively large number of female preachers attached to the group (Phyllis Mack identified 243 in the seventeenth century) also highlighted the potential for Quakers to undermine accepted social and gender structures (Mack 1992, 170–72). As for many Fifth Monarchists, women preaching was a sign of the millennium. In contrast, however, for Quakers it was internal and immanent rather than external and imminent.

Millennialism in the Later Seventeenth Century

Historians have often taken the Restoration of the English monarchy as the natural end of millennialism's popularity in England. Thomas Venner's doomed Fifth Monarchist rising in January 1661 helped to emphasise convincingly the dangers of millennialism to society. The descriptively titled pamphlet of that year, *Munster Paralleld in the Late Massacres Committed by the Fifth Monarchists*, illustrates this point well.

However, millennialism did not disappear at the Restoration. As Warren Johnston's research (e.g. 2011, 2016) has shown, there was a clear continuation and development of several different forms of millennialism in the later seventeenth century. This could include radical, and potentially seditious, uses along the lines of Venner. Millennialism could instil hope in groups suffering persecution after the ejection of non-conforming ministers from the Church of England in 1662 and increasingly restrictive legislation against dissenters. The Farnley Wood Plot in 1663, for example, attracted the support of some Fifth Monarchist, Baptist, and even Quaker congregations (the latter refusing to carry 'carnall' weapons) (Greaves 1986, 179–83). Sir Thomas Gower, Deputy Lieutenant of the North Riding, wrote to the king's general, the Duke of Albemarle, in August 1663 to warn that although the plot was unlikely to succeed,

millennial hopes could not be defeated by logic or reason: 'this sort of people, who follow ye fancyes of Anabaptism and ye dreams of those who presently expect to be sharers in a fifth monarchy, doe not govern them selves by such considerations, but earnestly believe what they vehemintly [*sic*] desire' (Gower 1663). Even texts that did not advocate violence could console believers that their enemies would soon get their comeuppance in the millennium, as the executed parliamentarian Sir Henry Vane's posthumously published theological reflections concluded in 1662 (Johnston 2016).

Yet millennial beliefs were not exclusive to radicals. Millennialism could also serve to support the restored monarchy and Anglican settlement, with some Anglicans using Fifth Monarchist exegesis in order to support the claims of the restored king—such as Arise Evans' claim that Charles II was the Jewish messiah (Evans 1664).

A more conventional approach came in the writings of the loosely affiliated group that Sarah Hutton has described as the 'Cambridge School' millennialists (Hutton 1994, 39) who looked to continue the moderate millennial tradition of Joseph Mede. Henry More's (1614–1687) work was particularly important in this area. Like Mede, he held that 'this *Millennium* is not yet come' (More 1680, 206. Emphasis in original). Monarchs would have a divine role as Christ's sub-regents during the period, with national churches (such as the Church of England) playing an important part in managing earthly affairs (More 1680, 230–35). Those raised into glorified bodies would rule with Christ in heaven, while those alive at the beginning of the millennium would continue 'on earth, where Christ is also present but by *his* Spirit' (More 1680, 207). More's views were not uncontested, and the prominent non-conformist Richard Baxter was drawn into an extended dispute upon them, in which he also engaged with non-conformist minister Thomas Beverley (Baxter 1691).

Most famously, Isaac Newton's (1642–1727) interest in the books of Revelation and Daniel led him to write extensively on the prophecies, although most of his writing remained in manuscript or was published after his death. As with earlier seventeenth-century figures, Newton's interests in mathematics, physics, and alchemy all helped to lead him towards an (albeit non-Trinitarian) form of apocalyptic speculation that looked forward to raised Christians exploring the universe in spiritual bodies (Newton 1733; 1974a; 1974b).

Newton also shared another millenarian interest with non-conformists—speculation about the conversion and restoration of the Jews. The excitement in European Jewry surrounding the appearance of the self-proclaimed messiah Sabbatai Sevi in 1665–1666 resulted in significant interest in England. Henry Oldenberg, secretary to the Royal Society, wrote to Spinoza in December 1665 asking for details, while several pamphlets proclaimed the return of the lost tribes and fall of the Ottoman Empire (McKeon 1977).

While individual millennial prophets were unsurprisingly less conspicuous than they had been during the 1650s, some continued to appear. The most influential of these was Jane Lead (1624–1704). Drawing from Behmenism, in 1670 Lead had a vision of the virgin wisdom, who was also the woman clothed in the sun in Revelation 12. Wisdom promised to give birth to a true spiritual being in Lead. The leader of the English Behmenists, Dr John Pordage, became a disciple, publishing her works, which were subsequently popularised and translated by Dutch and German millenarians and Behmenists. In 1695, the Licensing Act had lapsed, allowing another explosion of uncensored printed work, much as in the post-1640 period. Lead took advantage, publishing extensively and forming 'The Philadelphian Society' to promote her beliefs. As with the Quakers, Lead advocated an internalised apocalypse. The millennium was primarily an internal reigning of Christ in believers, although she also argued that believers would have external rule over their enemies. The Society continued after her death, and had significant interactions with groups such as the French Prophets in the eighteenth century (see Hessayon 2016).

Two major incidents at the end of the century also led to a growth in popular millennial rhetoric: the furore surrounding the 'Popish Plot' from 1678–1682 and the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. The 'Popish Plot' hysteria surrounded claims of a conspiracy to place the Catholic heir and king's brother, James, Duke of York, on the throne. This saw a return to feverish attacks upon the papacy as the beast and intimations of her coming fall at the hands of Protestant powers, most notably in pamphlet and broadsheet literature (Johnston 2011, 152–88). Such hopes were premature, however, and James II became king in 1685.

James's reign in England was short lived. In 1688, William of Orange was invited to take the throne, ultimately leading James to flee into exile and to the reign of the Protestants William and Mary. The deliverance of England from a Catholic dynasty, securing of the Church of England, and tolerance of non-conformist Protestant worship as a result of the 'Glorious Revolution' invited the use of millennial language to describe the new situation. Johnston has traced the prevalence of this trope in the early years of William and Mary's reign, with several Anglican commentaries concluding that the new monarchs would be responsible for ushering in the millennial kingdom (Johnston 2011, 189–212). This rhetoric made its way into court sermons. Bishop of Salisbury Gilbert Burnet's coronation sermon, for example, urged William to maintain true religion by suggesting he could enjoy a millennial role: 'When we see Kings become thus truly Christian Philosophers, then we may expect to see the City of God, the *New Jerusalem*, quickly come down from Heaven to settle among us; and if we may look for a glorious Thousand Years on Earth, we may reckon that it is not far from us, when we see Kings fall down before him that is the *King of Kings*' (Burnet 1689, 20).

Non-conformists also celebrated the end of James's reign and the coming of toleration. Particular Baptist Hanserd Knollys concluded that the 1,260 days of the beast's reign ended in 1688, and the English king would be predominant in destroying Rome. This would lead into 'the time of the glorious state of the Church, and Kingdom of Christ on earth, before the general Resurrection' (Knollys 1689, 229). Fellow Baptist and former Fifth Monarchist Benjamin Keach revised an earlier apocalyptic work in the same year to argue for the imminent collapse of the Roman Antichrist: 'And somewhat like this sudden fall, I can't but think we have seen of late (in respect to *Babylon's* fall) in *England*' (Keach 1689, 116. Emphasis in original). As Johnston points out, however, non-conformist writers such as Knollys and Keach were not entirely uncritical in their evaluation of the new monarchs. To cement the apocalyptic role, it was necessary for William and Mary to go further and purify the English churches along the models that the non-conformists advocated (Johnston 2011, 213–24).

The seventeenth century therefore saw major changes to political, social, and religious life that had an undoubted impact on millennial thought and the way in which it was expressed. Yet the situation at the end of the century can, in some ways, be seen as one of continuity as much as change. Anglican millennialists still proclaimed their church and monarch as evidence of the coming kingdom of Christ. Non-conformists still agitated for further reform, while Protestants of all stripes looked for the downfall of the papal Antichrist. The fact that Keach's commentators of choice included Thomas Brightman, Johann Heinrich Alsted, and Thomas Goodwin shows that the concerns of earlier writers had continued relevance as England approached the eighteenth century.

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