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"Chosen Vessels:" Protestant Women Prophets and the Language of Election in the Early Modern British Atlantic

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Abstract

"Chosen Vessels:" Protestant Women Prophets and the Language of Election
in the Early Modern British Atlantic

By Elizabeth Bouldin

"'Chosen Vessels" considers over one hundred women who prophesied between the British Civil Wars and the eve of the eighteenth-century transatlantic awakenings. I argue that the rich and varied expressions of election rhetoric among women prophets from a range of religious groups attest to the existence of a broad cultural discourse on election and chosenness. Election, or the claim of being chosen by God, was more than doctrinal; it became a powerful rhetorical tool with far-reaching effects on the formation of religious and national identities. How women prophets participated in and negotiated election discourse was key to how they worked out their own beliefs about their elect status. More broadly, it was also central to how women shaped ideas about the role of election in the lives of individuals and communities in the diverse religious environment of the expanding Atlantic world.

Through a consideration of groups such as the Quakers, Philadelphians, French Prophets, Labadists, and radical German Pietists, this dissertation examines how transsectarian and transnational encounters challenged British prophets' understandings of who comprised the "elect" and what "election" signified. The study also challenges arguments that have tied the feminization of late seventeenth-century religious discourse to the domesticization or decline of women's religious roles. I show how some women continued to participate actively in public religious life by claiming that they had been chosen for particular roles related to the end times. These women played a central part in the development of a transnational religious sphere, one in which dissenters carried out conversations and critical debates with one another about the nature of radical Protestantism.

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Introduction

In 1662, the Quaker prophet Esther Biddle published *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth into these Three Nations,* an admonitory tract addressing the king and others who persecuted Quakers. She also directed a few words to her fellow Friends, the "Royal Seed…chosen of God, and separated from the World." Her tract referred to England as "the most fruitful and famous Land, in which the Lord hath been pleased to make manifest his Life and Power, Beauty and Glory, more than in any Nation under the Heavens." But she continued that this England, saddled with wayward rulers, priests, and people, had sparked God's ire. In a passage adapted from Isaiah, chapter 62, Biddle spoke for God: "Now I will arise, saith the dreadful and terrible God…I will tear and devour, and for Sions sake I will not be quiet, and for my beloved Jerusalem I will not be silent." Biddle's prophetic language is filled with references to election. She mentioned the "royal seed," an early term used by George Fox to refer to the Friends, but which also had biblical connotations of God's covenant with the elect. Biddle also implied that England was special, set apart as an elect nation by God. And in adopting the words of Isaiah she drew a certain parallel between the situation of Quakers in her current society and the Israelites in Babylonian captivity.[1]

Biddle was not unique in her choice of language. In the seventeenth-century British Atlantic, we find myriad references to the belief that God favored certain individuals, religious groups, or even nations as "chosen" or "elect" people. As the Calvinist doctrine of election expanded into a powerful idea in the post-Reformation British Atlantic world, its effects on the formation of religious and national identities

1 Esther Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth unto these three Nations* (London, 1662).

were far-reaching. Most notably, the idea of England or America as an “elect nation” resonated ideologically for centuries to come. Among those who participated in discourses of election were several hundred women prophets who, like Biddle, claimed to prophesy as “instruments” of God. The prophetic renderings of these women shed light both on the language of election in the early modern Atlantic and on the ways in which women contributed to ideas about election.

Women from a variety of confessional backgrounds articulated and promoted notions of election through their rhetoric and actions. Concepts of election in prophetic discourse ranged from an emphasis on the soteriological (or salvific) implications of election, to the idea of the prophet as an elect messenger of God, to the idea of the “female ambassadress” chosen to usher in the new age. In all of these cases, election and chosenness functioned to convey a sense of God-ordained authority. Language of election thus offered women what they believed was an immediate and powerful claim to authority, although this authority was then negotiated between prophet and audience.

The prevalence of election language in female prophetic discourse was notable. For example, the Quaker prophet Elizabeth Bathurst proclaimed, “Tis *in him* we are elected; not in our selves, as though personally some were chosen, and others past by: but in the Seed Christ, the Elect of God, the Object of the Father's Love; all who are gathered into him, are made a chosen Generation, an Elect People by the Lord.”[2] Bathurst presented an understanding of election that argued against Calvinist soteriology. However, the concept of election clearly remained important to her frame of reference, as it did to the conceptual frameworks of many seventeenth-century women prophets. My

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2 Elizabeth Bathurst, *Truth's vindication, or, A gentle stroke to wipe off the foul aspersions, false accusations and misrepresentations cast upon the people of God call'd Quakers* (London, 1683), 15.

dissertation contends that how women prophets negotiated discourses on election was key to how they worked out their own beliefs about their elect status. More broadly, it was also central to how women shaped ideas about the role of election in the lives of individuals and communities in the diverse religious environment of the Atlantic world.

***

Historiography on Protestantism in early modern England and America has traditionally been compartmentalized and insular in focus, concerned in large part with religion as it related to political developments in the nation-state. We find great emphasis, for example, on debates over the nature of English Protestantism in the years leading up the Civil Wars. To what extent did Puritanism or "hot" Protestantism take hold? What role did the rise of Arminianism and anti-Laudian sentiment play in contributing to the Civil Wars? How unified was Protestantism in seventeenth-century England?[3]

Recently, a number of scholars have countered this historiography by looking at the transnational nature of Protestant movements. For example, scholars such as Rosalind Beiler and Carla Pestana have looked at the circulation and interaction of Protestants throughout the Atlantic.[4] Building on such work, this project places its study of Protestantism, female prophecy, and election in a more global context, one that recognizes post-Reformation religious movements as historical forces that are independent of, if still connected to, the political and cultural history of the nation-state.

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3 See, for example, Nicholas Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c. 1590-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987); Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of the Protestants: The Church in English Society 1559-1625* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982).

4 See Rosalind Beiler "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and European Migration, 1660-1710," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents*, eds. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 210-236; Carla Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the Making of the British Atlantic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009). Pestana suggests that it is only in the context of the British Atlantic that we can understand religion in the years from the Reformation through the eighteenth century.

It acknowledges that early modern Protestantism—and the sectarian movements that came out if it—had a transnational, transconfessional quality. Prophets not only traveled throughout the Atlantic, but they also corresponded with those of other nationalities or religious persuasions. At a collective level, shared influences existed between English Quakers and German Pietists, as well as between French Prophets and English Philadelphians. One should not overstate these shared influences, since early modern religious groups often emphasized theological difference over commonality. But if we are to gain a fuller understanding of the religious culture of the early modern British Atlantic, we must recognize the porosity of borders—both national and sectarian.

By definition, the focus of this project is the British Atlantic. The study of Quaker prophets takes us throughout the British Isles (England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland) and across the Atlantic Ocean to colonial North America. In the American colonies, women prophesied primarily in Boston and Rhode Island, but a few ventured as far south as the Carolinas, Jamaica, and Barbados. One did not have to be British, however, to participate in the religious culture of the early modern British Atlantic. The French Prophets settled in London in 1706 to escape persecution; in the process they attracted a number of English adherents. The Dutch Labadists had an important presence in early Pennsylvania. The Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon never set foot in the British Isles, and yet she managed to pose such a threat to Scottish Protestantism that the General Assembly passed two ordinances against her followers and made renunciation of "Bourignianism" a condition of ordination.[5] And, as the final chapter of this dissertation will argue, interactions among continental Europeans and Britons produced an Atlantic religious community that transcended British identity. Thus, while this is a study about

5 Alexander R. MacEwen, *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1910), 14-5.

prophecy in the British Atlantic, the international character of seventeenth-century religiosity broadens this study beyond its British roots.

The study encompasses the years from 1640 to 1715, an era sandwiched between the Arminian-Calvinist disputes of the early seventeenth-century British Atlantic and the transatlantic awakening of the early eighteenth century. Looking at these years as a whole, we see a moment when the Atlantic's various sectarian groups—and the female prophets who identified with them—were attempting to work out the notions and implications of Calvinist election for their own theological and cultural frameworks. Some women prophets professed Calvinist beliefs, others developed new notions of election based on their reading of biblical texts, and still others felt the need to address the errors of those who believed in doctrinal election. But most women prophets not only felt "pressed in Spirit" to prophesy, but also "pressed in Spirit" to address election.

The tradition of Protestant women creating agency through religious discourse did not begin with the Civil Wars. As Peter Lake has shown, for example, the Puritan Jane Ratcliffe used a language of piety to achieve various ends, and her biographer used this same pious language to explain away potentially contradictory events in Ratcliffe's life when she went against the grain of patriarchy or paternalism.[6] But it was the political and religious turmoil of the Civil War years that first opened up the world of prophecy to early modern English women on a large scale. The explosion of radical Protestant groups during this time of upheaval produced the first great wave of female prophecy in the British Atlantic. It also influenced groups such as the Quakers, who emerged in the following decades.

6 Peter Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The 'Emancipation' of Mrs. Jane Radcliffe," *Seventeenth-Century Journal* 2, no. 2 (1987), 143-165.

During the Restoration period, prophecy did not die out. Instead, it took on new forms and emphases. Millenarianism shed some of its political implications, and new groups such as the French Prophets entered debates over who belonged to "the elect." The transatlantic travels of prophets such as the Quakers, coupled with the Toleration Act of 1689, gave dissenters higher visibility and improved their status. By 1715, the British Atlantic was religiously diverse: the French Prophets had been in London for nearly a decade; Antoinette Bourignon had provided a threat to Scottish Protestantism; groups such as the Quakers and Labadists had taken full advantage of colonial opportunities.

I have chosen to end this study in 1715, a traditional ending point for studies of early modern Britain. More importantly to this study, though, a number of forces had begun to change the dynamics of prophecy by 1715. The groups who produced the most female prophets had either died out (i.e. the Fifth Monarchists) or assimilated to the point that they engaged less frequently in prophetic activity (i.e. the Quakers). Moreover, the beginnings of the Enlightenment brought new debates to the forefront, namely over the role of reason, that placed religious enthusiasm under increasing scrutiny. In addition, events such as the Glorious Revolution and the failed Jacobite Rebellion of 1715 served to unite Protestants. Catholics became "the enemy" in a heightened way as a perceived threat to Protestant Britain and its political liberty. Last, while the early eighteenth-century groups examined in this study (in particular the French Prophets) had a marked influence on later eighteenth-century groups such as the Shakers and Methodists, they nonetheless belonged to the world of seventeenth-century crisis and religious conflict.

This was their realm, even if, as Ann Taves remarks, their specters "haunted the transatlantic awakening of the 1730s and 1740s."[7]

Defining the Female Prophet

The number of women prophets during the years from 1640 to 1715 is considerable. Phyllis Mack estimates that nearly 300 women prophesied during the Civil War Years, the height of early modern prophetic activity.[8] In this study, I have looked at over 100 women from a number of traditions, including Quaker, French Prophet, General and Particular Baptist, Philadelphian, Labadist, Pietist, Puritan, Fifth Monarchist, Independent, and Roman Catholic. While the scholarship on female prophets is ample enough to have secured its own niche in the cultural and religious historiography of the British Atlantic, the question could be raised whether this particular study would be better addressed by a study of prophecy among both men and women. I argue that female prophecy in the seventeenth century is unique in both its form and in the responses it provoked, and thus deserves to be studied separately. Women prophets faced restrictions and encountered problems that their male counterparts did not. Women inspired followers in a different manner than did male religious figures. Notions of community, prophetic calling, and, indeed, the nature of being "chosen" to speak for God meant something different to women than it did to men. For all of these reasons, the study of female prophets can lead to a fuller understanding of community, election, and prophecy in the Atlantic context.

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7 Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 15.

8 Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 1.

In 1958, when Keith Thomas published his article on women prophets in the English Revolution, "Women and the Civil War Sects," he initiated what has become two generations of scholarship on women prophets in the British Atlantic.[9] A number of scholars have examined women prophets through the lens of key events like the British Civil Wars or the settling of New England. Others have concentrated on female prophets within a particular sectarian tradition, such as Quakerism. Christine Trevett has contributed much to our understanding of Quaker female prophecy.[10] Yet while such studies offer much insight into the sect they address, they do not always explore the broader trends and shared influences that crossed sectarian lines.

A third approach has studied female prophets in the context of historiographical debates about the role of women in post-Reformation society. There is no question that women were restricted in their public religious participation, in part by cultural constraints and in part by the Pauline injunction (cf. 1 Cor. 14:34-5).[11] We can see this by looking at the rhetoric of both Catholic and Protestant women. Drawing on language of concession, the sixteenth-century Catholic mystic Teresa of Avila repeatedly apologized to her readers for her bad memory, physical and mental weaknesses, and faults. She

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9 See Keith Thomas, "Women and the Civil War Sects," *Past and Present* 13 (1958): 42-62.

10 See Christine Trevett, *Quaker Women Prophets in England and Wales, 1650-1700* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen Press, 2000); Ibid., *Women and Quakerism in the Seventeenth Century* (York: Sessions Book Trust, The Ebor Press, 1991).

11 According to 1 Corinthians 14:34-5, "Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church."

emphasized that she was just a "poor little woman." Protestant women were similarly apologetic when speaking or writing publicly.[12]

What is debated, however, is how successful seventeenth-century women were at circumventing proscriptions against their public religious presence. On the one hand, for example, Puritanism presented women with a limited scope of acceptable piety. But Peter Lake and Diane Willen have shown how women could find agency through piety. Similarly, Amanda Porterfield has argued that language of female piety was a significant force in Puritanism and in shaping Puritanism's role in the process of modernization.[13]

Scholarship on the Civil War prophets has made similar arguments about women's ability to exert a public voice through their religion. In her study of female prophets of the mid-seventeenth century, Phyllis Mack argues that the types of prophecy women chose and the ways in which they articulated their chosen status as prophets were closely linked to constructions of gender.[14] For example, women prophets appropriated biblical models of prophecy to promote ideas about a chosen people or "second Israel." They frequently made references to specific biblical prophets, such as Daniel, Isaiah, or Deborah. Mack sees female prophets' adaptations of male biblical models as symbolic of

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12 Alison Weber, *Teresa of Avila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 36-41, 50. Patricia Crawford lays out the various methods that and strategies that women used to circumvent critics. They embraced the values of their opponents, using their gender as an excuse; they showed anxiety about their sexual identity; they tried to escape criticism by writing specifically to an audience of their own sex; and they chose to write on subjects that were socially acceptable for women. See Crawford, "Women's Published Writings, 1600-1700," in Patricia Crawford, "Women's Published Writings, 1600-1700*,"* in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800,* ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 219-221.

13 Peter Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: "The 'Emancipation' of Mrs. Jane Radcliffe;" Diane Willen, "Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 43, no. 4 (1992): 561-580; Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982).

14 Mack, *Visionary Women.* This dissertation distinguishes between gendered performance—the actions and rhetoric of prophets that reiterate gender—and performativity, which has the ontological quality necessary to produce or create gender. See Judith Butler, "Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler," in *A Critical Sense: Interviews with Intellectuals*, ed. Peter Osborne, 108-125 (London: Routledge, 1996).

the radical disengagement from the self that women undertook in order to assume such a public role.[15]

I propose that the study of the relationship between prophet and community also sheds light on the identities women prophets assumed as they fulfilled their self-perceived mandate to "speak for God." Women prophets in the early modern British Atlantic participated in a number of communities at the domestic, parochial, regional, national, and even transnational levels. As they sought to establish themselves as chosen prophets operating within various communities, they did so by evoking cultural and theological notions of election. When women donned ashes and sackcloth like the biblical prophet Isaiah, for example, they called for repentance and mourned for their community, city, or nation. At the same time, they often declared themselves and those who subscribed to their religious beliefs as chosen persons set aside from the corruption surrounding them. As such, the gendering of prophecy cannot be fully understood apart from the context of how language of election factored in prophetic reinscriptions of community boundaries.

In probing the relationship between prophecy, election, and community, this study provides a unique contribution to the analysis of sources on female prophecy. I give a historical reading to a variety of archival and printed sources that allow for a study not only of the gendering of prophetic discourse but also of the gendering of religious practice defined more broadly. Drawing on sources that allow for a transconfessional, transatlantic perspective, I analyze these sources not only to see how (or whether) female prophecy offered women individual agency but also to understand how women engaged as actors in transnational networks of religious dissenters.

15 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 172-78.

To accommodate a considerable range of religious views and practices, my dissertation defines prophecy broadly—and as early modern women often understood it—as "speaking for God."[16] This interpretation avoids a narrow focus on prediction of the end times and allows for a study of prophets from both millenarian and non-millenarian traditions. Importantly, prophecy is not limited to words; it can extend to any form of expression believed to be produced by God through human agency.[17] As such, this study considers prophetic performance as a whole—both the actions and rhetoric of women prophets. While one's religious background certainly influenced how one chose to "speak for God," it was not the sole determining factor. Based on the women prophets considered in this study, is possible to sketch a typology of seventeenth-century female prophecy that transcends formal religious affiliation.

Important to any typology of prophecy is how the prophet chose to relay her message. Prophets communicated their messages through a variety of prophetic mechanisms and discursive forms. One mechanism was lay preaching, which was often referred to as "tub-preaching" or "mechanic preaching" during the seventeenth century. Preaching was especially popular among mid seventeenth-century prophets, whose messages—and locations—varied. Anne Hempstall, who claimed that "Anna the prophetesse" had visited her in a dream, spoke only to women. Hempstall's

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16 Robert R. Wilson defines the biblical prophet (Heb. nabbi; Greek. prophetes), a key model for seventeenth-century prophets, as "a person who serves as a channel of communication between the human and divine worlds." See Wilson, s.v. "Prophet," in *HarperCollins Bible Dictionary,* rev. ed., eds. Paul J. Achtemeier and Roger Boraas (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 884-889).

17 Diane Purkiss, "Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body: Women Prophets of the Seventeenth-Century," in *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740*, eds. Isabel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1992), 139.

contemporary, Susan May, preached in a barn.[18] Women also "prophesied" in response to the preaching of others. Geoffrey Nuttall characterizes this type of prophesying as a combination of biblical exegesis, personal testimony, and exhortation given after the preacher had finished his sermon. Women participated in 34% of recorded cases where Quakers interrupted the preaching of a minister.[19]

Narrative writing represents another way prophets chose to communicate their messages. Many narrative writings fit this study's definition of prophecy in that the writers claimed they were "pressed in Spirit" or under an obligation to speak God's truth. Spiritual autobiographies (which developed out of the Puritan tradition) and testimonies (which developed out of the Quaker tradition) were two important forms of narrative writing that prophets employed. The spiritual autobiography originated as a Puritan conversion narrative that both reassured the author of his or her salvation and improved the author's standing in the Puritan community. This genre quickly spread to other sectarian groups, particularly to those with a Calvinist bent, who adapted the conversion narrative to other forms of writing. For example, the Philadelphian Ann Bathurst kept a spiritual diary (which she intended for circulation) for almost twenty years.[20] Her diary evoked a Puritan spiritual autobiography in that it traced her path to salvation, but the bulk of her entries focused on her prophetic visions and dreams.

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18 Anonymous, *A discoverie of six women preachers, in Middlesex, Kent, Cambridgshire, and Salisbury. With a relation of their names, manners, life, and doctrine, pleasant to be read, but horrid to be judged of their names are these. Anne Hempstall. Mary Bilbrow. Ioane Bauford. Susan May. Elizab. Bancroft. Arabella Thomas* (London, 1641), 1-2, 4.

19 Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75; Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution*, 26.

20 Ann Bathurst, "Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions," 2 vols., Rawlinson MSS D. 1262-63, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

Many Quakers wrote testimonies that bore witness to a particular issue. Some, such as Judith Boulbie's testimony against hired priests, had impersonal elements.[21] But testimonies also could take on a form that was close to the Puritan spiritual autobiography. Barbara Blaugdone wrote an account of her conversion, her call to ministry, and her experiences as a missionary, which was "given forth as a testimony for the Lord's power, and for the encouragement of Friends."[22] Correspondence was another way that women prophets communicated. Letter writing enabled women of various religious affiliations to share their theological expositions, visions, or prophecies with others. Letters varied in content from spiritual instruction to explanation of scripture to theological debate. Some women sent prophetic letters to the king or other political leaders. Others communicated to those of other nationalities.[23]

Prophecy could also involve symbolic, non-verbal acts. The women in this study used a variety of symbolic acts, most of which had their origins in Old Testament prophecy. A number of Quaker women dressed in sackcloth and ashes as a sign of repentance or mourning. Even more dramatic was the "French Prophetess turn'd Adamite," who stripped naked and made her way to the altar of a church, "where she appear'd in several Strange and Indecent Postures."[24]

As for the substance of female prophetic discourse, one could argue that all of the women in this study shared what Rosemary Radford Ruether calls divine "revelatory

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21 See Judith Boulbie, *A Testimony for truth against all hireling priests and deceivers* (London, 1665).

22 Barbara Blaugdone, *An account of the travels, sufferings and persecutions of Barbara Blaugdone Given forth as a testimony to the Lord's power, and for the encouragement of Friends* (London, 1691).

23 See, for example, Elizabeth Webb, "A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm," (Market Street, PA: Joseph Crukshank, 1781).

24 *The French prophetess turn'd adamite being a true and comical account of a pretended French prophetess* (London, 1707).

disclosures that could direct others on the path of holiness."[25] The particular ways in which prophets received and communicated these revelatory disclosures are what separated them one from another. Take, for example, the Quaker Elizabeth Bathurst, who described how "in an acceptable time was [God] pleased to appear unto me, (magnified be his Name forever) and to cast up a living way for me." Once a recipient of God's grace, Bathurst "found the God of all grace, laying a more special Injunction upon me to visit [the members of her Presbyterian congregation] particularly."[26] She was a visionary in that she believed she experienced direct revelation from God, but her writing consisted mainly of systematic theology. She was not an ecstatic visionary who focused on symbolic signs or charismatic preaching. On the other hand, the French Prophets were ecstatic visionaries; they entered into trances and spoke in tongues.

We can also categorize prophets by their millenarian beliefs. The following chapters of the dissertation will explore at length how millenarianism interacted with prophecy, but here I will sketch out a couple of points. First, prophets exhibited a wide range of beliefs about the millennium, from amillennial apocalypticism to premillenarianism to postmillenarianism.[27] Despite their differences, most prophets shared an interest in what role they—as chosen vessels of God's word—had in the preparational events leading to the end times (whenever and however they would unfold).

Millenarian prophecy in Britain peaked during the Civil Wars and again during the 1690s in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. Many of the political events of

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25 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Visionary Women: Three Medieval Mystics* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002), 5.

26 Elizabeth Bathurst, *An Expostulatory appeal to the Professors of Christianity, Joyned in Community with Samuel Ansley* (London, 1680), 2-3.

27 Amillenial apocalypticism rejects the idea that Christ will have a millennial reign. In premillenarianism, Christ is physically present on earth for his millennial reign, whereas in postmillenarianism Christ's second coming occurs after the millennium.

both revolutions were interpreted through an apocalyptic lens. The Fifth Monarchists, for example, believed that the political events of the Civil Wars were signs of Christ's imminent return, and they sought to assure civic reform in advance of Christ's arrival.[28] After the Restoration the intensity of millenarian prophecy diminished, but millenarian beliefs did not disappear among female prophets. The second-generation Quakers, for example, came to embrace a focus on the spiritual (as opposed to the literal) Second Coming of Christ. But while they focused less on the signs of the times that pointed to Christ's arrival, their prophetic discourse still maintained an interest in the transformative experience of the indwelling of the Spirit—which they saw as a microcosmic representation of what would one day be enacted at a larger level.[29]

Influences outside of Britain also shaped millenarian prophecy. Continental influences, such as Pietism and (later) the arrival of the French Prophets, assured the place of millenarian religious thought in Britain throughout the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The French Prophets took great interest in the New Jerusalem that they believed would soon arrive, although they were less specific about its particulars than were the Fifth Monarchists. They preached a message of repentance, that they might bring others into the fold of true believers who would be spared God's judgment.[30]

Another continental influence on post-Restoration millenarian prophecy was Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), a sixteenth-century German theologian and theosophist. Boehme's followers, Behmenists, existed throughout Europe and Britain, with one of the most salient examples being the London Philadelphian Society. Behmenist

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28 For an overview of the Fifth Monarchists see Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-Century English Millenarianism* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972).

29 See Catherine Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism* (Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen Press, 1995), 95.

30 On the French Prophets see Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England: A Social History of a Millenarian Group in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

millenarianism produced a mystical style of prophecy. The Philadelphian Jane Lead, for example, focused on the end times as ones of universal restoration.[31] Lead and Ann Bathurst, another Philadelphian, created cosmological drawings and focused on the female figure of Divine Wisdom in their visions and prophecies. Behmenist-influenced prophets (and non-Behmenists who embraced mysticism) often prophesied as individuals rather than collectively. In the case of Antoinette Bourignon, prophecy was divorced from the outside influences of a larger religious community; Bourignon collected her own following of "Bourignians" or Bourignonians as her career progressed, but she did not identify with any sectarian group.

As a whole, millenarianism influenced prophecy in two important ways. First, it shaped the prophet's audience and message. Prophets who believed that they were called to warn others of the world's impending end preached a very different message than Behmenists who focused less on cataclysm and more on mysticism. Second, as Chapter Five will explore at length, millenarianism encouraged dissenters to seek out others from different national or confessional affiliations in an attempt to find other millenarian reformers. Millenarianism was thus a considerable impetus for creating networks of dissenters—networks in which female prophets participated.

For the context of this dissertation, it is also essential to typologize female prophecy as it relates to gender. We can divide women into roughly three categories. Prophets from all of these categories cited Joel 2:28-9 (cf. Acts 2:17-8), that God would pour out a prophetic spirit on men and women in the final days, as justification of female prophecy. But they differed in the importance they assigned gender. The first group, who

31 Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 246.

included the Civil War prophets and the early Quakers, found their prophetic authority in minimizing the role of gender in prophecy. The second group, found among Behmenists such as the Philadelphians, believed that women had a role distinct to their gender as "female ambassadresses" who would usher in the new age. A third category would be the last major group considered in this dissertation, the French Prophets. These prophets often prophesied as part of a group, and the extent to which they gendered their prophetic discourse as feminine often depended on their role within the group's prophetic performance. These three categories of prophets will be considered at length in the following chapters, and they have driven the organization of this dissertation.

Election in Prophetic Discourse

There was no prophecy without the inherent idea of an individual election, that of a prophet's believing that she had been chosen to speak for God. But election language extended far beyond the call to prophesy, and the prophets in this study created a diverse and multifaceted relationship between prophecy and election. Election had multiple dimensions in the seventeenth century. At its root, election referred to the concept of being chosen by God. The idea of election as being chosen by God brought into play the question of who was chosen (both at the individual and collective levels), when they were chosen, and for what purpose they were chosen.

In Calvinist theology, election became closely associated with the doctrine of predestination, the belief that some were elected unconditionally to salvation.[32] Calvinists

32 For an overview of the social history of Calvinism see Philip Benedict, *Christ's Churches Purely Reformed: A Social History of Calvinism* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002). For a more theological treatment of Reformed doctrine see Richard Muller, *Christ and the Decree: Christology and Predestination in Reformed Theology from Calvin to Perkins*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008).

debated notions of divine election: was it infralapsarian (in place after the Fall) or supralapsarian (in place before the Fall)? Arminian dissenters of orthodox Calvinism even posited a condition of election in which God foresaw but did not foreordain the elect. In numerous places throughout the Atlantic, including England, France, and the American colonies, the role of grace and free will in shaping soteriology was a point of contention. The Calvinist doctrine of election was front-and-center in religious debates, in fostering the Civil Wars, and in the discourse of female prophets.[33] For example, the millenarian prophet Anne Yemans was "exceedingly moved by the Spirit of God" to write her treatise, which the non-conformist printer Giles Calvert published in 1648. In the treatise, Yemans cited Ephesians 1:5-6, arguing that "God hath chosen and elected some before the world began, to be the children of God in Christ, and to reveal himself unto him, and to give unto them eternal life, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."[34] Yemans addressed who the elect were (some), when they became elect (before the world began) and the purpose of their election (to be the children of God in Christ).

On the other end of the spectrum were the English Quaker Joan Whitrowe and the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, both of whom expressed vehement opposition to the Calvinist doctrine of election. Whitrowe and Bourignon offered anti-Calvinist interpretations of the biblical story of Jacob and Esau (as framed by Paul in Romans 9), a story which Calvinists often cited as illustrative of predestined election and

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33 Max Weber's famous formulation connects Calvinist election (and, more specifically, the ascetic Protestantism that it produced) to the development of the capitalist spirit. See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* trans. Talcott Parsons (London: Routledge, 2001). The original publication date was 1904/5, with the first English translation published in 1930.

34 Anne Yemans, *Crooked pathes made straight: or, The wayes of God made knowne to lost sinners, or bewildered saints Wherein is represented the severall conditions of a Christian in the spirit, as hee growes up out of weaknesse into strength, through death into life eternall* (London, 1648), 79.

reprobation. Whitrowe, for example, argued that Jacob "loved the Election, so as to buy it with a Price," while Esau "rejected his Election, and Despised it, so as to sell his Birth-right for a Mess of Pottage, and so was Rejected, but not that he was Personally and wholly from all Eternity, Predestined to Damnation; this is a great mistake from a False Faith, for whatsoever was Evil in Jacob was Rejected of God, as well as in Esau." Whitrowe thus constructed an understanding that involved the conditionality of an individual *choosing* election by choosing good over evil: "So, in these two are placed the Election or Reprobation; in the Good the Election; and in the Evil the Reprobation; and not that God Ordered it so in the beginning." Bourignon offered the same view, arguing that predestinarian theology had incorrectly pulled from the story of Jacob and Esau its concept of election and reprobation, while in fact the story merely demonstrated how God rewarded good and punished evil. [35]

Bourignon, who left the Catholic Church but never identified with any other religious group, went so far as to construct her own theology of election. She based her views on election in part on scripture, in part on her knowledge of Calvinist theology (which she rejected with vehemence), and in part on her own interpretation. She described how "it is true, [God] sometimes makes particular Elections, as of the Blessed Virgin Mary for the Mother of his Humanity, St. Paul for his Disciple, and some others." But her understanding of individual election differed from that of the other prophets in this study. Bourignon virulently opposed Calvinism, even going so far as to claim that

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35 Joan Whitrowe, *Faithful warnings, expostulations and exhortations, to the several professors of Christianity in England, as well those of the highest as the lowest quality. with a testimony against divers great errors in some teachers, and other hearers* (London, 1697), 143-45; Antoinette Bourignon, *Oeuvres, vol 18*, Part II (Amsterdam, 1686), 58, 62-3. Translations of Bourignon are mine.

Satan was the one who planted beliefs about predestined election in people's minds.[36] She believed that the elect of God—such as the biblical figures mentioned above—received so much grace that they could no longer resist it; grace overpowered the soul, making it impossible for an individual not to be saved. This view appears to have been inspired, at least in part, from two tenets of Calvinism: the doctrine of irresistible grace, in which an elect individual could not resist God's grace and was thus saved; and the doctrine of perseverance, in which an elect individual could not fall from grace. But whereas in Calvinist doctrine this election was predestined, Bourignon focused on the importance of the quantity of grace: elect persons could not fall from grace only because they were so overwhelmed by its abundance. She considered such souls to have an absolute election. However, others could become elect by *choosing* to follow God through the help of grace; Bourignon deemed this to be a conditional rather than absolute election. Grace could thus be absolute or conditional, given in abundance or in moderation; it was not, however, denied to any who sought it.[37]

For some time now, scholars have debated whether subsequent generations of Calvinists distorted Calvin's theology by placing too much emphasis on soteriology. Richard Muller, who gives a thorough treatment of this debate, argues that post-Reformation theologians did not latch onto the doctrine of predestination and ignore other aspects of Calvinistic theology; rather, they approached Calvinistic theology systematically.[38] Nonetheless, as the theology of Calvinism spread throughout the Atlantic, it took on various implications, both theological and cultural, which were not present in doctrinal Calvinism. For those who worshipped in Calvinist churches, a

36 Bourignon, *Oeuvres, vol 16*, Part I (Amsterdam, 1686), 11-12.
37 George Garden, *An Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon in Four Parts* (London, 1699), 120-21.
38 Muller, *Christ and the Decree,* 180.

personal concern with one's elect status sometimes came to dominate other theological aspects of Calvinism. In extreme cases, angst over one's salvation could even lead to suicidal despair. Calvinists often looked for signs of their elect status, and the gift of prophecy reassured more than one female prophet that she was among the chosen by displacing her concern over her elect status. The Particular Baptist Sarah Wight, for example, first received spiritual comfort regarding her salvation through a vision: "Then I fell into a Trance. (This was April 6 at night) I lay in visions. And in that time, the Spirit of God was poured in upon me. And then Jesus Christ was presented to me, as crucified for my sins. I saw it: and my self crucified with him." But it was not until Wight claimed that God had called to her to minister to others through sharing her visions and spiritual insights that she entirely resolved her crisis. She received the message that "God had bid her Arise, and he had raised her soul from the lowest hell; and now he persuaded her, that he will raise up her body also: that she might be a Witness of the Grace of God, to minister to others, what he had administered unto her."[39] Her spiritual crisis, while tempered by her vision of Christ crucified for her sins, became fully resolved when she embraced her temporal election as God's messenger.

While Calvinism retained great associative power with election, it represented only one aspect of a wide range of beliefs about election. For example, in constructing ideas about election, prophets also drew from biblical examples of God's having elected or chosen a particular individual or group of people for a specific purpose. Many early modern prophets believed themselves to be elect in this sense. Prophecy functioned as an outward manifestation of God's favor on an individual. Ann Bathurst was a prophet and

39 Henry Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace advanced by the spirit of grace, in an empty nothing creature viz. Mris. Sarah Wight, lately hopeles and restles, her soule dwelling as far from peace or hopes of mercy, as ever was any* (London, 1647), 135.

member of the Philadelphians, a group in late seventeenth-century London that was distinctively non-Calvinist. But she found language of election useful to describe what she saw as a special relationship between God and her fellow Philadelphians. Much like Sarah Wight, Bathurst interpreted prophecy, visions, and dreams as signs that God had chosen or claimed a person. She wrote that her friend received the following vision: "Then it was answered her, I will never leave them, who are called of God and chosen, called, elect, and precious; and the Heavens are open for you."[40] While Bathurst defined election differently than Wight did, both conceived of prophecy as a reassurance that they had been favored or chosen by God. Thus, prophecy functioned as a sign of election—although the implications of this election varied among prophets.

The calling of an individual to carry out God's purposes on earth was another facet of biblical election. This understanding traced back to the idea of covenant; the Israelites' election was not one merely of privilege but also of obligation—fulfilling their covenant with God.[41] A number of early modern female prophets employed covenantal language or spoke in terms of obligation. In 1680, Elizabeth Stirredge insisted to the Mayor of Bristol that "the God of Heaven and Earth hath constrained me this Night and Morning to come unto thee with this Testimony." Katherine Sutton, a Particular Baptist, felt it her "duty to make [her revelations] known, that people might be warned to depart from sin."[42] The writings of women prophets contain many statements similar to that of the Quaker Sarah Cheevers, who described "the Spirit of Prophecy, which is poured out upon the sons and daughters of the living God, according to his purpose, whereof he hath

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40 Rawl. MSS D. 1262/128.

41 See Ellen Umansky , s. v. "Election," in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, *2nd. ed.,* vol. 4 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 2744.

42 Elizabeth Stirredge, *Strength in weakness manifest* (London, 1711), 97*;* Katherine Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences* (Rotterdam, 1663), 16.

chosen me, who am the least of all."[43] For female prophets, the idea of being chosen by God for the task of prophecy was especially appealing; it allowed them, as women, to frame their public speech in more socially acceptable terms.

Hesitation or failure to respond to the task for which a prophet believed she had been chosen often led to a fear of losing God's favor. Elizabeth Webb described being "threatened inwardly that if I would not be obedient to the Lord's requirings, he would take away his good spirit from me again, so I was in a strait."[44] Elizabeth Stirredge was so weighed down by her calling to offer a testimony before King Charles II that she became "bowed down many months under the exercise of it." Stirredge finally visited the King in 1670/1, after which she expressed a sense of relief and thankfulness toward God "for keeping me faithful to his blessed testimony, and giving me strength to do his will, and made good his promise, which was, if I could believe, I should return in Peace, and my reward should be with me."[45] Stirredge's prophetic experience thus functioned as a sort of covenant, in which she was chosen to deliver a specific message to the King, and in return she would go home spiritually rewarded.

Some prophets who drew on biblical concepts of election envisioned themselves as having been chosen to fulfill an eschatological role. Both Quakers and French Prophets issued "warnings" that the Day of the Lord was at hand; they operated much like modern-day versions of the prophets in Israel, carrying out for their day the role that the biblical prophets had for theirs. Prophets who wore sackcloth and ashes, for example, were imitating the Old Testament prophets for whom these signs signified mourning and

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43 Sarah Cheevers, letter to her husband and children, n.d., in *Hidden in Plain Sight: Quaker Women's Writings, 1650-1750,* eds. Mary Garman, Judith Applegate, Margaret Benefiel and Dortha Meredith (Wallingford, PA: Pendle Hill Publications, 1996), 206.

44 Webb, *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm*, 22.

45 Stirredge, *Strength in Weakness Manifest*, 37, 39-40.

repentance. But the symbolism of sackcloth and was also tied to the Quakers' belief that they were living in the last days; Revelation 11:31 mentions "two witnesses, whom I shall appoint to prophesy, dressed in sackcloth."[46] Some prophets believed themselves to be fulfilling the role of the two witnesses in Revelation, ushering in the new age. The Quaker-turned-Philadelphian Sarah Wiltshire proclaimed in the voice of God:

> Rejoice my Elect, for the Victory is to Sion. I have chosen you from all Eternity to bring the Glad Tidings of Peace and Reconciliation. This Truth shall be established by a Cloud of Witnesses, and handed down to the Children of the third and fourth Generation."[47]

Other prophets with eschatological views, including the Philadelphian Ann Bathurst and the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, conceived of themselves as figurative or even literal representatives of the female figure described in Revelation 12. This figure gave birth to a male child (symbolizing the Church) who would usher in the new age. Thus, early modern prophets did not merely *imitate* biblical prophecy; in some cases, prophets actually believed themselves to have been chosen to *fulfill* scripture.

Biblical election was of further interest to early modern women prophets because it provided them with an explanation for suffering. Among prophets who faced persecution, the idea that election could lead to testing through suffering was widespread. The Quakers and French Prophets, in particular, viewed themselves as an elect but persecuted people. The French Prophet Mary Beer, speaking in the voice of God, declared: "I have now call'd but a small Number; but it shall increase more and more. I have pick'd out but a few; that is to suffer Reproach for my Name's sake."[48] Suffering as the chosen people of God was also a frequent motif in Quaker prophecy. Dorothy White

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46 Kenneth Carroll, "Sackcloth and Ashes and Other Signs and Wonders," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 53, no. 4 (1975): 314.
47 Richard Roach*, The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant* (London, 1727), 50.
48 Mary Aspinal, et. al*, A Collection of Prophetical Warnings of the Eternal Spirit* (London, 1708), 15.

issued a "tender visitation from the Fountain of Love, sent unto all the Suffering Seed, from the melting bowels of compassions from the Father of Life, unto all the Chosen, Called and Elect." In another letter, drawing on I Peter 1:7, White wrote that "the faith of God's Elect must be thoroughly tried, as purified Gold out of the Furnace, and as Silver that hath been seven times purified."[49] Many who linked election with suffering or persecution invoked the example of the suffering Israelites. Some prophets also drew upon examples of individual elect figures who suffered, such as Jonah or even Christ.

Biblical election also presented women prophets with the concept of the "chosen nation," in which God chose a favored nation with which to enter into covenant. The original understanding of the elect as a group or "nation" referred to a chosen few within the larger society. We see this interpretation among non-separating New England Puritans, who limited church membership to the "true church" by making a public declaration of one's conversion mandatory for full member status.[50] By the late sixteenth century, however, the concept of the elect nation had begun to take on a second meaning. Protestants such as John Foxe assigned "elect nation" a broader and more political valence in the aftermath of Elizabeth's accession in 1558.[51] Foxe, in particular, fostered among his readers a new consciousness of the English as a people set apart from others.

The elect nation was a widespread and popular trope in the early modern era, and as such has attracted considerable attention from scholars. Alexandra Walsham has argued that a widespread belief in providence played a key role in opening up the concept

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49 Dorothy White, *A call from God out of Egypt by his Son Christ the light of life, and this from the movings of the holy power, is sent for a visitation unto the seed of God in all professours, teachers and people through this nation and land of England / from a follower of the lamb,* (London, 1662), 10; Dorothy White, *Unto all Gods host in England*, (London, 1660), 3.

50 See Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963).

51 William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: J. Cape, 1963).

of election to encompass seventeenth-century Protestant England as a whole. Walsham contends that this expanded idea of the elect nation—particularly when framed in the biblical rhetoric of a second Israel—contributed to the formation of English identity and to the burgeoning sense of Protestant nationhood. This was not a fleeting construction. As Tony Claydon has shown, William III drew on a campaign of providence, Protestantism, and biblical rhetoric to establish his legitimacy after the Glorious Revolution. Moreover, Nicholas Guyatt has brought to light how ideas of providence and the elect nation found fertile ground in early colonial America.[52]

Election and the elect nation were far from fixed concepts, though. According to Patrick Collinson, the most consistent message among seventeenth-century writers was that England was *an* elect nation rather than *the* elect nation.[53] Collinson's qualification corrects the teleology of historians who have assigned modern nuances of nation to studies of the early modern "elect nation." Claydon and Ian McBride offer a similar assessment, noting that historians have begun to recognize complexities and difficulties in the theory that early modern Protestants saw themselves as chosen people, leading to questions of whether the reformed religion ever served as a foundation for national feeling.[54]

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52 Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Nicholas Guyatt, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

53 Patrick Collinson, "Biblical Rhetoric: The English Nation and National Sentiment in the Prophetic Mode," in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England,* eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 24.

54 Tony Claydon and Ian McBride, "The Trials of the Chosen Peoples: Recent Interpretations of Protestantism and National Identity in Britain and Ireland," in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650-1850*, eds. Tony Claydon and Ian McBride (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 12.

Claydon and McBride make an important cautionary point, one that is well evidenced by sources on female prophecy, which present an astounding variety of views on who made up the "elect" and what it meant to be among "God's people." The term "nation" had multiple, contested nuances in prophetic discourse. Some female prophets saw England as the most special of lands. The early Quaker Hester Biddle offered the following statement: "Oh *England, Scotland* and *Ireland!* but more especially thou O *England,* that art the most fruitful and famous Land, in which the Lord hath been pleased to make manifest his Life and Power, Beauty and Glory, more than in any Nation under the Heavens."[55] Other prophets infused the national, political events of Civil War England with apocalyptic significance. Some, such as the Fifth Monarchists, adopted the view that civil war in their nation initiated the Battle of Armageddon, with God on the side of the Parliamentarians and the New Model Army. As Paul Christianson points out, reformers merged the examples of Egypt, Babylon, the children of Israel, God's elect nation of England, the Old Testament, and the Book of Revelation, into a militant message that stressed God's intervention on the side of the saints.[56] These millenarians believed that the events of the last days were playing out on English soil.

Other prophets took a narrower focus. Still drawing on biblical election, they adapted the doctrine of remnant —as expressed in Old Testament prophecy and in apocalyptic biblical literature—to their own contemporary situation. The idea that God had chosen a remnant to survive and emerge from a corrupt and fallen nation appealed to many dissenting groups and their prophets who faced discrimination or persecution from broader society. While the idea of the "elect nation" had strong political connotations and

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55 Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth unto these three Nations*, 11.
56 Paul Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 243.

appealed to theorists and political figures who aimed to establish England as a favored nation, the concept of remnant functioned at a religious and supranational level. Referencing the Book of Revelation, the prolific Quaker writer Dorothy White announced that "this is the mighty day of the Lord, wherein he will gather a remnant from all Nations and Countries."[57] Some women, such as the Baptist prophet Katherine Sutton, struggled to reconcile the two motifs (elect nation and elect remnant) in their prophecy; others focused on England's corruption, thus presenting a different concept of the elect nation. The "elect" in this sense became the true believers, a chosen remnant surrounded by a corrupt, barren, and persecuting society. Early Quakers frequently employed this particular understanding of election, contrasting their election as a spiritual Israel with the false worship of their oppressors, whom they sometimes described either as Egypt (persecutors of the Israelites), or Sodom and Gomorrah (utterly corrupt).

Prophets who believed the end times were imminent often used prophetic discourse as a tool of evangelization to gather others into the remnant. The prophecy of many early Quakers, for example, was intended to bring as many people as possible "into the Light." There were similar efforts among the French Prophets, who imitated the Old Testament prophets sent to preach repentance. In this sort of prophecy, the problem of election remained at the collective level, and an individual could *choose* to belong to the elect by joining the chosen remnant.

An eschatological impulse was often behind the focus on collective election. The idea that God would establish—or already was establishing—a cohort of true believers to usher in an impending new age was prevalent among prophets. As the prophet and visionary Jane Lead declared to her fellow Philadelphians, "Meditate for all these

57 Dorothy White, *Upon the 22 day of the 8th month, 1659* (London, 1659), 5.

adorning power and Gifts that may demonstrate we are in Election to be the Beginning of that Priestly Church, that is coming out of the Wilderness...For the Election upon the Holy Seed shall for ever stand."[58] Quaker prophets also referenced the "Holy Seed" or "Elect Seed" in a similar manner in their prophecies. As with the idea of a chosen remnant, the "elect" here functioned entirely in a collective sense. Those who belonged to the "Holy Seed" were elect because they were members of the true Church.[59] The *Church* was predestined to election, rather than the individual soul, as Dorothy White suggested:

> This is the Church, the Body of Christ, which hath Living Members, every Member being in him that is True, who is the Pillar and Ground of Truth; and the Church of Christ being the Elect Body of Christ, being Elected in him before the World was; these are Called and Chosen, Faithful and True Israelites indeed, Born of the Holy Seed, Living Stones, Elect and Precious, having Life in them from the Chief Cornerstone.[60]

In a similar paradigm, Christ assumed the mantle of individual, predestined election. As Susannah Blandford wrote, "the Poor in Spirit...are led and made to understand the Mystery of Election and Reprobation, as in the two Seeds and Births, the one elect and blessed of God before the World was." Blandford believed that "if the mind of Man joins to Christ, who is God's Elect, Isaiah 42, they are saved by him, and Works out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling; and this is the Elect and Cornerstone, Christ Jesus, whomsoever Builds thereon.[61] Thus, one became elect through association with the elect figure of Christ.

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58 Jane Lead, *A Message to the Philadelphian Society whithersoever dispersed over the whole earth. Together with, a call to the several gathered churches among Protestants in this nation of England* (London, 1696), 38-9.

59 Philadelphians rejected the term "church," preferring instead the term "society. They did not believe that only Philadelphians belonged to the true Church; they saw themselves as representatives of this Church but not the exclusive members of it.

60 Dorothy White, *Greetings of pure peace and perfect love, sent unto all the poor, scattered, little, holy flock of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God…* (London, 1662), 9.

61 Susannah Blandford, *A small account given forth by one that hath been a traveller for these 40 years in the good old way And as an incouragement to the weary to go forward…* (London, 1698), 8.

Looking at the various manifestations of election in early modern prophecy, it becomes clear that prophecy and language of election remained most useful to those on the fringe of society—religious and political dissidents, women who broke gender norms, those who were a perceived threat to social order. Most of the subjects considered in this study were women and religious minorities; thus, they were doubly marginalized with little opportunity to establish a voice. But prophecy, with its claim to speak for God, offered the prophet an immediate claim to authority, at least in her eyes. Prophecy was a vehicle that allowed women to be heard, to challenge authority, and to stake a claim. Prophecy, in short, functioned to offer women a voice against a powerful and, at times, antagonistic force. That force could be a political one (the king, Parliament, local authorities), a religious one (a priest, one's church, or even a certain doctrine like predestination), or a social one (established social conventions, neighbors who had differing religious beliefs). The relationship of a prophet to these entities was always in flux because sectarian groups tended to disband or assimilate over time. As the status of religious groups changed, the representative prophets of these groups adapted their language of election accordingly. The dissertation will thus give attention not only to the relationship between prophecy and election but also to how attitudes toward prophecy and election changed over time.

Organization

The dissertation begins with a chapter on prophecy of the Civil Wars, Interregnum, and Restoration (c. 1640 through 1670), a time of proliferation of radical Protestant groups. As Chapter One argues, prophecy of this era was concerned with two

questions related to election: the political implications surrounding the “elect nation” and the theological implications surrounding who comprised the “elect.” The chapter analyzes three women prophets from prominent mid seventeenth-century sects, Particular Baptists and Fifth Monarchists, placing the three in a comparative framework.

The accounts of Sarah Wight, a Particular Baptist[62] from London who flourished in the 1640s, are similar to Puritan testimonies of this era, where physical sickness and a Calvinist anxiety over election often culminated in a moment of profound religious experience. The Particular Baptist Katherine Sutton's account, written in the mid 1650s, shares similarities with both Wight's discourse and with early Quaker prophecy. The third prophet, the Fifth Monarchist Mary Cary, provides the fullest expression of the political implications of mid seventeenth-century prophecy. A study of Cary's pamphlets rounds out this chapter's consideration of female prophecy during the tumultuous years of the Civil War and Restoration, illuminating the ways in which language of election and the “elect nation” entered prophetic discourse in a heightened, contested way.

The second chapter looks at female Quaker prophets from the 1650s to 1715. It separates the study of Quaker prophets into two generations, with 1670 serving as a dividing point. Chapter Two argues that the relationship between community, prophecy, and election was central to the prophetic discourse of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Quaker women. In the early days of the Society of Friends, the Quaker sense of community developed out of Friends' understanding of themselves as a persecuted people. They related to biblical Israel and its prophets; like Old Testament prophecy, early Quaker prophetic discourse was replete with warnings to those who refused to

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62 Particular Baptists, sometimes called “Strict Baptists,” subscribed to a Calvinist doctrine of soteriology. Their counterparts, the General Baptists, held a view of universal atonement.

tolerate or accept God's People. Quaker prophets generally understood election in a collective sense, focusing on Friends as a chosen but persecuted people. Early Quakers who prophesied sought to fulfill the role of a prophet in Israel for their own time.

By the 1670s, transatlantic mobility and trends toward the routinization and reordering of Quakerism began to influence notions of community and the "elect." The movement reached across the Atlantic, and Quakers ventured thousands of miles from England. As Quakers spread throughout the Atlantic, they developed networks of support that reinforced communal ties despite geographical distance.[63] At the same time, Quakers started to assimilate into broader society, a process that challenged their status as a persecuted sect. Quaker leaders began supervise prophetic and religious speech, censoring prophets whom they believed were not true messengers of God. Quaker notions of community became defined by institutional structure and internal networks of support, rather than by Friends' response to persecution. Focusing on women prophets who traveled in the ministry, the chapter explores how the understanding of "the elect" adapted to the changes of second-generation Quakerism. Again, the tension between confessional devotion and transconfessional ecumenism comes into play, this time as the radical few who spearheaded the Quaker movement grew into a geographically broad, diverse community numbering in the tens of thousands.[64]

Chapter Three presents a case study of the prophet Ann Bathurst, who kept a religious diary of her prophetic visions and dreams from 1679 until 1697. Bathurst affiliated with the Philadelphians, a highly mystical group who subscribed to the

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63 For example, see Rosalind Beiler, "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and European Migration, 1660-1710."

64 Barry Reay estimates that there were between 35,000 and 60,000 Quakers in England by the early 1660s. See Reay, *The Quakers and the English Revolution* (London: Temple Smith, 1985), 27.

theosophy of the sixteenth-century theologian Jacob Boehme (1575-1624). This chapter analyzes Bathurst's visions and prophecies, arguing that Bathurst's particular brand of millenarianism led her to engage in new ways of gendering prophecy and proclaiming herself as elect of God. Placing Bathurst in the context of her contemporaries, Chapter Three shows that there was a key shift in female millenarian prophecy in the late seventeenth century, one influenced by a surge of interest in the theology and theosophy of Boehme. The focus of female prophets turned away from the political and toward the establishment of a true Church—whether that Church was the one described in the Book of Revelation or merely a community of true believers within a corrupt society. Along with this change, women prophets started to gender their prophecy differently. While the Old Testament and its prophets continued to be a source of inspiration, a number of female prophets began to identify with the apocalyptic woman described in Chapter 12 of Revelation. Their prophecy often adopted female imagery, describing their relationship to God and Christ as conjugal, or focusing on metaphors of childbirth and lactation.

The predominance of female imagery in the writings of Bathurst indicates a departure from the early prophets considered in this study, who tended to identify with male biblical prophets. Quaker contemporaries of Bathurst were also beginning to use feminine imagery in their prophecy, and Phyllis Mack has argued for a correlation between this increase in feminine imagery and a decline in visions of broad social transformation.[65] I suggest in this chapter that the turn to feminine imagery was not necessarily indicative of an abandonment of the radical or transformative. The political element may have been missing from late seventeenth-century prophecy, but the sense of

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65 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 410.

an imminent transformation of society through the coming of Christ was quite present in the prophecies of Bathurst and a number of her contemporaries.

Chapter Four addresses crises of prophetic authority among the Philadelphians and the French Prophets in the first decade after the latter group's arrival in London (1706-1715). The French Prophets, a group of millenarian Calvinists, came to London from the south of France, where they had been engaged in an uprising after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. They attracted a number of followers once in London and quickly underwent a process of anglicization. Chapter Four argues that the early eighteenth-century Philadelphians and French Prophets debated female prophetic authority and notions of election through increasingly public performances that involved the prophet, her followers, and her audience.

The chapter probes prophetic authority through an analysis of three case studies involving the French Prophets and the Philadephians. The first case study looks at a series of debates between the French Prophets and the Philadelphians in 1710 and 1712. The second examines the events and narratives surrounding the miraculous healing of a young woman by the Philadelphian Sarah Wiltshire in 1710/11. The third case study analyzes the theatricality of the French Prophets and the challenge that it presented to their prophetic authority. It focuses in particular on *The modern prophets: or, New wit for a husband,* the 1709 comedy by Thomas D'Urfey that ridiculed the French Prophets. In all three case studies, key questions regarding prophetic authority were at stake: what did it mean to be elect, both as a prophet and a woman? What authority did a woman need to lay claim to prophecy in the public sphere? How did changes to the relationship between the prophet and her audience challenge female prophetic authority?

The fifth chapter takes the trajectory of British Atlantic female prophecy explored in the previous four chapters and places it in the broader context of radical Protestantism in Europe and the British Atlantic. It considers the encounters, interactions, and debates of a diverse selection of dissenters with millenarian leanings, including Quakers, Labadists, radical Pietists, Philadelphians, Bourignonians, and French Prophets. As this chapter will show, the interactions of dissenters owed much to the circulation of travelers, correspondence, and printed works throughout the Atlantic. The chapter pays special attention to how radical Protestants used the mechanisms and structures of the public sphere—such as new sites of sociability, letter-writing networks, and the printed word—to engage in religious conversations and debates in a transnational setting. Through travel and the exchange of writings, dissenters participated in a transatlantic religious sphere, in which they carried out conversations and critical debates about the nature of radical Protestantism in the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

Chapter Five argues that female prophecy and concepts of election were central to this transatlantic religious sphere of dissenters. Radical Protestant women played a critical role in the development of a religious sphere as they published works, led religious communities, and traveled throughout the Atlantic. Women prophets wrote and even visited other radical Protestants, with conversations and debates often revolving around Calvinism and millenarianism. Frequently, prophets concluded that they were in fact not in congruence with those with whom they communicated. Nonetheless, such dialogue helped dissenters to refine their own beliefs, leading to a reinscription of community boundaries as female prophets redefined what it means to be “elect” in relationship to a given community—in this case one without national borders.

1

Female Prophecy and Language of Election during the Civil Wars and Restoration

As this chapter argues, women prophets of the Civil Wars, Interregnum, and Restoration used the concept of election as a compelling rhetorical tool to define their identities as prophets and to inscribe boundaries around imagined communities of "elect" persons. The inherent power in the idea of election transcended soteriological implications, and female prophets debated constructions of election in mid seventeenth-century England. During this period, prophets often defined "the elect" at the collective level, and the longstanding trope of the "elect nation" was challenged by some prophets' understandings of the elect as a remnant *within* the nation. Notions of community were thus central, as prophetic discourse drew on election to negotiate the various relationships among the prophet, her religious community, and broader society.

Sarah Wight, Katherine Sutton, and Mary Cary, three women prophets from prominent mid seventeenth-century dissenting groups (the Baptists and Fifth Monarchists), [1] represent a range of prophetic discourse on election. Their writings and accounts vary from a focus on Calvinist doctrinal election to the politically-charged construction of London as the chosen seat of Christ's pre-millennial reign. A study of these prophets brings to light how female prophecy of the Civil Wars and Restoration addressed who belonged to the "elect" and what the implications of election were for individuals, specific religious communities, and the nation as a whole.

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1 As Christopher Hill has argued, religious groups such as the Levellers, True Levellers (Diggers), Seekers, Ranters, and Quakers defined the most radical aspects of the Civil Wars. See Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (London: Viking, 1972).

Two Baptist Prophets: Sarah Wight and Katherine Sutton

The Baptists emerged as a dissenting group in early seventeenth-century England. Less than two decades after the founding of the first Baptist congregation in 1609, the Baptists of England split into two communities. The original group, General Baptists, believed in "general redemption," the idea that Christ died for all. The second group, Particular Baptists, espoused Calvin's belief that Christ died for the elect.[2] The soteriology and ecclesiology of the Particular Baptists closely resembled that of the Independent Puritans, or Congregationalists. General Baptists, however, had few sectarian allies.[3] By the time of the Civil Wars, the two groups approached the political situation in England quite differently. General Baptists, with their emphasis on lay preaching, resentment of tithes, and ingrained anticlericalism—not to mention their relative isolation from the Calvinist Puritans—embraced a more radical politics and associated themselves with the Levellers. Particular Baptists, who had close ties to the Independents, and a number of socially and politically prominent pastors among their ranks, took a more tempered course.[4]

As for Baptist women, they enjoyed a public role in the congregation during the early days of the movement. John Smyth and Thomas Helwys, the original leaders of the Baptist movement, included "women deacons" in their confessions of faith. While there are few references to women in the diaconate after 1612, church records indicate that there was a resurgence of women deacons during the Civil War years. The records of Broadmead Baptist Church in Bristol also show that some women found a public voice in

2 B. R White, *The English Baptists of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Baptist Historical Society, 1983), 7.

3 Mark R. Bell, *Apocalypse How?: Baptist Movements During the English Revolution* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000), 44.

4 Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603-1649* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell Press, 2006), 185, 170-76; M. Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, 30.

the church.[5] Dorothy Hazzard, one of the church's founding members, refused to hear her own husband, a parson, recite the Common Prayer at his Church of England parish. Instead, she held meetings in her house, waiting until her husband had finished the Common Prayer before entering the church. Parish records also refer to Hazzard as having interrupted her husband's preaching by going forth into the congregation in the middle of a sermon. By the 1640s, she had joined the Baptist church in Bristol, where "there was liberty for any brother (and for any sister by a brother), to propose his doubt of, or their desire of, understanding any Portion of Scripture."[6]

But relative to their large number of Quaker counterparts, women Baptists with a public voice were fewer in number. The lack of established patterns of Baptist female prophecy meant that there was more diversity of form among those women who did claim to speak for God. Support for the female Baptist prophet declined rapidly as the movement entered its second generation, but early Baptist women prophets were recognized and even promoted by male Baptists. While prophetic women faced attack from their critics (one pamphlet suggested that an appropriate university for such women would be Bridewell or Bedlam),[7] the Baptist women studied here received recognition from fellow believers as prophetic figures who spoke for God.

What we see with mid-seventeenth-century Baptist women prophets is a melding of forms; Protestant conversion narratives, late medieval mystic traditions, and radical

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5 Charles W. Deweese, *Women Deacons and Deaconesses: 400 Years of Baptist Service* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005), 62-3. The theology of those associated with Broadmead Baptist Church became increasingly Calvinist; the church later had an association with the Particular Baptists. At the time of Dorothy Hazzard, however, the church's affiliation with Particular Baptists was less defined. See Edward Terrill and Roger Hayden, *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol, 1640-1687* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1974), 51.

6 Terrill and Hayden, *The Records of a Church of Christ in Bristol*, 88-90, 100.

7 See Anonymous, *A Discovery of Six Women Preachers* (London, 1641). Curtis W. Freeman proposes that these women were likely Baptists. See Freeman, "Visionary Women among Early Baptists," *Baptist Quarterly* 43 (January 2010): 269.

Civil War prophecy all contributed an influence on their discourse. The prophetic discourse of the two Particular Baptist prophets considered here, Sarah Wight and Katherine Sutton, illustrates distinct styles of prophecy, and the two women's rich record in the sources allows extended analysis.[8]

Sarah Wight was born in London in 1631. Her father worked in the auditor and exchequer's office, and he died when Sarah was a child. Soon afterwards, Wight's mother entered a deep depression and was unable to care for her child during these years. Up to the age of nine, Sarah was "well trained up in the Scriptures by her godly faithful Grand-mother." Wight's pastor, Henry Jessey, indicated that from the tender age of twelve, Wight struggled with increasingly violent "temptations," which culminated in the experience documented in her account. At that time, Wight was only fifteen years old, somewhat young for the typical adolescent or young adult faith crisis that permeated Puritan conversion narratives. [9] Unlike the later prophets in this study, Wight focused on the inward and the theological: she was concerned with personal salvation, Calvinist election, and the implication of God's grace for her life and the lives of those who consulted her as a visionary.

Wight belonged to Henry Jessey's Particular Baptist congregation in London. Jessey, who pastored the congregation for forty years, was notably liberal in his approach

8 Curtis W. Freeman's recent edited collection of Baptist women prophets' writings includes selections from Katherine Sutton, Sarah Wight, Katherine Chidley, Elizabeth Poole, Jane Turner, Anna Trapnel, and Anne Wentworth. See Freeman, ed., *A Company of Women Preachers: Baptist Prophetesses in Seventeenth-Century England* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2011).

9 Henry Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace advanced by the spirit of grace, in an empty nothing creature viz. Mris. Sarah Wight, lately hopeles and restles, her soule dwelling as far from peace or hopes of mercy, as ever was any : now hopefull, and joyfull in the Lord, that hath caused to shine out of darknes, that in and by this earthen vessell, holds forth his own eternall love, and the glorious grace of his dear Son, to the chiefest of sinners : who desired that others might hear and know, what the Lord had done for for soul (that was so terrified day & night) and might neither presume, nor despair and murmure against God, as shee hath done* (London, 1647), 6-7.

to doctrinal differences. He was slow to reject infant baptism, for example, and he enjoyed connections with a range of religious and political leaders. Jessey began his career as Puritan and could be characterized as having been at various points in his life a Particular Baptist, a Fifth Monarchist, a Seventh-Day Baptist, and an Independent Baptist.[10] It was Jessey who first brought Wight's story to light by composing a lengthy pamphlet detailing Wight's illness, healing, and religious insights. Later, a friend of Wight's published a letter of spiritual advice that she had written him. Wight's letter and Jessey's account are the two extant sources on Wight.

Jessey acknowledged Wight's prophetic status when he stated in his dedicatory epistle that “The Lord enabled this weak and earthen vessel to utter forth *ex tempore*, in Soliloquies, from April 9 til April 20, when she knew not that others listened, and heard her, and wrote it down, as here followeth.” Jessey’s reference to Wight as a “vessel” de-emphasized her own agency and suggested that God's truth spoke *through* her.[11] Throughout both Wight's letter and Jessey's account, Wight's passivity was a point of emphasis. She broke few gender norms through her prophecy, and her voice became public only because Jessey published her account.[12]

Wight's account could be characterized as a hybrid between the Puritan spiritual autobiography, the radical prophecy of Civil War sectarian women, and the tradition of *ars moriendi*. She relied on fasting as a means to achieve her visions and was a religious

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10 M. Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, 63.

11 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, “Epistle Dedicatory.” The term "vessel" was popular among women prophets as a way to frame their role in socially acceptable terms. However, it was also a powerful term. As Phyllis Mack argues, “the metaphor of woman as vessel conveyed a literal as well as a literary meaning, for the woman's body was understood to be a potentially explosive device, the carrier of an inflammable spiritual essence." Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 23.

12 The subsequent chapters of this dissertation will deal more thoroughly with print culture, patronage, and female prophecy. It is worth pointing out here, however, that female prophets such as Wight often relied on well-connected persons (such as Jessey) to bring their writings or speech to the printing press.

ascetic.[13] As Diane Purkiss notes, some Protestant women prophets such as Wight were able to create a space for conditional autonomy by reviving the positive associations of virginity. Wight also relied on illness and her physical weakness to achieve prophetic status. Her physical weakness facilitated the prophetic voice by stripping her body of its force, thereby making her a more passive receptacle.[14]

Wight thus represented a departure from the typical seventeenth-century Protestant woman, who usually appeared in religious literature either as married or in preparation for marriage. Her example also points to a divide among female prophets between those who embraced asceticism and those who incorporated their ministry into their broader lives. The former, some of whom lived in religious communities, often struggled to come to terms with what they saw as an incompatible co-existence of earthly responsibilities and religious life. The latter, including most of the Quakers in this study, saw no conflict between their familial and religious duties. They often relied on an extensive network of co-religionists to help them fulfill their familial responsibilities while maintaining an active ministry.

Wight's struggle between the temporal and the spiritual appeared most clearly after the death of her beloved half-brother, who was at Oxford. Wight wrote in a letter to a friend:

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13 The prophets in this study who practiced ascetic behaviors varied considerably both in their doctrines and in their practices. Sarah Wight, for example, gave Calvinist nuance to the tradition of fasting found in medieval accounts of holy women. In a very different construction, the Behminist-influenced Philadelphian prophet Ann Bathurst (see Chapter 3) used bridal imagery to place her celibacy in the framework of marriage to Christ. Despite the significant variation in ascetic practices among women prophets, we can divide the prophets in this study into roughly two camps: those who engaged in ascetic behaviors and those who did not. In the former category were prophets who, for the most part, were not married (at the time of their prophetic discourse), who generally renounced the world, and who led relatively cloistered lives. The latter category comprised prophets such as the Quakers, who married and who lived very much in the world as active participants in their civic communities.

14 Diane Purkiss, "Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body: Women Prophets of the Seventeenth-Century," in *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740*, eds. Isobel Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London: Batsford, 1992), 157, 143, 145.

> This one word which was spoken to me also: Lovest thou me more than these; more than Gold, Silver, Lands, Livings, any relations, Golden gifts and Graces, men or means? And love not the world, nor the things of it: love nothing, I say, equal or above me: for he or she that loves any thing more than me, is not worthy of me.[15]

Confessing that her brother was "such riches" to her and that her soul would have had "a portion of great joy" were he restored to health, Wight decided to let his death be a reminder to her to let the sword of God's chastisement "divide and sever more between soul and body."[16]

The severing of soul and body was indeed central to Wight's experience as a prophet. In the tradition of *ars moriendi,* the spiritual experience of Wight took place around what was feared to be her deathbed. She had become ill after she "oft attempted wickedly to destroy her self, as by drowning, strangling, stabbing, and seeking to beat out her brains...the chief cause of such weakness since."[17] Her suicidal behavior, which stemmed from her spiritual despair, had resulted in temporary blindness and deafness. Her asceticism required that her bodily senses—sight, hearing, speech—diminish in the face of her communion with God. As with other seventeenth-century women ascetics, openness to God and prophecy required being closed to earthly sensations.[18]

The most central aspect of Wight's asceticism was her fasting, which Jessey commented on multiple times throughout the account. By fasting, Wight drew on a Puritan tradition that had its roots in the renunciation of the body. Like some medieval mystics, she engaged in inedia, or the restriction of ingested food in order to achieve

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15 Sarah Wight, *A Wonderful Pleasant and Profitable Letter Written by Mris Sarah Wight to a Friend, Expressing the joy is to be had in God* (London, 1656), 46-7.
16 Ibid., 47-8.
17 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 7-8.
18 Ibid., 15; Purkiss, "Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body," 150.

closer communion with God.[19] Wight's fast went beyond the typical behavior of such religious ritual, though. She claimed that she literally *could not eat.* Her fast lasted 76 days, during which time she had “inability...to eat at all, or to drink but very little (of fair water, or small Beer, and that only at once in two, or three, or four days).”[20] Those close to her begged her to eat, but unlike many medieval accounts where the fasting woman was labeled as “capricious,”[21] those at Wight's bedside believed her to be genuine. Their urgings for her to eat served as a rhetorical platform for Wight to assert her close communion with God. She responded to her brother, for example, with these words: “I cannot [eat]; I have what I did desire; I have a crucified Christ: I am so full of the Creator, that I now can take in none of the Creature. I am filled with heavenly Manna.”[22]

One of the key functions of Wight's fast was to produce a state that enhanced her liminal hovering between life and death. Purkiss notes that fasting in Puritan discourse involved more than self-denial; it was also quasi-magical in efficacy. In Wight's case, ten days after she began her fast, she entered into a trance. She described this time as one in which she “lay in visions.”[23] When she awoke, she began to utter forth the spiritual profundities that Jessey recorded.

Wight's fast thus points to the complicated relationship between body and soul in her prophecy, a focus that was not uncommon among Civil War prophets. Whereas for some ascetics, true communion with God could only be achieved after complete renunciation of the body, this was not the case with Wight; rather, she *reconciled* body

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19 For more on inedia see Rudolph Bell, *Holy Anorexia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

20 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, A4, 90. The same claims were made by medieval holy anorectics such as Catherine Benincasa. See R. Bell, *Holy Anorexia,* 28.

21 R. Bell, *Holy Anorexia*, 12.

22 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 31.

23 Purkiss, “Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body,” 145; Jessey*, The exceeding riches of grace,* 54.

and soul. The reconciliation became a turning point for her—the pivotal moment in her conversion story. It allowed her to regain the will to live and to accept her perceived calling to minister to others. Jessey's lengthy aside on the experience compared it to Paul's at Damascus:

> It was answered as that to Paul, "Arise and go to Damascus, and there it shall be told thee what thou shalt do." So (it was given to her to understand, that) she must arise from that sinful condition, and go, out of her self, to Christ, and he would tell her what she must do...So God had bid her "Arise," and he had raised her soul from the lowest hell; and now he persuaded her, that he will raise up her body also: that she might be a Witness of the Grace of God, to minister to others, what he had administered unto her. And that as Paul should be a witness, both of the sufferings of Christ for him, and of his own sufferings for the Name of Christ: So she should be a witness of both in like manner: and set to her seal, that God is true, in whatsoever he hath spoken, and cannot deny himself...and now she must testify and minister that Grace of God that she had received, unto others.

Wight broke her fast to begin what was described as a miraculous healing process and a ministry to others, first from her sickbed and then later in public.[24] In a sense, she displaced her concern over election by embracing her chosen status as a visionary witness to God's grace. The full resolution of her crisis arrived when she accepted her calling to minister to others.

The account of Wight's religious crisis, fasting, ailment, and healing was similar to many religious testimonies of this era, where physical sickness or a Calvinist anxiety over election served as a platform for autobiographical expression.[25] In Wight's case, her physical and spiritual ailments and recovery attracted numerous neighbors and fellow parishioners, who came to visit her to seek religious advice. The diversity of her visitors was considerable, ranging from nobility to servants, and from those with a vested interest

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24 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 135, 147.

25 As Barbara Ritter Dailey has noted, for example, both death and conversion rituals became narratives for autobiographical expression. See Dailey, "The Visitation of Sarah Wight: Holy Carnival and the Revolution of the Saints in Civil War London," *Church History* 55, no. 4 (December 1986): 443.

in Wight to the simply curious. Her broad appeal illustrates how many mid seventeenth-century dissenters, regardless of their social status or religious affiliation, shared an interest in millenarianism, prophecy, and miracles. As Barbara Ritter Dailey notes, radical Protestants of numerous affiliations (Presbyterians, Independents, Spiritualists, and Fifth Monarchists) found common ground in Wight's troubles and deliverance.[26] The very fact that Wight embraced general redemption as a Particular Baptist reminds us that doctrinal differences among religious groups could sometimes be less visceral than scholarship has suggested.

First and foremost among Wight's visitors was Henry Jessey, who spent much of his time by Wight's bedside recording her words and actions. Jessey's role was, as he stated, that of a "relator." His questions toward Wight, such as "is there now any use of the Law to us?," were framed in such a way as to allow Wight a platform to expound on theological principles and to showcase her spiritual depth. Indeed, the flow of questions and answers between Wight's visitors and herself is reminiscent of the question-and-answer format of a seventeenth-century catechism. Jessey also functioned as a respectable witness, a role that was central to establishing Wight as credible.[27] The presence of Jessey, with his respected status in society, offered Wight some protection from common accusations against female religious enthusiasts, such as witchcraft or feigning.

A number of physicians and ministers came to visit Wight, and their questions to her sometimes took on an interrogatory tone. This is true even of radical dissenters, such as Thomas Coxe, a physician to the New Model Army. At one point he asked Wight

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26 Barbara Ritter Dailey, "Root and Branch: New England's Religious Radicals and Their Atlantic Community, 1600-1660" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1984), 155.

27 Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 103.

"whether find you a tickling of pride or hypocrisy, when so many people, and some great ones come to see you: Do you not ask who were the Great people, when they are gone? and take pride in it?"[28] Jessey did not shy away from printing the words of those who questioned Wight's veracity, no doubt in part because Wight's answers gave her an opportunity to defend herself in print.

Also among Wight's audience were a number of visitors—mainly women—who came to seek spiritual advice. Jessey noted at least six "despairing souls" who came to consult Wight.[29] Barbara Ritter Dailey has remarked on the difference in language between the physicians and ministers who visited Wight and the women who came to seek spiritual advice from her. The concerns of the latter were intensely personal and similar in nature to Wight's own spiritual crisis.[30] Their weighty questions and Wight's answers offer more insight into what Wight actually believed than do the formulaic responses that she gave her official visitors.

What did Wight believe? Considering that her experience took place in 1647, it is notable that her discourse is devoid of references to political or national events. Compared to her contemporaries, she included remarkably few references to millenarian or apocalyptic beliefs. This is not surprising, since Wight (as a Particular Baptist) belonged to a dissenting group that was decidedly less politically radical than many other groups of its era. Rather, Wight's overriding concern was with salvation on a personal, experiential level; in particular, she focused on her unbelief, which she called the "great sin that Christ died for" and "my greatest sin." Dailey has argued that Wight's conversion led her to believe that God loved all people, not just the elect; at no point did she advance

28 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 119.
29 Ibid., A3 and passim.
30 Dailey, "The Visitation of Sarah Wight," 447-48.

the Calvinist doctrine of election.[31] Certainly, at times, Wight's beliefs regarding election appear more in line with the General Baptists than the Particular Baptists.

However, I would argue that we cannot overlook the undercurrent of concern over election that runs throughout Wight's account. While Wight focused on mercy in a way that suggests she leaned toward general redemption, this focus was always placed within the framework of fears stemming from her understanding of limited atonement. Wight's conversations with the women who sought her spiritual advice are perhaps the clearest indicator of how election shaped her worldview. She stated to one visitor how she once worried that "if all the world should be saved, then it may be, I should be one; but else no hopes for me. That Peter, Mary Magdalen, David, Manasses were saved, it was nothing to me: no, if Judas should be saved, yet should not I."[32] In another conversation between Wight and a woman identified as Mistress A., while "both were in despair," Mistress A. lamented that she must be damned. Wight responded, "I am damned already, from all eternity, to all eternity: its not to do, but 'tis done already." Not long after, though, Wight experienced a vision of deliverance "in which Jesus Christ was presented...as crucified for my sins."[33] After this vision, her conversations with despairing women changed. She became an empathizer who shared her past experience and offered hope. When one woman, for example, stated that God would save the chosen but she was not among them, Wight chastised her: "Dare you enter into God's secrets? Who made you of his secret Counsel? Secrets belong to God." In a conference with

31 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 73, 89; Dailey, "Root and Branch," 136.
32 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 40.
33 Ibid., 44, 54.

another woman, who believed the Devil had told her that she was elected, Wight told the woman that “The Devil saith no such thing, but, Thou art damned for ever.”[34]

Wight's focus after her vision was on God's mercy, on what she termed the “free love” of God. She began to lean increasingly toward the idea of general redemption. At one point an African woman, identified in later editions as Dinah the Blackamoor, came to see Wight. Dinah told her that she was often tempted to end her life because “I am not as others are: I do not look so, as others do.” Wight responded that “many Nations must be blessed in him. He came to give his life for a ransom to many to give himself for the life of the world. He is a free agent, and why should you exclude yourself?” It was when she was asked directly about her views on general redemption, however, that Wight made clear her beliefs: “God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent and live. God's willingness to reconcile the world to himself, is to be held out to all.”[35]

Considering Wight's prophetic experience as a whole, one sees a hybrid of prophetic models. Unlike many of the Civil War prophets—including some considered below, who “turned the world upside down” with their prophecy—Wight did not abandon the construction of meek female holiness valued in medieval and Puritan hagiography. In fact, she represented the most passive form of female prophecy, that of the woman who spoke from a sickbed.[36] Also, unlike many of her contemporaries, she offered few indications that she believed herself to be living in the end times. In fact, when one woman asked Wight if she thought there would be a time when God would “pour out more of his Spirit upon his sons and daughters,” Wight answered that “though his love is poured out into the hearts of his people by the spirit now, or else we could not

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34 Ibid., 61, 70.
35 Ibid., 123-24, 96.
36 See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 34.

love him; yet this is personal, to a few: but I do verily believe, it will be more general to many, and in a greater measure."[37] She did not believe, like some of the more radical Civil War prophets, that this time had already arrived. Nor did Wight take election out of its theological context to make statements about the elect at a cultural or collective level; there is no sense of the "elect nation" or an "elect people" in Wight's discourse. But like the more radical prophets who came out of the same generation, Wight had an abiding interest in election. Election was a fluid but central concept that marked her experiences, her spiritual crisis, her dreams and visions, and her theology. Her fear of whether she was among the chosen, her subsequent progression toward a belief in general redemption, and her sense of a personal calling to minister to others form a unique conversion narrative through which she makes a statement about election and its place in her world.

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Katherine Sutton, a contemporary of Wight's, also affiliated with the Particular Baptists. Sutton, whose date of birth and background is unknown, lived during the mid-seventeenth century. She was highly mobile, like many of her contemporaries who left home to find work as servants and apprentices.[38] In search of work as a governess, Sutton moved to the north of England. She also left England for Holland in the late 1650s, probably for religious reasons. Sutton noted that the decision to expatriate was not easy but rather based on more than a year's worth of reflection, a combination of "motions of her spirit" and the consultation of scripture.[39] It was during her voyage that her original

37 Jessey, *The exceeding riches of grace*, 90.

38 Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680*, 2nd ed., (Rutgers, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 49-50. On Atlantic mobility see David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 68-9.

39 Katherine Sutton, *A Christian woman's experiences of the glorious workings of God's free grace* (Rotterdam, 1663), 22. The pamphlet was published posthumously in the year of Sutton's death.

writings were lost in a shipwreck. The version printed into pamphlet form was based on Sutton's memory of her experiences and prophecies, which she believed God had called her to record and publish for the benefit of others.

Sutton represents a departure from Wight in that she addressed salvation and election at the collective level, that of the nation, as well as the individual level. However, Sutton and Wight's accounts do bear several striking parallels. Most notably, both accounts include introductions written by prominent London Baptists. Hanserd Knollys, who introduced Sutton's account, was a Particular Baptist minister (he baptized Henry Jessey) and a Cambridge-educated theologian who reportedly drew over a thousand people to his sermons.[40] He took an interest in promoting Sutton's story for the spiritual edification of others. Knollys, like Wight, believed that his protégée was gifted with spiritual wisdom. He wrote in his introduction to Sutton's account that "when God was pleased to pour out of his Spirit upon some of his faithful Servants in our Generation, he had also some of his Handmaids...which the Lord blessed and distributed among his Disciples: Of which Number this holy Matron was one."[41] As with Jessey's treatment of Wight, Knollys framed Sutton's account in what his readership would have recognized as an acceptable model of female piety. He referred to her as a prophetess, but one who operated within the domestic sphere as a "Prophetess in her family." Knollys commented that "she prayed constantly with her children and Maidens, she also read the holy Scriptures daily unto them, and so spake from them, that many of them, who heard her (in her family duties) believed and turned to the Lord."[42]

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40 M. Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, 64, 84.
41 Knollys, Introduction to Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences*, A1.
42 Ibid., A2.

How Sutton portrayed herself, though, is a different matter. Unlike Jessey, who acted both as scribe and editor, Sutton offered her own spiritual autobiography to the reader; Knollys' contribution ended with his introduction. Sutton's self-image was more radical than the socially acceptable role of the "godly woman"[43] into which Knollys placed her. Her example highlights an inherent irony in the construction of the "godly woman," one which has been noted by scholars such as Diane Willen, Peter Lake, and David Como. While Puritan divines associated female piety with subordination, a number of factors in Puritan devotional life actually served to empower women. Among these factors, Como lists "the daily consequences of Puritan pastoral divinity—intense experiences of divine love or union, reciprocal and almost egalitarian lay-clerical relationships, a sense of spiritual or moral authority, and an almost inevitable civic awareness and immersion in politics."[44] Many of these aspects applied to Sutton's situation, including her relationship with Knollys and her sense of spiritual authority as a prophet. It is thus not surprising that Sutton's own account empowered her past the model of female piety established for her by Knollys.

Sutton's spiritual autobiography has a number of dimensions: namely, her biographical background, her conversion narrative, and her prophecy.[45] Her conversion narrative, like Wight's, came out of the Puritan tradition and a concern with personal

43 Ibid., A1.

44 David Como, "Women, Prophecy, and Authority in early Stuart Puritanism," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (1998), 203-04; See also Peter Lake, "Feminine Piety and Personal Potency: The 'Emancipation' of Mrs. Jane Ratcliffe," *The Seventeenth Century 2* (1987): 143-65; Diane Willen, "Godly Women in Early Modern England: Puritanism and Gender," J*ournal of Ecclesiastical History* 43, no. 4 (1992): 561-80.

45 While the terms "spiritual autobiography" and "conversion narrative" are sometimes used interchangeably, this is in fact misleading. As Daniel Shea points out, early Puritan autobiographies tended to dedicate only a portion of the narrative to the conversion experience. Regeneration was only a part of one's relationship to God. See Daniel B. Shea, *Spiritual Autobiography in Early America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1988), 183.

salvation. She described how she feared that she could not be a child of God, and how her self-loathing and anxiety over her sinful condition led to suicidal thoughts. For Sutton, it was not enough to gain assurance of her elect status, but she also had to come to terms with her worship style. She encountered "many Papists, and they much endeavored to have [her] of their judgment;" she wrote of being unable to kneel at Communion, and of her answered prayer of a new minister who gave better sermons than the previous parish priest.[46] Little separates Sutton's spiritual autobiography from that of any number of Calvinist women.

While Sutton did give attention to fasting and prayer, her day-to-day attention to devotion was more concerned with providentialism and how God shaped even the most mundane details of her life, such as work and family. She stressed, for example, that God used her position as a governess to reach out to one of the members of the "dark family" for whom she worked. She stated that at one point "the Lord was pleased to bless me in my employment that following year, with more then ordinary success." But she also "had some fears, that my employment might be a snare unto me (as the world is to many) and that I should be too earthly in it." Sutton was also married, and she wrote candidly of her husband: he was "much in practical duties, yet some difference there was in our judgments, which often caused no small trouble in my spirit: but it had this effect, it caused me to cry to God, and to search the Scriptures, so much the more."[47]

As with many spiritual autobiographies, Sutton's interpreted everything in her life through the lens of her own salvation. Thus, the death of a child prompted her to question her elect status: "Also the Lord was pleased by death to take away a child from me,

46 Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences*, 2, 6.
47 Ibid., 12, 3.

which was to my casting down, and for some time I was under a cloud, and questioned whether I were a child of God? and whither my child were saved?" She interpreted another child's illness in equally personal terms: "next the Lord was pleased to lay his afflicting hand upon another of my children, then did I much desire that all afflictions might be sanctified rather then removed, and that by all I might be made more conformable unto Jesus Christ."[48] Her interpretation is not surprising, given the seventeenth-century emphasis on providentialism and the ways in which women were taught to see moral and spiritual significance in life events such as childbirth.[49]

But Sutton's account transcended the typical Calvinist woman's conversion narrative in that she claimed to "own a Prophetical voice of Christ." Sutton spoke, for example, of how "after much seeking of the Lord for counsel" certain scripture passages came to her mind, including Acts 2:18 [cf. Joel 2:29]: "And on my servants, and on my hand maidens will I pour out of my spirit, and they shall prophesy."[50] Here Sutton invoked a common scriptural justification for female prophecy. Most prophets who cited Acts 2:18 also included the preceding verse: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams [c.f. Joel 2:28]." For many, the key phrase in this verse was "in the last days," as they interpreted their world and their role in it (as prophets) in eschatological terms. However, Sutton's account gives little evidence that she thought she was living in the last

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48 Ibid., 5, 11.

49 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 93; See also Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), for an overview of providentialism and seventeenth-century English society.

50 Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences*, 40, 12. Prophets cited Acts 2:17-8 (cf. Joel 2:28-9) in its eschatological sense, to indicate that they were living in the last days and in a time of prophecy. But they also drew on the passage in some cases to suggest a typological relationship between themselves and the Israelites.

days, a point reinforced by her focus on scriptural passages that avoid eschatological references.[51]

Sutton believed herself to have two spiritual gifts—prayer and singing—and she included numerous verse prophecies in her account.[52] She was not the only poetic prophet; prophets from various religious backgrounds spoke or wrote in verse at one point or another. Much of the second part of Dorothy White's *A trumpet of the Lord of hosts blown unto the city of London* (1662), for example, was in verse.[53] A generation later, we find several references to late seventeenth-century Philadelphians who prophesied by singing. The Philadelphian Ann Bathurst, commenting on verse prophecy and the singing of psalms in 1688, believed that “much in this Later Age will be given forth in verse.”[54] Early Quakers, while rejecting the singing of psalms—which they saw as a form and therefore uninspired—nonetheless considered singing a part of religious experience. Quakers sang in a variety of settings, including the meetinghouse.[55] As for Sutton, her gift first appeared one day when she walking along and suddenly found herself “indued with the gift of singing, in such a way and manner as I had not been acquainted with before.”[56] This experience occurred in February 1655/6,[57] and throughout the rest of the account, Sutton interspersed excerpts of her prophetical songs.

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51 Hanserd Knollys, on the other hand, took a great interest in millenarianism. He was the only Baptist of his time to write an exposition of the entire book of Revelation. Knollys believed that the coming of Christ would be in 1688. M. Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, 84-85.

52 Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences,* 41.

53 See Dorothy White, *A trumpet of the Lord of hosts blown unto the city of London, and the inhabitants thereof, proclaimng [sic] the great and notable day of the Lord God, which is coming swiftly on them all, as a thief in the night, and this is the cry of the Lord God, which is gone forth unto thy inhabitants* (London, 1662).

54 Ann Bathurst, “Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions,” Rawlinson MSS D. 1262/306, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

55 Kenneth Carroll, “Singing in the Spirit of Early Quakerism,” *Quaker History* 73, no. 1 (1984): 1.

56 Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences*, 12-3.

57 Unless otherwise noted, calendar dates between January 1 and March 25 are given both in Old Style and New Style (i.e. February 1655/6). Also, I have modernized spellings from manuscript sources.

Sutton was certainly aware of the difficulty of reconciling her prophetic calling with her gender. She addressed the problem directly, using justificatory language similar to that of most early modern female prophets. In an address to the reader, she asked that one not despise her account because it came from "the Spirit's working in the weakest vessel; for Christ did not reject the woman though weak, ignorant, and sinful." Also, like many female prophets, Sutton bolstered her argument by pointing out examples of biblical women. She cited the example of Mary, who visited Jesus' empty tomb, stating "that as the woman was first in the transgression, she might have first knowledge of the resurrection, the gift of the well of water, which springs up unto everlasting life: and this gift God is pleased to give it unto women as well as unto men."[58] Sutton thus constructed a different understanding of the female prophet than Knollys did. Her self-awareness as a prophet was grounded in humility; she insisted that her prophecies were instantaneous rather than "studied," and that it was not she but rather Christ who spoke through her. However, she saw herself as a prophet who was not relegated to the domestic sphere, but rather was called to speak her warnings publicly to the nation.

Sutton was concerned with her personal salvation, but she was less occupied with the theology of election than Wight was. Rather, she took an interest in national events and in the question of the "elect nation." After a day of fasting and prayer, she recorded the following prophecy: "Shall light appear, and darkness done away:/Shall Summer's green be clothed all in gray:/Shall a bright morning set in shadows dark,/Oh! England, England, take heed thou dost not smart." Sutton believed that God was angry with England, as her writing describes:

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58 Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences*, 40.

> about four of the clock, being in my bed, I had this laid before me, that God would afflict that nation with great afflictions: but I (not knowing what God would try the Nation with) did desire this of the Lord, that I might choose with *David,* rather to fall into the hands of God, then into the hands of merciless men: it was much upon my heart at that time; that the Lord would turn a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein."[59]

Sutton listed a number of sins of which the English people were guilty, including covetousness and false worship. Like a pre-exilic Old Testament prophet, she believed it was her task to warn those around her: "Then I looked upon it as my duty to make this known, that people might be warned to depart from sin, that so they might not partake of the great wrath and sore displeasure of God, which I much feared, was coming."[60] In a rhetorical coup, Sutton combined the climactic moment of her spiritual autobiography with that of her prophetic inspirations. In 1658, she left England for Holland, and during her voyage the vessel shipwrecked. Although the captain told her that they would most likely die, the crew were able to maneuver the ship to safety, at which point Sutton received the prophecy that "as thy deliverance is, so shall England's be, when they are brought to greatest straits, then will deliverance be from God."[61]

Sutton's prophecies reveal that she had a complex relationship with England, one that was similar to the relationship of an Old Testament prophet to Israel.[62] She saw England as having a covenantal relationship with God, but at the same time the nation was sinful and in danger of God's chastisement. As for herself, she was both part of this nation and set apart from it. We see this struggle in her use of the word "People" (meaning the people of God). On the one hand, Sutton used the term to refer to her fellow

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59 Ibid., 14. Sutton's prophetic discourse was immersed in biblical language. The fruitful land turned into barrenness, for example, appears in Psalm 107:34.
60 Ibid., 16.
61 Ibid., 23.
62 See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 134. Many early Quaker prophets resembled Old Testament male prophets, as well.

believers, the “Lord's People.” But in another example, God's “people” referred to all of England. For example, Sutton quoted 2 Chronicles 7:14 as a warning to the nation: “If my people, which are called by my name, turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and forgive their sin and will heal their Land.” Here, the “people” were the nation of England as a whole. As Patrick Collinson has pointed out, the concept of the elect nation had, at various times in the early modern period, the rhetorical power to consolidate the idea of the Protestant nation or to distract or divide it. [63] As Sutton defined who constituted the people of God, she employed both aspects of this rhetorical power.

In her writing, Sutton tapped into the trend among seventeenth-century radical Protestants of connecting England with the Israel of the Old Testament.[64] Leading this movement were prophetic preachers, such as those at Paul's Cross, who frequently addressed the nation, “O England!,” in imitation of the vocative “O Israel!” of the Minor Prophets. The preachers at Paul's Cross exhibited the same tension that we find in Sutton's prophecy: they called for a national response to renew what they saw as England's covenanted relationship with God, but at the same time they seemed to know that God's covenant would be honored only by a chosen remnant who (like Israel in Judah) would survive the ruin of the nation.[65] This tension between elect nation and elect remnant, which appeared frequently among female prophets, represented one way that

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63 See, for example, Sutton, *A Christian Woman's Experiences*, 30, 14; Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 25.

64 When prophets such as Sutton and the early Quakers identified with biblical prophets or connected England with Israel, they were both drawing on the tradition of Old Testament prophecy and (as they believed) fulfilling Scripture by being among the sons and daughters on whom God's spirit would be poured out in the last days, according to the prophet Joel (Joel 2:28-9).

65 Patrick Collinson, “Biblical Rhetoric: The English Nation and National Sentiment in the Prophetic Mode,” in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England,* eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20.

prophets took the idea of election and assigned it cultural or political relevance to their own time.

Thus, in sum, while Sutton never mentioned the Civil Wars or Interregnum directly, her prophecy was highly representative of the era. Her framing of the religious world of England as high Church corruption versus dissenting saints would have resonated with many in her audience. Although a Calvinist herself, Sutton was less concerned with the theological implications of election and more concerned with the fate of England and, within the nation, of those whom she identified as the "Lord's people." She stepped beyond the passivity of Wight's visions towards a more radical conception of the female prophet's role. In particular, in this age of political and religious divisions, she saw part of her role to be that of warning God's people to turn from their wicked ways. Who these "people of God" were became the contested question that more politically-minded prophets, such as Mary Cary, made the focal point of their prophecy.

Mary Cary and Fifth Monarchist Prophecy

The prophet Mary Cary affiliated with the Fifth Monarchists, many of whom had Calvinist and Baptist origins.[66] However, there were significant differences between the two groups. Baptists, while millenarian in their theological outlook, were notably less radical in their political views. There are several reasons for this. First, English Baptists wanted to distinguish themselves from the sixteenth-century Anabaptist revolutionaries at Münster, the frequently-invoked specter of political and religious radicalism in early modern Europe. Second, Baptists tended to focus on scriptural injunctions urging

66 Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press), 61.

compliance to governors; they saw the Beast described in Revelation as a mixture of ecclesiastical and civil power—something they wished to avoid.[67] For Mary Cary, on the other hand, politics and scripture were intricately woven together, allowing her to probe the question of England's status as an elect nation to the fullest extent. The question of England's fate, which Sutton hinted at in her prophecy, became a focus of Cary's writing, as the cultural and political implications of England as an elect nation took center stage.

Little is known of Cary's background. She was born in the early 1620s and likely married at some point, as she wrote under two names, first Cary and later Rande.[68] She was well educated, especially in the Scriptures. At some point in the early 1650s, she became affiliated with the Fifth Monarchists. All of her works were published between 1647 and 1653, and David Loewenstein has pointed out that Cary's writing (especially her works entitled *The Little Horns of Doom* and *A More and Exact Mappe*) helped to shape and give voice to the burgeoning Fifth Monarchist movement.[69] Despite the lack of contextual information on Cary, her works remain among the most studied documents of the Fifth Monarchists. Even though some of her writing predates her association with the Fifth Monarchists, it shares the same focus on eschatology and the nation of England as her later pamphlets.

The Fifth Monarchists were an amorphous movement without a common program, but they all shared an interest in apocalyptic literature such as Daniel and Revelation.[70] This focus on apocalyptic (as opposed to prophetic) biblical literature is an important distinguishing factor between the Fifth Monarchists and less radical groups such as the

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67 M. Bell, *Apocalypse How?*, 30.

68 David Loewenstein, "Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary," *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900,* 46, no. 1 (2006): 134.

69 Ibid., 136.

70 Arthur Williamson, *Apocalypse Then: Prophecy and the Making of the Modern World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2008), 165.

Baptists.[71] Apocalyptic biblical literature produced the most radical and most political interpretations of the elect nation in the seventeenth century. Comparisons between Israel and England could, in their mildest form, mellow into mere allegory. A focus on apocalyptic literature, however, led the Fifth Monarchists to construct detailed blueprints for the reign of Christ.[72] While the Levellers focused on social justice and equality, the Fifth Monarchists went a step further and actually designed a new political regime based heavily on scripture. These plans, of course, were never implicated. But they represented the Fifth Monarchists' radicalism and their belief in the imminent arrival of Christ's second coming.

Apocalyptic literature also gave the Fifth Monarchists' their name, which they took from the five monarchies outlined in the Book of Daniel. Based on their reading of Daniel, they believed that the first four monarchies (Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman) had passed, and that the fifth and final monarchy, which would be heralded by the second coming, was at hand (many believed the year to be 1666, based on their calculations of Revelation). Fifth Monarchists, including Cary, associated the fourth monarchy (the fourth or Roman beast) with Charles I; Charles was the “little horn” of this beast cited in Daniel 7:8. Thus, they established a link between the Book of Daniel and Charles' execution, which they supported. They also placed London as the site of Christ's millennial reign.[73]

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71 Patrick Collinson, for example, shows how prophetic literature (especially the Minor Prophets) held meaning for the English nation in the generations of Shakespeare and his children to a degree that apocalyptic literature did not. However, the place of apocalyptic literature in the English nation has received disproportionate attention from scholars. See Collinson, “Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode,” 19.

72 Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 61.

73 On the Fifth Monarcists and Mary Cary see Rachel Warburton, “Future Perfect?: Elect Nationhood and the Grammar of Desire in Mary Cary's Millennial Visions,” *Utopian Studies* 18, no. 2 (2007): 115-138; Loewenstein, “Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary.”

Most Fifth Monarchists placed great importance of inward illumination. They believed in the power of dreams and visions as a communicatory tool between God and humans, and there was a mystical element in their writings.[74] They shared an interest in the application of scripture (particularly the Old Testament) to their current political situation, and they were particularly concerned with applying the Mosaic Code to seventeenth-century England. Despite these common threads, though, the group achieved little coherence. For example, while Fifth Monarchists shared an interest in the Mosaic Code, the idea was never fully elaborated in their writings.[75] The Fifth Monarchists also failed to offer a declaration of faith, as the Baptists and Congregationalists had done. Moreover, there remained an unresolved tension between the political and the religious with which the Fifth Monarchists never came to terms: while clearly a dissenting religious group, their origins were distinctly political. What one can say with full assurance, however, is that the Fifth Monarchists all shared a belief that they were elite and chosen saints of God's aristocracy, who were justified in ruling over the reprobate as they ushered in the New Jerusalem.[76] It is this understanding of a group of "chosen saints" brought together by a common interest in New Jerusalem and its practical application to seventeenth-century England that illuminates our reading of Cary. As David Loewenstein notes, Cary's not only interpreted Daniel and Revelation in a manner similar to that of other Fifth Monarchists, but she also presented her interpretations in a more in-depth and systematic way.[77]

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74 A number of dissenters became interested in the mystical writers Paracelsus and Jacob Boehme after their works were translated into English in the 1640s and 1650s. See Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1972), 185.

75 Ibid., 164.

76 Ibid., 230.

77 Loewenstein, "Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary," 139.

As with many female prophets of her era, Cary's prophecy posed problems because of her gender. Cary herself addressed this in her writing, appealing to the idea that she was a passive instrument guided by the hand of God.[78] Fifth Monarchists, like most radical groups of the seventeenth century, had an ambiguous and at times inconsistent position on female ministry. They permitted women to vote, testify, act as spies and even meet separately from men, thus offering women a level of agency not found among many groups. At the same time, Fifth Monarchists insisted on a distinction between preaching and prophesying, and between those who prophesied as leaders of the church and those who prophesied as mere vessels of God.[79] Women could not assume positions of power or speak autonomously in their own voice; they could only claim to speak for God as so inspired.

As Phyllis Mack has noted, though, Cary actually insisted that she was a minister. This meant that she spoke with her own voice, out of her own learning and conviction.[80] The importance of this should not be underestimated. By laying claim to being a minister, Cary assumed a greater agency than many women prophets did. Cary did not, however, deny that she was a prophet. Rather, what she really did was to reconfigure the meaning of prophecy to incorporate a broader ministerial role. Cary first established that all the elect are prophets: "every Saint in a sense, may be said to be a Prophet. For they are Prophets to whom God discovers his secrets: and there is no true Saints, but the secrets of God are discovered to them." In response to the question of what a prophet is, Cary answered that "a man that is a true Prophet of Jesus Christ may be, and in some degree

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78 Ibid., 137.

79 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 107.

80 Ibid., 91. For more on the complicated role of Cary, who excused her prophecy as that of a passive vessel of God yet at the same time functioned as a radical interpreter of Scripture, see also Loewenstein, "Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary," 138.

truly is an Evangelist, and Pastor, and a Teacher also." While she admitted that these spiritual gifts were dispensed separately, she informed the reader that saints were often fitted to do more than one work. Furthermore, saints had little choice in the matter of prophesying, "for when the Lord hath revealed himself unto the soul and discovered his secrets to it...the soul cannot choose but declare them to others." Indeed, saint and prophet were symbiotic categories: "Now then as soon as the soul is made a Saint, it is made a Prophet."[81] Cary cited Joel 2:28-9 as justification, and she also enjoyed the support of both well-connected female patrons (including the daughter of Cromwell) and radical male reformers.[82]

Cary had a similar understanding of spiritual gifts to the Quakers. It was not merely that those who were inspired to prophecy, preach, or interpret the Scriptures should do so, but that the entire concept of ordination should be abolished. As we will see in the next chapter, Quakers repeatedly attacked the "hireling priests" who hindered the transmission of the true word of God. Here, Cary and the Quakers were influenced by some Puritans, who believed in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, in which lay people who were "gifted" with the spirit were encouraged to pray vocally, to prophesy, and even to preach. Cromwell's Army was filled with "gifted brethren," who claimed the ability to preach through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Especially popular were "prophesyings," in which a lay person gave a spirit-guided commentary or biblical exegesis following a sermon. Such acts show that the line between preaching and prophesying was often blurred, with some prophets such as Mary Cary (and later, the Quakers) calling for an abolition of

81 Mary Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses; and England's fall from (the mystical Babylon) Rome. Clearly demonstrated to be accomplished. Whereby great encouragement is administered to all saints, but especially to the saints in England. In the handling of a part of the eleventh chapter of the Revelation* (London, 1648), 65, 123, 125-26, 66.

82 Loewenstein, "Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary," 136-39.

ordination. Cary, in particular, asserted that there was no biblical basis for ordination, except in the case of bishops and deacons.[83] She contended that for the sake of England's prosperity as a nation, any saint who was called to prophesy should be allowed to do so.

Mary Cary's two most substantial works, *The Little Horns' Doom and Downfall* and *The Resurrection of the Witnesses*, illustrate the kind of prophecy popular among radical lay Puritans who spoke after sermons: prophetic interpretation of scripture, or biblical exegesis. Cary called this type of prophesying “scripture prophecy.”[84] As a Fifth Monarchist, Cary gave particular attention to passages in Daniel and Revelation, showing how the significance of current events had a scriptural basis that revealed these events to be the fulfillment of biblical prophecies. Of all the prophets in this study, Cary presented the most developed proposal of how England was living in the last days, connecting Daniel and Revelation to the current political situation in England. There is no metaphor in Cary's assessment: the king mentioned in Daniel 7:7 *is* Charles I; one of the ten horns mentioned in Daniel 7:20 *is* England.

Cary, of course, was not the only prophet to base her prophecy on scripture. Indeed, as we have seen with Sutton and Wight, the Bible was an essential tool of the female prophet. It lent her authority, it grounded her work within the framework of her religion, and it offered her a refuge from critics. Many of the prophets in this study had an astounding command of the Bible. Cary, for example, claimed to have accomplished many years of study of scripture (in particular the books of Revelation, Isaiah, Jeremiah,

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83 Kenneth Carroll, “Early Quakers and 'Going Naked as a Sign',” *Quaker History* 67, no. 2 (1978): 70-2; Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience, 2nd ed.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75-6; Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses*, 134-35.

84 The subtitle of *The Little Horns of Doom* includes the phrase "scripture prophecy." See Mary Cary, *The little horns doom and downfall: or A scripture-prophesie of King James, and King Charles, and of this present Parliament, unfolded. Wherein it appeares, that the late tragedies that have bin [sic] acted upon the scene of these three nations: and particularly, the late Kings doom and death, was so long ago, as by Daniel pred-eclared [sic]* (London, 1651).

and Daniel), which she began in 1636 at age fifteen.[85] In Cary's *Resurrection of the Witnesses*, which she dedicated to members of the House of Parliament, she used her knowledge of the Bible as an explanation of why these esteemed persons must accept her prophecy:

> Now what I say, for the encouragement of the Parliament, and of the General, and chief Commanders of the Army in particular, and of all the Saints in England in general, is clearly grounded in the Scripture, and therefore it is unquestionable, and to be received and observed of the Parliament, Army, and Saints in England. Indeed, if I should declare any thing to you, and tell you that I had it by vision or revelation, and it were not apparent in Scripture, I know no warrant you had to receive it.[86]

This is an argument that would have resonated with her audience and even her critics. But Cary used the Bible differently from most female prophets in this study. Most used scripture as warrant: they made a statement (varying from a dream they might have had to an exhortation to fellow believers) and then backed it up with biblical evidence. Cary, however, reversed the process by presenting the biblical passage *first* and then interpreting its significance. In some ways, this was closer to preaching, and it thus made a strong statement about Cary's views of her own authority as one who spoke for God.

The concept of election was central to Cary's prophecy and eschatology. She employed election in a literal way to make sense of the political (and, as she saw it, apocalyptic) turmoil of seventeenth-century England. A key tension in Cary's writing was to define who the elect were within the context of the nation of England: was England itself an elect nation, or was there a remnant of elect among the nation? Part of this tension came from Cary's interest in New Jerusalem: she connected England to New Jerusalem, but she was at pains to determine who the saints of New Jerusalem were.

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85 Loewenstein, "Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary," 134.
86 Cary, "The Resurrection of the Witnesses," 181-82.

What we see is a sort of imagined community in Cary's writing, one that (like Sutton's) shifted between the elect as a remnant and the elect as the nation.

Cary and other Fifth Monarchists used Puritan terminology to refer to the elect, calling them “saints.” Puritan sainthood incorporated the full meaning of “sanctus:” a saint was not just “holy,” but also “set aside.” Thus, the Puritan saint was one who was sanctified and set aside to receive divine grace and assurance of salvation.[87] Unlike Sutton and Wight, Cary was not concerned with personal election. She presented no sign of spiritual angst over the destiny of her soul. The focus on election in Cary's prophecy remained at the collective level. However, Cary's use of the term “saint” was anything but passive: the saints were actively engaged in the struggles of apocalyptic significance enveloping mid seventeenth-century England.

As Rachel Warburton has pointed out, Cary's writings address two utopian modes: millennial prophecy and petition for earthly reform.[88] We can see Cary's dual focus in her treatment of the saints. Cary had a historical understanding of the elect, referring to the two witnesses in Revelation as a metaphor for all saints who lived during the time of the Beast. At other times, however, she took a presentist view, focusing on or even addressing the saints in England. Writing of Presbyterians, Independents, and Anabaptists, she commented how she wished “that these distinctions of difference might be all laid aside, and that all that belong to Jesus Christ might only be called Saints, and the servants of Jesus Christ.”[89] It is this group of people, these saints of Cary's time, to whom she referred when she spoke of God's “called, and chosen, and faithful ones, those

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87 John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603-1689* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 184.
88 Warburton, “Future Perfect?: Elect Nationhood and the Grammar of Desire in Mary Cary's Millennial Visions,” 123.
89 Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses*, 173.

first fruits whom he hath now called forth, and engaged in his works." Cary understood these saints to be living in a time of great import, when the spirit of prayer and prophecy was poured out "very richly" in comparison to twenty years prior. The saints touched by this spirit included the learned and unlearned, old and young, male and female.[90]

While Cary envisioned the saints as a group set aside within the human race, she also placed them in a national context. Cary stopped short of proposing that that all of England was chosen, yet it is clear that she believed England was special and had merited God's favor. Echoing many of her contemporaries, Cary proclaimed that England had the greatest number of saints of any nation: "Now in England there are a more considerable number of the faithful servants, and Witnesses of Jesus Christ, than is in any Kingdom in the World." By contrast, the Protestants in France, Germany, and Scotland were "exceedingly formal, and lukewarm generally."[91] Cary believed that, due to the great number of saints in England, the entire nation could be saved from destruction. Here again we see her attempting to work out the conflict between remnant and nation:

> First, I desire you to consider, That God hath a very great number of his dear Saints in this Kingdom, in whom he delights, and for whose sake he may, and I had almost said, will spare this Kingdom, and spare the Cities and Towns, and Counties where they are for if God would have spared Sodom for ten righteous persons, we have a great ground of hope, that he will spare London, yea all England from a general devastation and desolation, having thousands of righteous persons in London, and in all England a very great number.[92]

For Cary, the treatment of the non-elect toward the elect went far in determining a nation's fate. She connected England's treatment of its prophets and saints with the question of whether its future would be one of destruction or one of happiness and

90 Cary, *The little horns doom and downfall*, 169-70, 282.
91 Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses*, 87-8.
92 Ibid., A6-A7.

prosperity.[93] In what could be interpreted as a charge or warning not to persecute the saints and prophets, she argued that the saints would be lifted up as the head of all nations, and whichever nation or kingdom failed to serve them would perish. Moreover, she saw the battle between Parliament and the king as heralding the final apocalyptic battle against the saints.[94]

The Bible's prophetic literature was essential to prophetic constructions of the elect nation. It was through identifying with Old Testament prophets that the English connected themselves to Israel, thus constructing the notion of God's special relationship with their nation. But as Patrick Collinson points out, the prophetic mode was judgmental and self-critical, rather than triumphalist. This was certainly the case with Cary's assessment of England. She did not gloss over what she saw as the “hellish mirth” of some of its residents.[95] Ultimately, such a view led to the crisis that appeared among so many female prophets: their admonitory prophecy built up the nation as having a special relationship with God, but it also served to fragment and even dichotomize those resident within the nation, as the ultimate focus was on the godly remnant rather than on the nation as a whole. Cary could thus be considered a representative figure in what Christopher Hill and Patrick Collinson have observed as the transition from “peculiar people” signifying the elect people of England to its acquisition of a more sectarian nuance, that of 'a little rump of saints in some backstreet Bethel.'”[96]

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93 Mary Cary, *A word in season to the kingdom of England. Or, A precious cordiall for a distempered kingdom* (London, 1647), 2, 4.

94 Cary, *The little horns doom and downfall*, 67; Loewenstein, “Scriptural Exegesis, Female Prophecy, and Radical Politics in Mary Cary,” 142.

95 Collinson, “Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode,” 24; Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses*, 96.

96 Collinson, “Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode,” 33, 36; Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1993), 270.

It was this “little rump of saints” to which Cary devoted the most attention. Fifth Monarchists exhibited an almost dogged elitism in their belief that, as saints, they had the right and duty to establish a New Jerusalem in England. This was a key focus in Cary's work, as she combined an analysis of millenarianism with a call for earthly reforms. Fifth Monarchists were not the first radical Protestant group to attempt to build New Jerusalem. The Anabaptists of the German city of Münster led a similar campaign—and one that succeeded past the “blueprint stage”—when they seized control of Münster and attempted to erect New Jerusalem in the 1530s. This bloody and chaotic episode led many Europeans in the following decades to discredit millenarianism as being violent and socially subversive.[97] Cary, perhaps aware of the difficulty of supporting violence in the name of religion, nonetheless issued a call for action, arguing that “it is clear that it is lawful in Gospel times for saints to fight against such as would murder and destroy them (as the Associates of the Beast would).” Indeed, she suggested that it would be sinful for the saints not to fight in such an instance. Notably, she was one of the few female prophets to call for the “none-such” King Charles' execution.[98]

Cary believed the saints of England would play a key role in the earthly reforms necessary to establish New Jerusalem. More so than almost any other writer of this period—male or female—she worked out a detailed plan of New Jerusalem by interpreting Revelation through the lens of the events of the Civil Wars. While many writers connected England with New Jerusalem, few envisioned New Jerusalem as a physical place. Cary, however, believed that within a few years, there would be a material

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97 Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 228-29. On Münster and the Anabaptists see H. C. Erik Midelfort, “Madness and the Millennium at Münster, 1534-35,” in *Fearful Hope: Approaching the New Millennium,* eds. Christopher Kleinhenz and Fannie J. LeMoine (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1999), 115-34; R. Po-chia Hsia, *Society and Religion in Münster, 1535-1618* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

98 Cary, *The little horns doom and downfall*, 125-26, 41; Mack, *Visionary Women*, 101.

heaven on earth, one with "external privileges" as well as spiritual ones for God's saints. These privileges would even extend to England as a whole, now that it had been freed from the bondage of Rome. Cary understood England to be the tenth horn of the Beast (the Pope); now that it was fallen from the Beast, none of the other nine horns (which included the kingdoms of France and Spain) could ever prevail over England again.[99]

Key to the establishment of a premillennial New Jerusalem, according to Cary, was the conversion of Jews to Christianity. Her views were part of a larger trend among British and European radical Protestants, who imagined themselves as latter-day Jews and, as such, sought to connect with contemporary Judaism. Continental Protestants such as Philipp Jakob Spener and Jean de Labadie, for example, also took an interest in Judaism, professing the hope or belief that Jews would be converted *en masse* as part of a millenarian plan. Spener even believed that this conversion placed an obligation on Christians to convert Israel in the present. Later Pietists engaged in a missionary program that addressed not only proselytization but also questions of social care, occupational rehabilitation, assimilation, and identity.[100] As for the Fifth Monarchists, they had a strong interest in Judaism; some believed that Jews would play a prominent role in the establishment of New Jerusalem as a chosen people.[101]

Cary's vision of New Jerusalem required both the readmission of Jews to England and the conversion of Jews to Christianity. However, she never advocated openly for Jewish conversion, nor for Jewish readmission into England. Instead, as Rachel

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99 Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses*, 185-86.

100 Williamson, *Apocalypse Then*, 192; Christopher Clark, "'The Hope of Better Times': Pietism and the Jews," in *Pietism in Germany and North* America, 1680-1820, eds. Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horn Melton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 251-70. Clark notes (p. 253) that from the 1650s, adherence to the doctrine of a prophesied mass conversion of Jews was relegated to the chiliastic fringe of German Protestantism. In the first half of the seventeenth century, however, orthodox Lutheranism had embraced this doctrine almost unanimously.

101 Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 190.

Warburton explains, Cary collapsed past and present by combining the biblical past with Civil War and Interregnum England.[102] Essentially, she developed a sort of typological relationship between the saints and modern-day Jews. The Jews, who represented the law of the Old Testament, were closer to the saints ("the new and heavenly Jerusalem") than the saints were to many Christians. Indeed, Cary blamed Rome, that "filthy, abominable, hateful strumpet; such a mother of harlots, and abominations" for having repulsed the Jews and prevented their conversion.[103] Once the Jews were converted, she asserted that they would hold a special place in New Jerusalem as God's "anciently beloved people." Moreover, like the Gentile saints, Jews would have material benefits and "possess their own land, even the land given to their fathers to possess."[104] It was through this version of typology, what Warburton calls "reducing Jerusalem to a 'figure' rather than both a historical and a living city," that Cary was able to develop her understanding of England as New Jerusalem and its saints as the leaders who would have the greatest rights and benefits.[105]

Cary thus assigned tremendous power to the elect saints—they were the remnant of the nation who would have the privilege and right to rule over England, the New Jerusalem. Granted, Cary eased the tension between remnant and nation by suggesting that a nation which welcomed the saints, allowing them to prophesy and worship freely, would be a prosperous nation favored by God. But one cannot ignore the power that she assigned the elect saints. Her prophecy represented a struggle that was common to many seventeenth-century radical religionists: the question of how to reconcile the elect status

102 Warburton, "Future Perfect?: Elect Nationhood and the Grammar of Desire in Mary Cary's Millennial Visions," 116-17.
103 Cary, *The resurrection of the witnesses*, 43; Cary, *The little horns doom and downfall*, 139-40.
104 Cary, *The little horns doom and downfall*, 161.
105 Warburton, "Future Perfect?: Elect Nationhood and the Grammar of Desire in Mary Cary's Millennial Visions," 130.

of their particular religious community (which was usually in the minority and often persecuted) with competing notions of community such as that of the English nation.[106]

As the above examples have shown, the prophetic discourse of mid-seventeenth century women suggests that election had a cultural resonance that allowed for a range of implications and that drew on various biblical and theological models. Sarah Wight, Katherine Sutton, and Mary Cary all emerged out of the world of Calvinist-Arminian debates and Civil War radicalism. They frequently employed language of election to express their prophetic callings and to negotiate their various relationships with God and their religious or civic communities. As each of the prophets in this chapter has demonstrated, what exactly “election” meant—for one's self, for one's religious community, and for one's nation—was a contested but central question for women prophets of the Civil Wars and Restoration.

106 Christopher Hill comments, for example, on the use of the phrase “peculiar people” among dissenting religious groups, who were conscious of their superiority as “true believers” but also of their minority position and precarious standing in society. See Hill, *The English Bible*, 270.

2

Female Prophecy, Election, and the Transatlantic Quaker Community

As Chapter Two argues, election became an important discursive tool through which seventeenth-century Quaker women prophets defined the community of Friends and their place in broader society.[1] Through an examination of the relationship between prophecy, election, and notions of community in Quaker prophetic discourse, this chapter considers female Quaker prophecy from the earliest days of the Quaker movement through the second generation (1650s to 1715). It pays special attention to how prophetic discourse changed over these two generations as female Quaker prophets renegotiated their relationships with the religious and civic communities in which they operated.

Election was a central concept in seventeenth-century Friends' prophetic discourse. It shaped how Quakers understood themselves as a chosen but persecuted people. It helped define their understanding of community, and it gave them a self-perceived divine calling to preach and prophesy in the name of God. We can trace the Quakers' interest in doctrinal Calvinist election all the way back to their roots in Puritanism.[2] The Quaker movement and its theology emerged out of pre-Civil-War Antinomian Puritanism, which disapproved of the lack of emphasis on grace among Calvinist Puritans. As with many early modern religious movements which formed over doctrinal differences, the tenet in

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1 As noted in the dissertation's introduction, I have chosen to divide my study of Quaker female prophets into "generations" rather than retaining Braithwaite's schema of "periods." The dissertation uses the year 1670 as the dividing point between the first and second generations. See "Introduction," p. 22.

2 While mystical theologians such as Jacob Boehme influenced some early Friends, Quakerism's main roots were in Puritanism. William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism, 2nd ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 40; Kenneth L. Carroll, "Early Quakers and 'Going Naked as a Sign'," *Quaker History* 67, no. 2 (1978): 69. Carroll cites Nuttall, Tolles, Barbour, and Brinton as all arguing for the Puritan roots of Quakerism.

question became a focal point for the new group: Friends held a great interest in the Calvinist doctrine of election, if only to refute it.

Quaker founder George Fox (1624-1691) believed that overemphasis on Calvinist election and reprobation had magnified God's sovereignty at the expense of God's love.[3] His views were welcoming and attractive to a number of religious “seekers,” who embraced the Quaker movement after having had previous experiences in Baptist, Puritan, or other dissenting congregations. Some of these newcomers, including Fox's wife, Margaret, had Calvinist backgrounds and found the Quaker emphasis on grace to be especially appealing. Several early Friends described how they struggled with anxiety and unhappiness resulting from doubts over their election. Many early Quakers shared a familiarity with Calvinism, even if they believed in “the grace of God which hath appeared to *all* men [emphasis added].”[4]

Regardless of previous affiliations, no Quaker prophet promoted the Calvinist doctrine of election once convinced (the Quaker equivalent to conversion). Nor did any early Quaker prophet share the Fifth Monarchists' interest in a millenarian Calvinism with aspirations of a rule of the elect.[5] Rather, Quaker prophetic discourse invoked broader biblical notions of “the elect” as persons—and, collectively, as a people—chosen by God. For them, implications of election often functioned at a collective level. They drew on concepts of biblical election to draw parallels between the Israelites and themselves as God's chosen people.

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3 William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism, 1st ed.* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1912), 36.

4 Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences: The Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 100; Susanna Bateman, *I matter not how I appear to man... but of a virgin pure conceiv'd is he* (London, 1657), 4.

5 Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England, 2nd ed.* (London: Verso, 1990), 172; Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 17.

Early Quakers (c. 1650-1670) and Prophecy

From its beginnings in the late 1640s, the Quaker movement was a prophetic one. Friends associated themselves with the spirit of primitive Christianity, promoting prophetic or charismatic religion while condemning priestly and institutional religion as false worship. A number of Quaker prophets labeled ordained ministers with epithets such as "diviners for money" or "hireling priests."[6] The message of the Quaker prophet was always directed toward an audience, one that she envisioned as a community to whom she reached out with God's word and the message of divine will.[7] Those who spoke in Quaker meetings were prophetic preachers, in the sense that they believed God delivered a message through them. Indeed, Quakers used the terms "preaching" and "prophesying" interchangeably to describe God's speaking through an individual. To preach in a Quaker meeting always meant to speak as led by the Spirit; it did not mean to assume a pastoral role or to establish a hierarchical claim.

While the definition of prophecy was consistent among Friends, always entailing God's speaking through a human agent, prophets adapted their prophetic messages and mechanisms to their audiences. In the early decades of the movement, prophets spoke prophetic warnings and gave written and spoken messages to audiences ranging from kings to cities to fellow Quakers. As time passed, audiences narrowed to comprise mostly Friends.[8] Here the focus became less on warning one's religious "other" and more on

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6 For example, see Dorothea Gotherson, T*o all that are unregenerated, a call to repentance from dead works to newness of life by turning to the light in the conscience...* (London, 1661), 87; Judith Boulbie, *Testimony for truth against all hierling priests and deceivers* (London, 1665).

7 Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, *2nd ed.,* 524.

8 There were, of course, exceptions. Friends who traveled throughout the Atlantic often attracted non-Quaker audiences at their meetings. See, for example, Deborah Bell, *A Short journal of the labours and travels in the work of the ministry, of that faithful servant of Christ, Deborah Bell* (London, 1762).

exhortation, admonishment, and instruction of one's fellow believer. The message and delivery of prophecy changed to reach the audience.

Importantly, Quakers believed that prophetic preaching was not limited by gender or social station. Unlike many of their dissenting contemporaries, Quaker women had equal status with men as prophets and leaders in the early Society of Friends. Indeed, the first convert of George Fox became a female prophet. Elizabeth Hooten, the wife of a prosperous farmer, had already left her parish church for a Baptist congregation when she met George Fox in the north of England sometime during 1646 or 1647. Two years after her "convincement" (conversion to Quakerism), Hooten began an active ministry as a noted preacher, traveling as far away as Barbados and New England. She established a model of public behavior that many subsequent Quaker women followed.[9]

Hooten and other religious seekers who found their way to the Quakers encountered new opportunities that surpassed most forms of religious expression available to women in seventeenth-century England. The early Friends were not only tolerant but also encouraging of women's prophetic ministry. Of the "valiant sixty," the original core group of Quaker preachers based out of the north of England, twelve were women; of the 211 early missionaries, 33 were women.[10] For the first few years of their existence, Quakers believed the attributes of men and women to be interchangeable. They claimed that God's omnipotency and will could overturn the authority of patriarchal hierarchies

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9 For an overview of Hooten's life, see Emily Manners, *Elizabeth Hooten, First Quaker Woman Preacher, 1600-1672* (London: Headley Brothers, 1914); Elaine Hobby, "Handmaids of the Lord and Mothers in Israel: Early Vindications of Quaker Prophecy," in *The Emergence of Quaker Writing: Dissenting Literature in Seventeenth-Century England*, T. Corns and D. Loewenstein, eds. (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 89; Linda J. Webster, *Among Friends: Establishing an Oratorical Tradition among Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Era, vol. 1* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2007), 201.

10 Catherine Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, Ltd., 1995), 240.

for the furthering of the kingdom; God was “no respecter of persons.”[11] The Quaker prophet’s claim that God spoke through the individual was not just a claim made by dissenting women to establish authority and a public voice; it was a core Quaker belief.

The eschatological emphasis of early Quakers also led many to cite Acts 2:17-18 (cf. Joel 2:27-28) as scriptural justification for female prophecy. Some Quaker prophets invoked this passage at the beginning of their writings, as a passing remark to establish authority with their audience. For the most part, these women were not stating a specific case for women's right to preach and prophesy, but rather arguing that the Holy Spirit does not discriminate among vessels. Key to this argument was the idea that Friends were living, as Acts 2:17 states, “in the last days.” The imminent eschatology of the early Quakers was unequivocally fundamental to their acceptance of female prophets.[12] But unlike Behmenist-influenced prophets such as the Philadelphians, early Quaker women did not envision a gender-specific role for the female prophet. Philadelphians such as Jane Lead believed that God had chosen them *as women* to be millenarian reformers. By contrast, early Quaker women believed they were called to prophesy in these times of eschatological significance because God disregarded gender in choosing prophetic vessels. This distinction is key, in that Quakerism thus produced fewer differences between male and female religious roles than did the Philadelphian movement. The term “chosen vessel,” a term often associated with female prophets, appears in Quaker

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11 Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 9; Teresa Feroli, “Engendering the Body Politic: Women Prophets and the English Revolution, 1625-1667” (Ph.D. diss., Cornell, 1994), 135.

12 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 136; Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism*, 235.

literature describing both men and women.[13] Language of election was important to male prophets as well as female ones, and there is little gendered language in the prophetic writings of early Quakers.

While most Quakers addressed female public ministry only briefly, a few Quakers wrote lengthier treatises on the subject. One such example is Margaret Fell's *Women's Speaking Justified,* published in 1667. Fox based her argument on scripture and on biblical examples of female leaders, such as Priscilla. She differentiated between Mosaic Law and the new life in Christ, stressing that "where women are led by the spirit of God, they are not under the law, for Christ in the male and in the female is one."[14] Quaker women were often quick to temper this argument with the assurance that women were not trying to overturn gender hierarchies. For example, after claiming men and women to be one under Christ, Sarah Blackborow wrote that "the woman usurps not authority over the man, but hath power on her head because of the angels." The focus was on God's speaking *through* the prophet, not on the earthly figure of the prophet assuming a public voice. Quaker prophet Katherine Evans made this clear when she asserted:

> Paul would not permit of a woman to speak in the church; no more do not the Quakers; neither do they permit a woman to speak in the church, nor a man that is born of a woman; but he that is born of God, whether in male or in female, let him speak freely as his Father giveth him utterance.[15]

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13 See William Edmundson, *A journal of the life, travels, sufferings, and labour of love in the work of the ministry, of that worthy elder, and faithful servant of Jesus* (London, 1715), xii; George Fox, *A journal or historical account of the life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences, and Labour of Love, in the work of the ministry, of that antient, eminent, and faithful servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox*, 3rd ed. (London, 1765), xii.

14 Margaret Fell Fox, *Women's Speaking Justified* (London, 1667), 8, 13.

15 Sarah Blackborow, *The just and equall ballance discovered: with a true measure whereby the inhabitants of Sion doth fathom and compasse all false worships and their ground* (London, 1660), 13-4; Katharine Evans, *A brief discovery of God's eternal truth and a way opened to the simple hearted whereby they may come to know Christ and his ministers, from Antichrist and his ministers...* (London, 1663), 35.

The early Quaker female prophet thus viewed her call prophesy as justified by her belief that God spoke through the regenerated human, whether male or female.

Not all women who joined the Quaker movement in its early stages laid claim to prophecy. Many early converts in York, for example, lived quiet lives in which they largely conformed to societal expectations.[16] For those who did become prophets, the prophetic calling was a key moment in their spiritual and physical lives, one that held the potential to uproot them from family and community. We read, for example, of Elizabeth Fletcher, who was "made an able minister of the gospel of life and salvation, and with her companion, Elizabeth Leavens, travelled through many parts of this nation." Barbara Blaugdone, a governess, responded to the call to preach and nearly lost her employment after children were removed from her care.[17]

Despite the life-changing realities of a call to the prophetic life, women tended to treat their callings as individual, temporary instances where they were overtaken by the power of the Holy Spirit. Dorothy White captured one such moment:

> Upon the 25th day of the second month, [16]59, as I was passing along the street, I heard a cry in me; again on the 26 the day of the same month, the same cry was in me; again on the 27th day the same cry was in me, and as I was waiting upon

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16 David Scott, *Quakerism in York, 1650-1720* (York: University of York, 1991), 5-7.

17 Penney, *The First Publishers of Truth*, 258; Barbara Blaugdone, *An account of the travels, sufferings and persecutions of Barbara Blaugdone. Given forth as a testimony to the Lord's power, and for the encouragement of Friends* (London, 1691), 6. Blaugdone turned to teaching to supplement the small income left for her upon the death of her husband. She was convinced in 1654, and her memoirs extend through 1657—although they were not published until 1691. Blaugdone fasted during the first year of her convincement; she was also imprisoned on charges of witchcraft. See Bridget Hill, "Barbara Blaugdone," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

> the Lord in silence, the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, "write, and again I say write."[18]

There are a couple of reasons that White and many other women framed their prophetic callings in terms of transience and obligation. As we have already seen, prophetic religion was at the heart of the early Quaker movement. In a sense, everything spoken at a Quaker meeting was prophetic, because Friends believed such speech was a direct communication from God.[19] Prophetic preaching as a brief, compulsory experience accounted for the working of the Spirit. Moreover, this construction could offer the prophet—as a woman speaking in public—a better reception from her audience. One of the more common terms found in early Quaker writings is “constrained:” prophets were constrained to lay pen to paper, constrained to interrupt public assemblies with a prophetic word, or constrained to travel to certain cities with warnings from God. Early Quaker women prophets couched their agency and voices in a language of obligation, as the vessels through which God spoke; they did not claim a voice for themselves or seek to register autonomy.[20]

The main way that Quaker women spoke and wrote in the voice of God was by drawing on scripture. As a whole, early modern prophets varied considerably in how they connected the Bible with their prophecy. Some, such as the radical Puritans, equated the term “prophesying” with the spirit-led illumination of scripture or biblical exegesis. On the other end of the spectrum was the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, who

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18 Dorothy White, *A diligent search amongst rulers, priests, professors, and people and a warning to all sorts high and low, that are out of the doctrine of Christ, and fear not God...* (London, 1659), 1. White was the second most prolific Quaker woman writer of the seventeenth century after Margaret Fell Fox. Little is known of White's biographical background. There is some question as to whether White may have fallen out with the Quakers from the mid-1660s to the mid-1680s. Her later writing was not sanctioned by the Friends' publication committee, further indicating that she may have been a marginal Quaker later in life. See Catie Gill, “Dorothy White,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

19 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 170.

20 Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth Century Quaker Community* (Cornwall: Ashgate, 2005), 71.

claimed that God told her to draw from her spirit, and let others study the Scriptures.[21] Quakers fell along the middle of the spectrum. Like many Puritans, they believed in both the inward Spirit (what they called "the Light") and the outward Word. However, whereas Puritans believed that the inward Spirit and the outward Word functioned in tandem, Quakers separated the two. As the seventeenth-century Quaker Elizabeth Bathurst argued, scripture merely bore witness to God's word as a written record of it; scripture was not in and of itself the word of God. She made a distinction "between the *Written Words*, the *Writing* or *Letter*, and the *Living Word*, which is a *Quickening Spirit*."[22] But while the Quakers greatly valued the Spirit, they did not concentrate on the authority of the Spirit at the total expense of scripture. Rather, they claimed to possess the same Spirit that had inspired the Bible. The prophecies of seventeenth-century Quakers were heavily inflected both with references to scripture and with the language and cadence of the King James Version. They especially related to Hebrews and James, the apocalyptic texts of the Old and New Testaments, the Old Testament Prophets, the Pauline Epistles, and Johannine literature.[23]

In contrast to the Fifth Monarchist Mary Cary, however, early Quaker prophets expressed little interest in the precise and literal fulfillment of apocalyptic prophecies.[24] This was due in part to Quaker theology. While Quakers had an eschatological focus, they were not millenarian in the strict sense of the word (i.e. anticipating the thousand-

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21 Carroll, "Early Quakers and 'Going Naked as a Sign'," 70; Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, *2nd ed.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 75; Antoinette Bourignon, *Oeuvres, vol 2* (Amsterdam, 1686), 82.

22 Hugh Barbour, *The Quakers in Puritan England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), 158; Elizabeth Bathurst, *Truth's vindication, or, A gentle stroke to wipe off the foul aspersions, false accusations, and misrepresentations cast upon the people of God called Quakers…*(London, 1679), 3.

23 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism*, 58.

24 This is not to say that the early Quakers ignored Revelation. Rather, I am agreeing here with Catherine Wilcox that some scholars have over-magnified the importance of Johannine literature to early Quakers. Ibid., 58; Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 61.

year reign of Christ before the final judgment). They believed that Christ would come again in a second incarnation, but their immediate focus was on what they believed to be an immediate, spiritual coming of Christ into the hearts of his followers. It was this present-day work of Christ in the heart, that which produced religious experience, on which the early Quakers concentrated.[25] Thus, it is not surprising that whereas Mary Cary and the Fifth Monarchists cast their vision of the nation and the elect in terms of a literal interpretation of Revelation, Quakers invoked biblical passages that allowed them to construct their present-day community of Friends as an elect people of God.

Early Quakers and Community

The early Quakers were an eclectic group, drawn from diverse social and religious backgrounds.[26] Unlike most religious groups, they had no ordained pastors presiding over congregations; churches were replaced by meetinghouses where anyone could speak or lead worship. However, these differences did not result in an inherent lack of organizational structure or unity within the early movement. On the contrary, the early Quakers were well situated to come together as a coherent movement because of their leader, George Fox. Fox not only fostered unity through his leadership, but he also encouraged an emphasis on the group over the individual. From the beginning, Fox tended to win converts at the group level. And while the theological emphasis of Quakers was on the "inner light" and the spirit of God working through an individual soul, Friends never interpreted the inner light solely in an individualistic sense. They emphasized what

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25 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism*, 40-1.

26 Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth Century Quaker Community*, 30; Bill Stevenson, "The social and economic status of post-Reformation dissenters, 1660-1725," in *The World of Spiritual Dissenters, 1520-1725*, ed. Margaret Spufford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 360-87.

Geoffrey Nuttall has called the "corporate witness" of Friends' principles and practices.[27] Even in its formative years, when the Quaker movement was more tolerant of individualism among prophets, we find multiple references to Quaker prophets who were careful not to stray from the corporate vision. Barbara Blaugdone, for example, wrote George Fox from Bristol to ask his approval regarding her message to the king, which she had enclosed with her letter: "I have not received one line from thee this great while though I writ to thee twice now this thing was with me to lay before the king, and I have sent it thee to peruse it if thou approve of it to have it delivered; if not to let it be, I leave it with thee as thou shalt order it."[28]

The consensus among scholars is that Quakers had a strong corporate identity, which had the effect of reinforcing their sense of remoteness from society. Adrian Davies, for example, has described seventeenth-century Quaker life as a form of tribalism. Quakers disregarded worldly customs and associations, and their ties with non-Quaker relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances often diminished.[29] While many Quakers did continue to conduct their social, economic, and domestic lives as part of a local community, they were sometimes forced to sever ties with neighbors or family members

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27 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 225; Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 130; Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 45.

28 Barbara Blaugdone, "Letter from Barbara Blaugdone to George Fox," Portfolio 1/41, Society of Friends Library, London. The letter Blaugdone references is most likely the one she wrote to King James II, dated the 11th of the 7th month (no year given). See Portfolio 1/44, Society of Friends Library, London.

29 Stevenson, "The social and economic status of post-Reformation dissenters, 1660-1725," 361; Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society, 1655-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 35. There has been some debate over the extent to which Quakers interacted with their non-Quaker neighbors. Simon Dixon has provided a challenge to traditional scholarship that emphasizes Quaker separatism. Dixon's article on London Quakers in the fifty years after the Clarendon Code suggests that there was in fact a considerable degree of interaction. He argues that the degree of persecution existing at the state level did not decide how those at the parochial level viewed Quakers; there was more toleration and opportunity extended to Quakers than scholars have recognized. See Simon Dixon, "Quakers and the London Parish, 1670-1720," *London Journal* 32, no. 3 (November 2007): 229-249; Simon Dixon, "Quaker Communities in London, 1667-c. 1714" (Ph.D. diss., Royal Holloway, University of London, 2005).

due to religious intolerance. For example, Quaker records reveal that Elizabeth Wheatly, convinced around the year 1656, "met with hardships from her Mother who was a widow, and so severe against her, that she turned her out of her house to shift for her self." Alice Hayes' father in-law threatened to "buy a chain, and chain [her] to that maple tree that stands in the green" when she became a Quaker in 1680.[30] For women in a society where they had little legal standing on their own, this severance of family ties would have been significant.[31]

Family was important to the early Friends, though, and the religious community of Quakers could not have flourished without the role of familial networks. Most women married, had children, and (if of lower or middling sectors of society) pursued livelihoods outside of their prophetic careers. From the beginning of the movement, Friends placed emphasis on ties between husband and wife, parents and children. Marriages between spouses who shared the Quaker faith were remarkably different from those of most seventeenth-century households; in matters of religion, in particular, there was a notable absence of patriarchal structure. When Alice Curwen, an early convert, heard of the persecution of Quakers in New England, she felt called to leave her home in the north of England to go to Boston. Her husband was in jail at the time for refusing to pay his tithes, and she had young children still at home. But her sense of calling persisted, and she

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30 John Freeman, et al., "A Testimony of Friends in the County of Durham concerning Elizabeth Wheatly," Temp MSS 745, TCMD 1/30, Society of Friends Library, London; Alice Hayes, *A legacy, or widow's mite; left by Alice Hayes, to her children and others. With an account of some of her dying sayings* (London, 1723), 48. Alice Hayes' testimony offers insight into how relationships changed once one became a Quaker. Like many Quaker converts, Hayes first received an introduction to the Society of Friends while out in service. She attended a meeting with some neighbors, largely out of a curiosity to hear a famed "woman-preacher." Hayes' embrace of the Quaker faith strained her relationship with her husband and her mother in-law, but she noted that her husband died in a Friend.

31 Amy Louise Erickson's work on women and property in early modern England is a good starting point for understanding the position of women economically and legally. She reveals that the economic reality of women was not as bleak as some scholarship has portrayed it. See Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

finally told her husband that God "would deliver him out of prison, and that we must travail in another nation together, and there bear a testimony to God's blessed truth, which is broken forth in this day of his power, wherein he is making his people willing."[32] By the time Thomas Curwen was released from prison, their children were all grown or deceased, and the Curwens embarked (with the support of Friends) on their transatlantic journey. The Curwens, like many early Quakers, ultimately found a way to balance religious calling with the responsibilities of domestic life. As we will see among the second generation of the Quaker movement, the expanding numbers of Friends throughout the Atlantic facilitated this struggle as Quakers developed networks to care for each other's children, to support spouses whose husbands or wives were away, and to extend financial support to those who traveled in the ministry.

Quakers also created networks early in the movement through the circulation of manuscript and print literature.[33] Epistles, in particular, were a significant part of early Quaker communication and the formation of the Society of Friends.[34] Letters addressed to the king and Parliament allowed women to address personal grievances or to write on

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32 Alice Curwen, "A relation of the labour, travail and suffering of that faithful servant of the Lord, Alice Curwen," Vol. 70, Box 131/11, Society of Friends Library, London. I have chosen not to modernize the spelling of "travail" because in its seventeenth-century spelling it could signify both travel and labor; the modern spelling loses this ambiguity of meaning. Unless noted, however, I have modernized spelling throughout this dissertation.

33 As Harold Love has demonstrated, scribal publication and circulation continued throughout the seventeenth century, despite the rise in printing. Scribal publications tended to circulate within circumscribed communities or literary circles (such as the Society of Friends). See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

34 Letters were particularly important to Enlightenment women as an acceptable way to participate in the world of letters. In the case of the women considered in this chapter and elsewhere in this dissertation, letter writing did not become the recourse that it did for eighteenth-century Enlightenment women. Dissenting women had a variety of acceptable media open to them if they wished to speak or prophesy—at least within their respective religious groups. Quaker women, for example, wrote letters but they also spoke their prophecies in public venues, wrote and published pamphlets and treatises, and issued travel journals. For a consideration of the Enlightenment public sphere, women writers, and questions of agency and exclusion, see *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France*, eds. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Dena Goodman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995). See also Chapter Five of this dissertation.

behalf of other Quakers. But exhortative letters addressed exclusively to Quaker audiences were also important because they linked together the Quaker community in different parts of the country. As Gary Schneider has argued, early modern letters were "sociotexts," collective social forms intended for circulation within certain epistolary circles. In the case of the Quakers, Margaret Fell facilitated this circulation. Her home, Swarthmoor Hall, served as an organizational headquarters and a clearinghouse for Quaker correspondence.[35]

Letters to Friends often employed a marked biblical language that drew parallels between the Quaker community and the early Church. For example, Dorothy White's letters to "Dearly Beloved Friends," undated but most likely composed in the early 1660s, followed the format of a New Testament epistle with a salutation, exhortation to live in God, and an ending. In the salutation of one letter, White wrote, "This epistle is sent to the risen seed of God in all, to be heard amongst the assembly of the saints and church of the first born, peace from God who liveth for ever be multiplied amongst you and in the seed of God I salute you all." Her letter, much like a New Testament epistle, was intended to be read out loud to the entire religious community to which it was addressed. Another of White's letters mirrored the Epistles by pointing to the promise of an imminent Second Coming: " And so blessed are all the faithful and upright in heart who keep their habitation, in this evil day, who are watching and waiting for the coming and appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ." White's closing remarks were taken, in part, directly from Paul: "and so the everlasting peace of God which passeth all understand fill

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35 Gary Schneider, *The Culture of Epistolarity* (Newark, NJ: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 22; Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60. George Fox converted Margaret Fell during a visit to Swarthmoor Hall in 1652. After being widowed, Margaret married Fox in 1669.

all your hearts, that you may always abound in love, and in good works, to the glorifying of your heavenly Father."[36]

Of equal importance to the early Quaker movement was the printed word. Print culture became an important medium for religious expression and debate in the century before the rise of the Quakers. From arcane religious treatises to cheap print aimed at the masses, the printed word became a forum for negotiating Protestantism. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, at least a third of the total number of published items each year were religious works.[37] From the outset, Quakers capitalized on the power of print. 4000 Quaker pamphlets and books were published between 1650 and 1700. And Quaker women wrote about one in five of all female-authored publications in the seventeenth century. Part of the prevalence of female Quaker authors was likely due to the high literacy rates of Quaker women in comparison to women in the general population. Adrian Davies estimates that female Quaker literacy was comparable with that of English males in the general population, with around two-thirds of Quaker women achieving literacy. Possible reasons for these higher rates include the economic background of Quakers, an expectation of literacy on the part of the Society of Friends, and a desire to escape worldly corruption through the reading of devotional literature.[38]

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36 Dorothy White, "Dearly beloved friends," Crosse MSS 292/8-11, Society of Friends Library, London. The Crosse manuscripts are a collection of documents related to the Perrot controversy over the wearing of hats during prayer, so White likely composed these letters at some point during the 1660s. It is unclear whether "evil day" hints directly at discord arising from the Perrot controversy, or whether the intended connotation is more generalized.

37 See Peter Lake and Michael Questier, *The Anti-Christ's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists and Players in Reformation England (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 122.

38 See Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English Society,* 108, 119-122; Patricia Crawford, "Women's Published Writings, 1600-1700*,"* in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800,* ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 213.

As with most Protestants who printed pamphlets or books in the early modern period, Quakers found the print medium useful both for promoting devotion among their ranks and for building a public image of a national and unified movement. A female prophet did not merely publish as an individual voice, but also as a representative of the larger Quaker program. Indeed, she often relied on other Quakers to fund her printed works. Printing also functioned to reinforce a sense of community among early Quakers by requiring the development of networks to support the process from manuscript to print to circulation. Itinerant ministers were front-and-center in this process, deciding whom to trust as messengers and recipients of printed material. Indeed, there was a close relationship between printed books and oral preaching in seventeenth-century Quakerism, and itinerant preaching expanded in part due to the establishment of the same communication networks that facilitated the print process.[39]

While acknowledging the importance of networks, family, and print culture, one could argue that the most powerful impetus in strengthening communal bonds among early Quakers was their perceived status as a persecuted people. It was this status that allowed them to see themselves as an embodiment of God's "original" chosen people, the persecuted Israelites. Official state policies regarding Quakers changed frequently during the first decades of the movement, in part due to political shifts brought about by the Restoration. Throughout the Interregnum and Restoration, Friends were imprisoned. But the return of Charles II prompted even stricter anti-Quaker legislation with the passage of the Clarendon Code, which imposed serious sanctions on any threat to the Church of England. The Clarendon legislation included the 1662 Quaker Act, which, among other

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39 Catie Gill, *Women in the Seventeenth-Century Quaker Community,* 115; Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers,* 60, 63.

items, made the refusal to take an oath of allegiance to the king illegal. Oath-taking was against the religious principles of Friends, and this piece of legislation resulted in the imprisonment of numerous Quakers. Two years later, fears of a Puritan plot in the north of England led to the passage of the 1664 Conventicle Act. This piece of legislation, which stayed in effect for almost five years, made refusal of a judicial oath punishable by transportation. The act also prohibited religious assembly outside of the Church of England.[40] It would not be until 1689, with the passage of the Act of Toleration, that Quakers would free themselves from legislated persecution. By then, thousands of Quakers had been imprisoned, and hundreds had died in jail.[41]

Recent scholarship has shed new light on the nature of early modern persecution and toleration. As Alexandra Walsham has argued, there is little merit to the idea that a "persecuting society" in England gave way to one of religious toleration through a direct, linear path. Persecution and toleration were cyclical, feeding off of each other and responding to a number of external factors. One of these factors was the discrepancy between state-legislated persecution and its implementation at the local level.[42] For many Quakers, as for many individuals throughout Europe, the realities of persecution and toleration played out in local communities. Social and economic lives were tied to the parish, and the response of one's neighbors was the deciding factor in how most Quakers (and other religious minorities) experienced persecution or toleration. Looking at post-Reformation Europe as a whole, Benjamin Kaplan has argued that the practice of

40 Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few: Symbolism of Speaking and Silence Among Seventeenth-Century Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 111.

41 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 266.

42 Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 262, 300; Stevenson, "The social and economic status of post-Reformation dissenters," *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725*, 387; See also S. Dixon, "Quaker Communities in London, 1667-c. 1714"; S. Dixon, "Quakers and the London Parish, 1670-1720."

toleration did not arrive with the Enlightenment. Rather, it functioned in practice among thousands of communities throughout Europe, where people confronted and worked out the divisions of Christianity and, in some cases, lived together peaceably despite religious difference.[43] In mid seventeenth-century England, this "practice of plurality" became an issue to contend with, due to the emergence of the fleeting Civil War sects (Ranters, Seekers, Muggletonians, Levellers, Grindletonians, and Fifth Monarchists) and the lasting Baptists and Quakers, who joined an already diverse array of Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Independents.[44] While the state might make its decrees, the local authorities were the ones who enforced these decrees. Location was thus a key factor in whether Quakers experienced harsh treatment from authorities.

For example, Puritan-controlled New England produced an intricately woven church and state that took any threat to Puritan solidarity as dangerously subversive. Katharine Chattham's visit to Boston offers a typical example of how Quaker prophets were treated in New England:

> The cause of her imprisonment at first was, that she came from London to Boston, and there, under a great exercise and concern of mind, appeared publicly clothed in sackcloth...After being turned out of prison as aforesaid, she came again to Boston, and was there again imprisoned a long time, in a dismal cold winter, where, through the hardships endured, she contracted a grievous sickness near unto death.[45]

Chattham was only one of many Quakers in the New World who endured imprisonment under harsh conditions. In rare cases, Puritan New England took persecution even further. Mary Dyer, the only known Quaker woman prophet to be executed, was condemned in a

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43 Benjamin J. Kaplan, *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 354-55.

44 C. Scott Dixon, "Introduction," in *Living with Religious Diversity in Early Modern Europe,* eds. C. Scott Dixon, Dagmar Freist, and Mark Greengrass (Surrey: Ashgate, 2009), 17.

45 Joseph Besse, ed., *Sufferings of Early Quakers: America, West Indies, and Bermuda* (York, England: Sessions Book Trust, 2001), 231.

Boston court. Whippings were also common in New England. The prophet Elizabeth Hooten "publicly warned the people [of Boston] to repentance, and of the terrible day of the Lord, which would otherwise overtake them." Her message was received with great scorn; she was imprisoned and then sent to several towns where she was whipped at each location. Finally, she was banished into the wilderness, "there left to pass above twenty miles with her body thus miserably torn and mangled, in an extreme cold season, through several waters, and other exceeding great dangers."[46] One early Quaker record describes the case of a Quaker woman who received the rare punishment of being bridled: "There was one Dorothy Waugh who traveled beyond the seas in obedience to God; who went through much sufferings and imprisonments and at Carlisle they did put a bridle on her head with a stone-weight and much iron in her mouth like an egg for declaring the truth."[47] The people of New England could be as hostile as the authorities. Elizabeth Hooten, who was in her mid-to-late sixties at the time of her second visit to New England, wrote of her experience prophesying before a congregation: "they abused me as I stood, and when he had done I asked the priest a question. The people violently flew upon me young and old, and flung me down on the ground."[48]

Rather than squelching the Quaker movement, the harsh treatment of Friends in New England only strengthened their communal bonds. Even though Quakers who visited New England were thousands of miles from home and living among strangers, they formed strong relationships with other Quakers in New England. Hooten noted that after narrowly escaping Boston with her life, she came to Rhode Island, "where [Friends]

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46 Ibid., 230-31.

47 "Brief Account of Dorothy Waugh," Portfolio 16/67, Society of Friends Library, London.

48 David Booy, ed., *Autobiographical Writings by Early Quaker Women* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 65. (See also Elizabeth Hooten, "Letter from Elizabeth Hooten to Friends," n.d., Portfolio 3/27, Society of Friends Library, London).

were abundantly refreshed one with another for the space of a week." From there, she traveled to Barbados and then back to Boston, commenting that "through much of this country we went amongst Friends."[49] During Thomas and Alice Curwen's transatlantic journey, they were unable to secure passage to visit Bermuda, likely because of a law forbidding shipmasters to accept Quakers as passengers. The Curwens wrote a letter to Friends in Bermuda:

> It was in our hearts to signify our love in writing a few words unto you...and we would have gladly visited you, if we could have gotten a passage thither; for you have been often in our remembrance, but in the will of the Lord we stand, and in that power that is unlimited, where neither earth nor seas can separate us from the Lord, nor one from another.[50]

The persecution that Quakers endured from those outside of their faith further isolated Quakers, making them more attached to those within the fold; this was especially true of traveling Quaker prophets who found themselves in strange lands far from home.

Contrary to Puritan New England, the residual effects of Civil War sectarianism continued to foster a degree of religious plurality in England. Despite anti-Quaker legislation, some Friends remained well integrated into parochial life. In London, for example, Quaker men held varied roles in parish government in the years after the Conventicle Act.[51] As for female Quaker prophets, those arrested in England faced less severe punishments than their New England counterparts. Nonetheless, they still encountered serious sanctions. In a testimony of Elizabeth Hooten, George Fox recalled that before Hooten left England for New England, she "often had her goods and cattle taken away from her for going to meetings and serving and worshiping God by the

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49 Hooten, "Letter from Elizabeth Hooten to Friends," Portfolio 3/27.

50 Thomas and Alice Curwen, "Letter to Friends," 1676/7, in "A relation," Vol. 70, Box 131/12, Society of Friends Library, London.

51 For more on Quakers and parochial life, see S. Dixon, "Quakers and the London Parish, 1670-1720."

justices and informers."[52] Hooten wrote numerous letters to English authorities, ranging in status from sheriffs to the king, asking for redress of various grievances. For example, she appealed to the king and Lord Chamberlain regarding the confiscation of her goods:

> This is to let you know, that I have been often hard for Justice, because I had my Team taken away in Leicestershire contrary to the law by a persecuting magistrate, called Mathew Babington, who took away my son to prison and tendered him the oath, and because he would not swear he fined him 5£ and a wicked bailey of the hundred, whose name was William Palmer, whom he set a-work, took away for his fine 3 mares from me, to the value of 20£ in the time of the harvest...and I have been here for justice several times, and at the sessions in Leicestershire and he never restored me them again.[53]

The confiscation of Hooten's goods serves as a reminder that persecution could take many forms throughout the British Atlantic.

Whatever form persecution took and wherever it was exacted, it galvanized the Quakers into action as a community. As Quaker scholar Richard Bauman argues, during the period of intense persecution of the Restoration, Quakers turned their energies toward building an institutional base that would allow them to survive.[54] The persecution of the early Quakers became central to the construction of their religious community as God's People. It allowed them not only to come together as a group, but also to envision themselves as a chosen, persecuted people. It is thus not surprising that the early Quakers modeled most of their prophetic discourses on Old Testament prophecy. They could identify closely with the elect nation of Israel and its people, who were at times favored, at times exiled, at times sinful, at times persecuted or oppressed.

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52 George Fox, "A Testimony Concerning our Dear Friend and Sister in the Lord, Elizabeth Hutton [Hooten]," Portfolio 16/74, Society of Friends Library, London.

53 Elizabeth Hooten, "Letter from Elizabeth Hooten to the King and his Lord Chamberlain," n.d., Portfolio 3/7, Society of Friends Library, London.

54 Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 137. Even the name "Quaker" had its origins as a term of scorn and derision. Early prophets, such as Jeane Bettris, often commented that they were "in scorn called a Quaker." See Jeane Bettris, *A lamentation for the deceived people of the world. But in particular to them of Alesbury, and those small villages round about her* (London, 1657), 8.

Language of Election in Early Quaker Prophetic Discourse

Women prophets created an elaborate discourse of election to establish the community of early Friends as a modern-day people of God. This paradigm took on two specific forms: that of the Quakers as a chosen remnant of a corrupt nation, and that of the Quakers as an elect but persecuted people. To construct both ideas, Quaker prophets drew heavily on models of the biblical prophets of Israel, and on a language of election.

One central way in which Quaker prophets connected themselves to the elect nation of Israel was through the imitation of biblical prophets. While Quaker women such as Margaret Fell Fox cited female biblical figures to justify women's public preaching and prophecy, women who actually uttered prophetic warnings tended to adapt the rhetoric and mannerisms of male figures such as Moses or Isaiah.[55] This disengagement from the female body could reinforce the idea that the female prophet was merely a passive receptacle for God's message, but it could also appear quite radical. As Diane Purkiss notes, it was always unsettling for the female body to produce a male voice. Early Quaker female prophets were more radical than most visionaries of the 1640s because they literally removed themselves from their social identities and outward selves.[56] Theirs was an active, at times aggressive, prophecy that operated in stark contrast to the outwardly passive, trance-like utterings of Sarah Wight on her sickbed.

Much of the scholarship on early Quaker women's imitation of male biblical prophets has focused on gender construction. But modeling prophetic discourse on biblical prophecy served another important purpose: it allowed the Quaker prophet to

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55 See Mack, *Visionary Women*, 172-78.

56 Diane Purkiss, “Producing the Voice, Consuming the Body: Women Prophets of the Seventeenth-Century,” in *Women, Writing, History, 1640-1740* (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd, 1992), 141; Mack, *Visionary Women*, 174.

reenact a situation similar to that of a prophet in Israel, where the prophet was sent as God's chosen messenger to warn an individual or community of impending judgment. Following the tradition of Old Testament prophets, the use of the vocative was common among early Quakers, who frequently lashed out warnings to the king, Parliament, a religious congregation, a particular city, or even the nation as a whole. In response to the vigorous persecution of Quakers in Puritan New England, Elizabeth Hooten issued the following prophetic warning: "Oh Boston, Boston, how hast thou slighted the day of thy visitation, woe is me for thee." Hester Biddle's admonitory prophecy to the people of London provides another example: "O The day and hour of thy visitation is now, O city of London! with all thy suburbs, and likewise the day, hour, and time of God's righteous judgments is at hand, and will be executed upon thee in flames of fire from heaven."[57] Quaker prophets, like their biblical counterparts, thought of geographical places in a metonymical sense; the people residing therein were an imagined community who formed an audience for the prophet.

Like their biblical predecessors, Quaker women directed a number of their prophecies toward temporal authorities. Warnings to the king and Parliament were popular among Quaker prophets, particularly during the reigns of Charles II (r. 1660-85) and James II (r. 1685-88). Quaker prophets were not the first to address the nation's rulers. During the Rump Parliament, the Baptist prophet Elizabeth Poole had provided

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57 Elizabeth Hooten, "A Lamentation for Boston in New England," n.d , Portfolio 3/35, Society of Friends Library, London; Hester Biddle, *A warning from the Lord God of life and power unto thee, o city of London, and to the suburbs round about thee : to call thee and them to repentance & amendment of life, without which you cannot see God* (London, 1660), 1. Esther/Hester Biddle, the wife of a cordwainer, was convinced in 1654. She traveled extensively (Newfoundland, the Netherlands, Barbados, Egypt, France). After her husband's death in 1682, Biddle became relatively impoverished and received support from the Peel Monthly Meeting. See Catie Gill and Elaine Hobby, "Hester Biddle," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

solicited advice to the Council of Officers on whether to spare King Charles' life.[58] Poole's role as prophet was that of a consultant, but Quaker prophets had a different reason for addressing the monarch or Parliament: they wished to bring an end to the upswing in religious persecution that had accompanied the Restoration. Drawing on the Old Testament, they gave fiery warnings of what would happen to a ruler who failed to promote religious freedom in his kingdom. Anne Clayton, a servant of Margaret Fell Fox, sent a letter of warning to Charles II reminding him of how God “rent the kingdom from Saul because of his disobedience.”[59] Some women even delivered their messages in person, such as Mary Bradshaw, who spoke to King Charles II during his visit to Bristol. Likewise, Elizabeth Adams stood outside Parliament for two days before breaking a flask in imitation of the prophet Jeremiah and signifying the corruption of church and state. For the most part, Quaker women who addressed the king were not subverting or questioning his authority, but rather emphasizing and reminding him of his responsibility as elected by God to rule, a construction that had parallels to biblical framings of the king’s election as a temporal ruler.[60]

A number of early Quaker prophets, both men and women, backed up their warnings with symbolic actions inspired by biblical prophecy. Wearing sackcloth and

58 See Elizabeth Poole, *An alarum of war, given to the Army, and to their High Court of Justice (so called) revealed by the will of God in a vision to E. Poole, (sometime a messenger of the Lord to the Generall Councel, concerning the cure of the land, and the manner thereof) (*London, 1649). Poole belonged to William Kiffin's Particular Baptist congregation in London until she was expelled for heresy, some time prior to 1648. Poole later moved to Abingdon, Berkshire, where she became associated with the Baptist minister John Pendarves. There, Poole was also a member of the radical network associated with John Pordage, who led the Philadelphian movement. See Manfred Brod, “Elizabeth Poole,” in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

59 Anne Clayton, “A Letter For the King from Anne Clayton,” n.d., Portfolio 1/78, Society of Friends Library, London.

60 James Packe, “The words which Mary Bradshaw of Bristoll spake to Charles the Second King of England,” Portfolio 1/47, Society of Friends Library, London; Mack, *Visionary Women*, 167; Ellen Umansky , s. v. “Election,” in Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion*, *2nd. ed.,* vol. 4 (Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 2744.

ashes and going naked in public were two of the most common non-verbal means of communication for the early Quaker prophet.[61] It is difficult to unpack the full symbolism behind these events because extant sources are often skewed toward the critical or the hagiographic: those who committed such actions appear in local court records or in accounts of Quaker sufferings. However, Quakers who prophesied by signs were clearly drawing on the biblical messages of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Jonah, which connected the wearing of sackcloth with repentance.[62] Margaret Brewster, who entered a Boston congregation with her hair down, her face blackened, and wearing sackcloth and ashes, drew a comparison to Jonah entering Nineveh:

> The desire of my soul is, that it may be with this town as it was with Nineveh of old, for when the Lord sent his prophet Jonah to cry against Nineveh, it is said, "They put on sackcloth, and covered their heads with ashes, and repented, and the Lord withdrew his judgments for forty years."

By contrast, Elizabeth Fletcher invoked Isaiah, who walked naked as a sign and portent against Egypt and Ethiopia. Fletcher went naked through the streets of Oxford as a sign and portent to the Presbyterians and Independents that the Lord would strip them of their religious profession, "so that their Nakedness should Appear."[63] With such actions, women prophets like Brewster and Fletcher were indicating that the significations behind the prophetic signs of sackcloth, ashes, and nakedness—significations such as the fall of

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61 Most instances of prophetic signs took place early in the Quaker movement. Rosemary Moore suggests that prophetic signs peaked between 1652 and 1654. Kenneth Carroll notes that there were a "scattering of cases" in the years after the Restoration. Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 126; Carroll, "Early Quakers and 'Going Naked as a Sign'," 87.

62 Kenneth Carroll, "Sackcloth and Ashes and Other Signs and Wonders," *Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 53, no. 4 (1975): 314.

63 Besse, *Sufferings of Early Quakers: America, West Indies, and Bermuda*, 262; Penney, *The First Publishers of Truth*, 259. Elizabeth Fletcher was convinced by George Fox at the young age of about 14. She became one of the first Quaker missionaries to Ireland. See Catie Gill, "Elizabeth Fletcher, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

the godless and the coming of God's Kingdom—were imminent and therefore pertinent to their contemporary situation.[64]

Thus Quaker women were doing more than just *imitating* biblical prophets when they donned sackcloth and ashes or walked naked through the streets. As professed inheritors of the same Spirit that inspired the prophets and apostles, early Quaker prophets saw themselves fulfilling for their time the same role as the biblical prophets had for theirs. Indeed, as Kenneth Carroll has posited, they may have believed themselves to be fulfilling scripture itself: Revelation 11:31 speaks of "two witnesses, whom I shall appoint to prophesy, dressed in sackcloth."[65] The symbolism of sackcloth and ashes was therefore not only tied to the Quakers' interest in the prophets of Israel, but also to their belief that they were living in the last days.

Whatever an individual Quaker prophet's relationship to the Bible and its prophetic traditions, she—along with her entire Quaker community—understood herself to be chosen and set aside for her special task. Lydia Odes, in a letter to other Friends, spoke of "the loving kindness of the Lord, who hath chosen us from among many generations to bear a testimony for his name." While accepting the spiritual gift of prophecy could produce fear and trepidation (there are several references to Quaker women struggling to obey prophetic injunctions), the calling itself was seen a sign of God's favor. As the prophet Mary Howgill wrote in 1662, "blessed are they that in the Lord's time either speak or write by revelation, by prophecy, or vision."[66]

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64 Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 126.

65 Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience*, 26; Carroll, "Sackcloth and Ashes and Other Signs and Wonders," 314.

66 Lydia Odes, "Letter to Friends," n.d., Crosse MSS 292/5, Society of Friends Library, London; Mary Howgill, *The vision of the Lord of hosts: faithfully declared in his own time; and the decree of the Lord God also recorded, which is nigh to be fulfilled. Also, a few words to friends of truth, whom the Lord is trying in this day* (London, 1662), 5.

Adopting the discourse and symbolism of the biblical prophets was only one way that Quaker prophets constructed themselves and their broader religious community as God's elect people. They also did so through their choice of language and rhetoric. Covenantal language, for example, contributed significantly to prophets' discourse on election. Early Quakers acknowledged two covenants: the Old or First Covenant, a covenant of works established under the Law of Moses; and the New or Second Covenant, God's relationship with Israel made through a covenant of grace with Abraham.[67] Living under the New Covenant, Friends perceived themselves to be the direct heirs of Abraham's pact with God. Dorothy White described this understanding to an audience of Friends, writing that her prophecy was:

> a heavenly visitation, sent from the union of the Holy Spirit, and holy covenant of perpetual peace, of love and consolation, unto all who are of the holy faith, and are partakers of the promise which God made with Abraham, the same faith and holy covenant which God made with him and his seed after him.[68]

Quakers believed that the New Covenant was fulfilled not only through the first and second comings of Christ, but also immediately—in a spiritual sense—through the hearts of his people, who received spiritual gifts such as prophecy.[69] Thus, early in the movement when Quakers' eschatological expectations were at their height, Friends linked prophecy both to the spiritual coming of Christ into the hearts of his believers and to the imminently expected physical coming of Christ. As Dorothy White professed in a pamphlet addressed to the nation of England in 1661:

> The Lord God is making a new covenant with the generations of the seed of Abraham, which must inherit the promise of God; and to such the spirit of promise is fulfilled, that was made in generations past, to whom the Father said he would send the spirit of truth, the which is now come in this age and generation,

67 Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 98.
68 Dorothy White, *Unto all Gods host in England* (London, 1660), 1.
69 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism*, 77.

> which was before prophesied of, that in the latter days, he would pour forth his spirit upon all flesh, and upon sons and daughters, and upon servants, and handmaids.[70]

There was a sense among Friends that this covenant was alive in new ways among the Quaker prophets as they spread God's Light throughout the nation in anticipation of Christ's return.

The question of who was in covenant with God was not fully answered in Quaker prophetic literature. Prophets addressing the broader nation never excluded the idea that to enter into covenant with God was an open invitation. As Dorothy White proclaimed, “God is bringing and gathering people into covenant with himself...that which our hands have handled of the word of life, of the same do we declare freely, that all may come freely, and drink of the fountain of life, which is now set open for Judah and for Jerusalem.”[71] But the idea that Quakers were the chosen remnant retained a strong presence in their prophecy. Even prophecies directed at broader audiences, like Hester Biddle's pamphlet warning London and England, sometimes included a separate address to Friends: “Oh! you beloved Friends of God, this I have to say unto you from the mighty God...know this, that the covenant of the Lord is made with you, and his power and life shall not depart from you, nor from your seed for evermore.”[72] The language of covenant in such prophecies reinforced the idea that the Quakers were God's chosen people.

Quakers who drew on covenantal language were following the lead of Puritan preachers who made comparisons between England and Israel as they castigated England in imitation of the Minor Prophets. Their sermons expressed the idea that, as with the

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70 Dorothy White, *An alarm sounded to Englands inhabitants but most especially to English rulers* (London, 1661), 5.

71 Dorothy White, *A call from God out of Egypt by his Son Christ the light of life, and this from the movings of the holy power, is sent for a visitation unto the seed of God in all professours, teachers and people through this nation and land of England* (London, 1662), 7.

72 Hester Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth unto these three Nations* (London, 1662), 18.

experience of Israel in Judah, God's covenant would not be honored by the entire nation but only by a few. The Quakers were thus one among several groups who adapted the concept of biblical covenant to contemporary political, religious, or social purposes.[73]

Equally popular among female Quaker prophets was the concept of "remnant," which expressed the idea that there would be a chosen few to survive the imminent destruction of the nation.[74] Remnant language was particularly prominent in Quaker prophetic discourse from the late 1650s and 1660s, a period of heightened apocalyptic expectations as the Interregnum transitioned to the Restoration. Prophets who described the Quakers as a chosen remnant were inspired by biblical prophets' references to remnant, such as the prophet Isaiah's proclamation that "though your people Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will return. Destruction is decreed, overflowing with righteousness" (Isaiah 10:22). In a 1662 pamphlet, for example, Hester Biddle announced to the citizens of London that "God hath a remnant in thee, which he hath marked for his own, which shall escape the Wrath that is to come." Similarly, Dorothy White proclaimed in 1660 that "the end of all things is at hand; and all must come to know an end of the first covenant which was made with hell and death...This is the acceptable day of the Lord God, wherein he is come to gather together his remnant, and to seek the lost sheep of the house of Israel."[75]

Early Quaker prophets also set themselves apart by employing language that suggested they were the People of God. They envisioned themselves as part of a

73 Patrick Collinson, "Biblical Rhetoric: the English Nation and National Sentiment in the Prophetic Mode," in *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*, eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20; Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), 11.

74 See Introduction, "Election in Prophetic Discourse."

75 Hester Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth unto these three Nations*, 7; Dorothy White, *A visitation of heavenly love unto the seed of Jacob yet in captivity* (London: 1660), 4-5.

continual tradition of true believers. For example, when the prophet Lydia Wright went on trial in New England for disturbing worship, she told a magistrate that “if you worshiped that God which we worship, you would not persecute his people, for we worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the same God that Daniel worshipped.”[76] Quaker prophets most frequently established themselves as God's people when commenting on or reacting to their persecuted condition. Alice Curwen and her husband had just arrived in Rhode Island after a 13-week journey from England when they heard of “a new law that was made at Boston against the people of God called Quakers.” They traveled to Boston “to bear our testimony, with the rest of Friends, to God's blessed weighty truth against this generation that remain there unto this day, that so with the rest of the Lord's people we might fill up the sufferings that remain behind.”[77]

Like Curwen, most Quaker prophets who used terms such as “the people of God called Quakers” or “the Lord's people” did so in a manner that did not rule out the possible inclusion of others in this group. One exception is Hester Biddle, perhaps the most fiery and vitriolic of the early Quaker prophets, who invoked the voice of God to denounce her persecutors: “this is my decree which I will have sealed unto my people, *I am the Quakers' God*, and will be with them unto the end of this world, and in the end they shall be with me in my glorious kingdom, where they shall be kept from their persecutors.”[78] Biddle notwithstanding, most prophets entertained the idea that the Quakers were God's people in so far as they were true believers and present-day inheritors of God's covenant. This understanding encouraged Quakers to witness to others who might also join the remnant of God's People but who were not yet in the Light. The

76 Besse, *Sufferings of Early Quakers: America, West Indies, and Bermuda*, 263.
77 Curwen, “A relation,” Vol. 70, Box 131/11, Society of Friends Library, London.
78 Hester Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth unto these three Nations*, 9.

early Quaker missionary and prophet Sarah Cheevers expressed this view when, during her imprisonment in Malta from 1659-1662, she dreamed at one point that "the Lord said unto me, I have a people in this place, and precious seed to be gathered from the chaff, through labor and travel."[79]

Quaker prophets further extended their language of election by employing terms such as "elect" or "chosen." References to *individuals* as chosen or elect were rare among the early Quaker prophets, with the significant exception of descriptions of prophetic callings. Most Quakers did not experience an anxiety-filled spiritual journey to ascertain their state of grace, as did many Calvinists.[80] Rather, Quaker prophets tended to speak of being chosen or elect when referring to the Society of Friends as a whole. Prophets who addressed Quakers, for example, sometimes called their intended audiences "chosen." Hester Biddle appended to one of her pamphlets "a few words unto the royal seed, which is chosen of God, and separated from the world." Similarly, Dorothy White addressed one of her postscripts "to all the elect of God, who are called and chosen, faithful and true." Quakers also spoke of being an elect or chosen people when issuing warnings to their persecutors. In an admonitory message with an eschatological tone, Dorothy White warned the rulers and people of Weymouth: "Behold now is the Lord gathering in his chosen seed, chosen before the foundation of the world." Katharine Evans wrote from prison how God leads believers "through the greatest trials by the secret working of over-

79 Katharine Evans, Sarah Cheevers, and George Robinson, *A brief history of the voyage of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers, to the island of Malta, To which is added, a short relation from George Robinson, of the sufferings which befel him in his journey to Jerusalem* (London, 1715), 197.

80 The tension in Quaker spiritual autobiographies tended to center on the author's religious seeking and his or her quest to find "true" believers, a process that culminated in convincement.

ruling providence: so that the counsels of men against his chosen and elect prove insufficient and come to nought."[81]

Labeling the Quaker community as "elect" and "chosen" was also a powerful way for early Friends to set themselves apart from what they saw as the false worship of the nation. In a tirade against ordained ministers, Dorothy White lamented how England's ministers "have craftily crept into houses, calling them churches, but God hath a church of living stones, elect and precious, and this church is God a-building in this our day, a spiritual house built upon that rock that never shall be shaken, the rock that is God's elect." White indicated that she believed this election of the true church to have been pre-ordained: "the church of Christ being the elect body of Christ, being elected in him before the world was; these are called and chosen, faithful and true Israelites indeed, born of the holy seed, living stones, elect and precious, having life in them from the chief cornerstone."[82] Once again, the focus was on using election to establish the Society of Friends as a community of true and elect believers. Election here functioned in a collective sense—that of all members of the true Church—rather than in a personal sense of individual election.

Largely absent in early female Quaker prophecy, however, was the emphasis on England's potential salvation from destruction that appears as a possibility in the writings of Katherine Sutton and Mary Cary. The desire of early Quaker prophets to establish

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81 Biddle, *The Trumpet of the Lord Sounded forth unto these three* Nations, 17; White, *A call from God out of Egypt*, 11; White, A *diligent search amongst rulers, priests, professors, and people*, 6; Evans, *A brief history of the voyage of Katharine Evans and Sarah Cheevers* , 42.

82 Dorothy White, *Greetings of pure peace and perfect love, sent unto all the poor, scattered, little, holy flock of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God...* (London, 1662), 9. Susannah Blandford offered a similar construction in her spiritual autobiography (published 1698). See Susannah Blandford, *A small account given forth by one that hath been a traveller for these 40 years in the good old way And as an incouragement to the weary to go forward; I by experience have found there is a rest remains for all they that truly trusts in the Lord* (London, 1698), 22-3.

themselves as God's remnant among a corrupt nation precluded an emphasis on England as an elect or favored nation. The sense of England as a *nation* is clearly evident: many Quakers addressed their eschatological warnings to the nation of England, for example. But the focus remained on the elect as a group *within* the nation, rather than on the elect *as* a nation.

In a few instances, Quakers did suggest that England was a favored nation, but they usually did so because it allowed them to achieve other means. For example, some three-dozen Quaker women signed the following letter written to King Charles II:

> And so full of goodwill are we unto the land of our nativity, that we must call unto you, that you might mind what the great God of heaven and earth hath made known unto us, that he hath appeared, and doth appear in this nation and kingdom, more than in any nation in the earth, that it might be cleansed and delivered from the destruction threatened by the Lord.[83]

One would be hard pressed, however, not to draw a connection between the women's display of affection for the "land of our nativity" and their desire to appeal to their regal audience.[84] In another example from a pamphlet published in 1662, Mary Howgill described how "the living God did appear unto me by vision, and shewed me the dark, horrible, and miserable estate that would come on this land of England, and on the people therein." Howgill was "in great travail in spirit, soul, and body, for the whole land of England," stating to God that "even above and beyond all other lands) thou hast so largely made thy self manifest" in England. Yet, ultimately, Howgill singled out what she

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83 Ann Whitehead et al., *For the King and both houses of Parliament* (London, 1670).

84 Quaker letters to the king expressed a belief in the divine appointment of the monarch, which in itself represented a sort of election. However, prophets could have an ulterior motive for acknowledging divine appointment: it allowed them to remind the monarch that with great authority came great responsibility. Various prophets tied the longevity of the king's reign or the prosperity of the nation to the king's tolerance of Friends. For example, the prophet Ann Burden hinted to Charles II that God could remove him, should he stray from God's will. She wrote that "the Lord our God overturned one authority and government after another; because the cry of the oppressed hath not been regarded by them." See Ann Burden, "Letter from Ann Burden to King Charles," Portfolio 1/50, Society of Friends Library, London.

called the "elect seed" from the rest of the nation, pleading specifically for them, that God not "slay the righteous with the wicked." With these words, Howgill echoed Abraham's entreaty for Sodom (cf. Genesis 18:23). Thus, while she appealed for mercy for England, she linked it with a symbol of great corruption as she separated the wicked from God's People.[85]

When Quakers did compare England to a biblical nation, they often conceived of England as a modern-day counterpart to ancient Egypt, an enslaver of the people of God. References comparing England and Egypt appear in numerous writings of Quaker prophets, especially those addressing persecution.[86] Here again we see the importance of persecution in shaping the early Quakers. Whereas the Babylonian captivity was a frequent reference in the jeremiads of English Congregationalists—who saw themselves as a remnant fleeing from spiritual exile—the Quakers stressed a particular connection to the enslaved Israelites in Egypt.[87] Theirs was not so much a desire to separate from sin but rather to emerge out of the bondage of persecution. In some instances, prophets dispensed entirely with simile and made England and the Quakers the literal embodiments of Egypt and Israel, respectively.[88]

White and other prophets also made numerous references to Zion and Jerusalem. A number of prophets addressed their Quaker audiences as "sons and daughters of Sion,"

85 Howgill, *The vision of the Lord of hosts*, 3-4.

86 See, for example, Penney, *The First Publishers of Truth*, 69; Anne Gilman, *To the inhabitants of the earth* (London, 1663).

87 For more on the English Congregationalists and the metaphor of Babylon see Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 34-35, 37.

88 Dorothy White's pamphlet to "England's rulers, mayors, magistrates, and unjust judges" offers an example: "blessed are they from the Lord God and they shall be blessed, although the enchanters of Egypt study mischief against the Israel of God, yet their divinations shall not hurt Jacob, nor the enchantments prosper against Israel the called of God, none shall be like unto them." Dorothy White, *An alarum sounded forth from the Lord God of vengeance unto England's rulers, mayors, magistrates, and unjust judges, who are found oppressors of the seed and heritage of God* (London, 1662).

for example. However, there was a notable scarcity of references to New Jerusalem in early Quaker prophecy. The few allusions to New Jerusalem speak of an undefined, vague eschatology that sharply contrasts the highly detailed New Jerusalem outlined in Mary Cary's prophecies. This absence reflects the broader theological emphasis of the Quakers. They acknowledged that the "day of the Lord" was at hand, but their focus was on the spiritual regeneration of the "last days" and on building their community of true believers. They expressed little interest in the elaborate eschatological timetables of the Fifth Monarchists.

The uniform persistence with which early Quaker prophets established the Friends as an elect remnant among a fallen nation is remarkable, especially considering that these women prophesied during a formative, protean period of Quakerism. Their rhetoric of election not only suggests that Quakers developed a keen sense of community early in the movement, but it also raises questions about how religious minorities related to the concept of the elect nation. Indeed, Quaker prophecy serves to bolster Christopher Hill's thesis that there was a progressive shift during the seventeenth century from "peculiar people" signifying the chosen people of England to "peculiar people" taking on a sectarian resonance.[89] The paradigm of Israel, which was so important to early Quakers—and to many other religious minorities in the seventeenth-century British Atlantic—ultimately was not one of comparisons between England and Israel as an elect nation. That paradigm was reserved for national campaigns, political advisors or theorists, and the Church of England. The paradigm of Israel adopted by the early Quakers was that

89 Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Penguin Press, 1993), 70.

mirrored by the eschatology of many of the Old Testament prophets themselves: a nation written off as beyond redemption except for a godly few.[90]

Second-Generation Quakers: Community

By the late seventeenth century, Quakers faced a number of changes that began to influence their notions of community, such as the forging of internal networks, the institutionalization of the meeting structure, and transatlantic expansion.[91] Prophecy was a response—made in the name of God, the highest authority—against a temporal authority. When the relationship to that authority changed, so too did the nature of female prophecy. Language of election began to decline as the prophet's audience shifted to a largely Quaker audience—one that was facing less persecution.

Historians who extend their studies into the post-Restoration years encounter the difficult problem of assessing the changes to female prophetic discourse in second-generation Quakerism. The consensus in scholarship has been that radical female prophecy declined in the late seventeenth century. Some scholars have correlated this decline with the feminization of religious discourse. Phyllis Mack, while avoiding a language of "decline," sees feminized subjectivity as having circumscribed women's roles in the public arena by 1700. However, as Mack and Paula McDowell both suggest, this

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90 See Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); See also Collinson ("Biblical rhetoric: the English nation and national sentiment in the prophetic mode," 36) for an explanation of how prophetic preachers at St. Paul treated the elect nation.

91 Recent historiography has taken an interest in networks as a way to understand the early modern Atlantic world. Historians vary in their approach to networks, from employing the term without defining it to dedicating considerable space to sociological analysis of the term. Joel Podolny and Karen Page define a network as "'any collection of actors...that pursue repeated, enduring exchange relations with one another and, at the same time, lack a legitimate organizational authority to arbitrate and resolve disputes that may arise during the exchange relationships." While they refer specifically to economic networks, this definition also would apply to other types of networks in the early modern Atlantic world—including the networks of dissenters considered here. See Joel M. Podolny and Karen L. Page, "Network Forms of Organization," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (1998): 57–76.

same subjectivity allowed female religious figures to claim an authority *as women,* even as it circumscribed their roles.[92]

Yet problems remain with how scholarship has addressed the changes to second-generation Quaker prophecy. First, as Kate Peters has shown, women prophets were aware of their gender and the problems that it created as early as the first generation.[93] Second, the relationship between the feminization of religious rhetoric and the decline in radical female prophecy applies to the Quakers but not to all dissenting women. As I will argue in the following chapters, some millenarian prophets such as the Philadelphians feminized their discourse to produce a radical and empowering message about their elect status.

This chapter contributes to debates over the place of women in the second generation of Quakerism by considering both the centripetal effects of standardization and the centrifugal effects of transatlantic mobility on female Quaker prophecy and notions of community. It focuses in particular on the relationship between the prophet and her audience, and on the process by which prophetic discourse adapted to meet the needs of the changing community of Friends. By highlighting how community changed, we gain insight into the close relationship between election and notions of community in the discourse of radical Protestants such as the Quakers.

The numbers of Quakers began to swell during the last decades of the seventeenth century. At the century's end, there were by some estimates 50,000 Quakers in the British Isles and another 40,000 scattered throughout the Western Hemisphere. Quakers traveled throughout the Atlantic, gathering new members in Scotland, Ireland, Wales, colonial

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92 Mack, *Visionary Women,* 412; McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street,* 213-14.
93 Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, 140.

North America, Jamaica, Bermuda, and Barbados. They also began to experience a more favorable relationship with their non-Quaker neighbors.[94] And, although the Act of Toleration was not passed until 1689, the harshest legislated persecution of Quakers had occurred in the 1660s.

All of these changes meant that the Quakers were becoming a larger, more geographically diverse religious group that (at least on some levels) had begun to assimilate into broader society. Not surprisingly, as with any enthusiastic religious group entering its second generation, the Quaker emphasis began to change. Friends' sense that they were living in the last days started to diminish.[95] The eschatological impulse that had defined the first generation of Quaker prophets never disappeared entirely, but it declined considerably in the years after the Restoration. Instead, Friends focused their energy on giving structure to the movement.

Starting in the 1660s, the Quaker movement underwent significant organizational changes. As we have seen earlier in the chapter, this impetus came in part from the heightened persecution of the Restoration period, which forced the Society of Friends to develop an institutional base that would enable them to survive the hostile political environment. Two main changes, both spearheaded by George Fox, had a considerable effect on female prophecy: the creation of separate women's meetings and the establishment of a Quaker censorship system.[96]

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94 Frederick Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 3rd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1960), 24; “Visits of Ministers of the Society of friends to the West Indies in 17th and 18th centuries,” Portfolio 17/2-4, 7, Society of Friends Library, London; Bill Stevenson, “The social and economic status of post-Reformation dissenters, 1660-1725,” 372.

95 Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism*, 84.

96 Richard Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 137; For a more comprehensive overview of women's meetings and Quakerism see Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*, 283-86.

In 1671, George Fox began work on his plan to establish a separate women's meeting that would remove them from participation and leadership in the men's meetings but give them autonomy over their own.[97] Unequivocally, separate meetings emphasized gender in a way that first-generation Quakerism did not, and an understanding of the Quaker woman as having a spiritual role unique to her gender began to take shape in the second generation.[98] But the consensus among scholars is that the move was not intended as a blanket statement on the spiritual role of women. Indeed, Phyllis Mack goes so far as to argue that separate women's meetings offered long-lasting positive effects by offering leadership opportunities to Quaker women, who would later take an active role in movements like feminism, women's suffrage, and peace activism.[99] Similarly, William Braithwaite challenges the assumption that the new structure was intended to give women an unequal share in leadership. And Christine Trevett cautions that women's meetings did not put an end to female prophecy.[100]

Nonetheless, despite the opportunities that the new meeting structure afforded women (and, more specifically, women prophets), the very implementation of structure itself served to create restrictions on the style and prevalence of women's public speech. Richard Bauman explains that by the late 1670s, Quaker ministers spoke more formally, and in a narrower range of contexts than the previous generation."[101] Some of this restriction came from George and Margaret Fox's decision to have the Second Day

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97 Women did not cease to worship with men. Rather, the separate structure of men's and women's meetings was intended more for business and administrative issues.

98 For more on the feminization of Quaker women's spirituality and prophecy, see Mack, *Visionary Women*, "Part III: Visionary Order: Women in the Quaker Movement, 1664-1700."

99 Ibid., 349.

100 William Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, 1st ed. (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd, 1919), 273; Christine Trevett, *Quaker Women prophets in England and Wales, 1650-1700* (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), 13.

101 Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 150.

Morning Meeting of Ministers censor and edit all Friends' writings, beginning in 1672. The men who led this meeting rejected the political and apocalyptic emphases of the early Quakers in favor of a corpus defined largely by autobiography, works of instruction, and Quaker testimonies.[102]

The Second Day Morning Meeting was in charge of censorship, but women's meetings also played a role in directing and managing Quakers, particularly regarding domestic matters. Male and female Quakers alike were held accountable by Quaker women's meetings, which served in a manner similar to church courts by reprimanding individuals and vetting potential couples with the goal of enforcing and protecting the Quaker faith among individuals and families.[103] The censorial role of the women's meetings also could carry over into their everyday lives. Barbara Blaugdone, for example, took it upon herself to write George Fox to inform him of the behavior of various Friends in Bristol:

> Jone Elie is gone from all good and turned sottish… I believe [you] heard how Richard Marsh manifested his folly and wickedness in taking his wife contrary to the order of Friends; it was very gross.[104]

Richard Marsh's decision to marry outside the faith stood out as particularly problematic for Blaugdone. Similarly, Irish Quaker Abigail Abbott, whom Friends described as an “eloquent woman of a Majestic presence,” considered her marriage to a non-Friend to have been a key component of her turn from the Quaker faith. Despite her “evidence in

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102 Mack, *Visionary Women*, 367-68.

103 Ibid., 284-85; Mary Maples Dunn, “Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period,” in *Women in American Religion,* ed. Janet Wilson James (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 45-6.

104 Barbara Blaugdone, “Letter from Barbara Blaugdone to George Fox,” n.d., Portfolio 1/41, Society of Friends Library, London. Blaugdone, who mentions the death of Ann Whitehead, most likely wrote the letter in late 1686 (it is dated the "seventh month," but no year is given). Whitehead died in the summer of 1686. Blaugdone, died in 1704 at the age of about 95.

my conscience, from my own experience, that [the Quakers] were a chosen people of God," Abbot lost her good judgment:

> to that degree, that when my Friends refused to let me take my now husband in their assemblies on my own terms, I foolishly concluded, that though I went from the people of the Lord to marry my husband with a minister of the world's people yet the Lord would still be with me as before, seeing he had brought me near himself before I knew them: thus Samson-like who slept on the lap of his Delilah, I knew not that my strength was departed from me and so rashly and resolutely I rushed into the congregation of the dead as a dog returns to his vomit.[105]

This push toward endogamy was part of the move toward regulation of Quakerism; leaders wanted to ensure that those of the current generation would remain true to their faith and that those of future generations would be raised in it.

The Quakers' sense of community underwent changes not only from a move toward regulation, but also from a rise in the numbers of Quakers who traveled or relocated throughout the Atlantic. While dispersion and migration separated Quakers by many miles, Friends were able to counteract some of the centrifugal effects of distance by establishing a solid support system of networks. As Quakers traveled many miles from home, they encountered like-minded Friends who offered them shelter, took care of their children, worshiped with them, and circulated their manuscript and printed writings among Friends. This transatlantic network of Quakers was as important to Friends' sense of community in the second generation as the move toward structure and regulation.

Due to the prevalence of interactions among Quakers throughout the Atlantic, Quaker historians developed an early interest in the potential of Atlantic history as it applied to the Society of Friends. In 1960, before the surge in scholarship on the Atlantic world, Frederick Tolles argued that the traveling ministry was the "principal element of

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105 "An Account of Abigail Abbot," Portfolio 14/12, Society of Friends Library, London.

the Atlantic Quaker community."[106] Travel diaries, testimonies, and meeting records reveal that women prophets were a prominent part of the Quakers' traveling ministry. Their well-documented experiences shed much light on the world of transatlantic travel and on the importance of networks as a means of survival.

It is striking how little of what Quaker women actually spoke at meetings appears in the texts of many travel journals and testimonies. The genre of the travel journal itself can account for some of this emphasis on travel experiences at the expense of prophetic content. And Quaker women's travel accounts did vary considerably. Esther Palmer, for example, kept a travel diary detailing distance logged and places visited. Deborah Bell, on the other hand, published a more retrospective biographical account that ranged in content from details of her nervousness when first prophesying as a young woman to copies of her correspondence with a Baptist woman who inquired about women's preaching.[107] However, the absence of detailed prophetic messages in the accounts of prophets such as Esther Palmer and Elizabeth Webb suggests that much of the focus of these women's missions was on the travel experience itself. Traveling as a missionary was not just about delivering specific messages; it was also about the calling to travel and how it served as a mark of status within the Quaker community.

Women who traveled in the ministry usually expressed to the Quaker community that they had a strong calling to do so. Elizabeth Webb, who eventually settled with her family in Pennsylvania, described her calling to visit America as a powerful moment when her spirit was actually transported to the colonies and back:

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106 Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture*, 3-4.
107 See Deborah Bell, *A short journal of the labours and travels in the work of the ministry, of that faithful servant of Christ, Deborah Bell.*

> And in the year 1697, in the sixth month, as I was sitting in a meeting in Gloucester, which was then the place of my abode, my mind was gathered into perfect stillness for some time, and my spirit was as if it had been carried away into America, and after it returned, my heart was as if it had been dissolved with the love of God, and it flowed over the great ocean, and I was constrained to kneel down and pray for the seed of God in America, and the concern never went out of mind day nor night, until I went to travel there in the love of God.[108]

As with many women who prophesied, Webb experienced what she considered to be an irresistible obligation; her "concern" to travel to a specific place never left her until she fulfilled this calling. In a sense, she believed herself to be chosen for this individual task.

But not all women who felt called to travel as ministers received the approval of their fellow Friends. By the late seventeenth-century, as Quakers began to regulate the meeting structure, they also standardized the process by which Friends could represent them in the mission field. Quakers, both male and female, had to apply for travel certificates, or certificates of removal, which were issued by a monthly meeting that then reported back to the quarterly meeting. Not everyone who applied for a certificate was accepted; some were informed they should remain "quiet" for additional guidance. As for those who obtained certificates, they carried the certificate with them as they traveled, and the clerks of the various meetings they visited would sign the certificate. This was a

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108 Elizabeth Webb, "A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm" (Philadelphia: Joseph Cruikshank, 1781), 34-5. Webb, born in 1663 in Wiltshire, began to preach in her early twenties, after having joined the Quakers at the age of about nineteen. She married Richard Webb of Gloucester, with whom she had at least nine children. Like many of her contemporaries, Webb was introduced to religious dissenters while out in service as a young adult. Spiritual autobiographies often refer to young servants or apprentices going to a religious worship service out of curiosity, or going through a period of religious seeking. As Paul Griffiths has shown for the period just before the Quaker movement began (1560-1640), there was a "youth culture" in early modern England that allowed for servants and apprentices, both male and female, to experience a more ambiguous and flexible life than the structured, hierarchical world of their elders. It is thus not surprising to find a considerable number of female Quaker prophets who were drawn to the movement as young adults living outside their family's home for the first time. For a short biography of Elizabeth Webb, see Frederick Tolles, "Introduction," in Elizabeth Webb, "Memoirs. A Short Account of My Viage into America with Mary Rogers My Companion," eds. Frederick B. Tolles and John Beverly Riggs, MS 975B, Quaker Collection, Haverford College Library, Haverford, PA. For more on youth culture in early modern England see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

momentous shift in the Quaker approach to preaching and prophecy; the spontaneous speech of the early Quakers was becoming regulated.[109] Granted, the system of certificates did not bring an end to inspired prophecy; but it did mean that Quaker leaders now determined which Friends had been given the gift of prophecy and which had not.

In 1687, Elizabeth Collard applied for a certificate through her monthly meeting, stating that "it hath been pretty much before me several times in my mind for some months past to visit Friends in some of the western counties and northward if way was made for me.[110] As with Collard's example, certificate applications usually expressed a sense of calling or ministerial "gift." Travel certificates were not permanent; applicants reapplied if they felt called to make further journeys. Records of Elizabeth Webb indicate that before she moved to Pennsylvania in 1700 she came over on a religious visit in 1697, bringing a certificate from the Quarterly Meeting held at Tetbury in Gloucestershire. Over the next 27 years, she received multiple certificates from monthly meetings in both England and America; some were issued to her only, others to her family as a whole.[111] Eighteenth-century travelers such as Webb who crossed the Atlantic were distinguished from female Quaker ministers who operated closer to home in two ways: they experienced a specific "concern" to travel across the Atlantic for religious service, and the approval of their visit indicated that Friends placed a high level of trust in their ministerial qualifications.[112]

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109 Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers,* 103; Bauman, *Let Your Words Be Few*, 149.

110 Elizabeth Collard, "Letter for a certificate applying to travel in the ministry," 1687, Portfolio 16/38, Society of Friends Library, London.

111 Rebecca Larson, *Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying in the Colonies and Abroad, 1700-1775* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999), 63; Gilbert Cope, "Elizabeth Webb," *The Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* 11 (January 1914): 133-34.

112 Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 64.

Once accepted for travel—whether at the national or transatlantic level—Quaker women encountered a well-developed support network that facilitated their travels. If they were married or had children, their families often became involved in the process. Elizabeth Collard's husband, for example, added a postscript to his wife's letter of application for a certificate "to satisfy Friends that I am freely willing to give up that she may go: as the Lord may order it." In late 1697, Elizabeth Webb's husband accompanied her from their home in Gloucester to Bristol, where they stayed for two weeks until her ship was ready to leave.[113] Several years later, Webb related in a letter to the German Pietist Anton Wilhelm Boehm that her husband granted his consent for the voyage only after some hesitation: "I told my husband that I had a concern on my mind to go to America, and asked him if he could give me up. He said he hoped it would not be required of me; but I told him it was, and that I should not go without his free consent, which seemed a little hard to him at first." However, soon after declaring her intentions to travel, Webb fell sick with a fever from which she feared she would not recover. Her illness made her husband "very willing to give me up, he said, if it were for seven years rather than to have me taken from him forever."[114]

While some women traveled before they married or had children, others left behind young offspring in the care of others. Elizabeth Webb returned from her 18-month trip through the American colonies to find her "mother and children in good health [her]

113 Collard, "Letter for a certificate applying to travel in the ministry," Portfolio 16/38, Society of Friends Library, London; Webb, "Memoirs," MS 975B/1.

114 Webb, "A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm," 36. Boehm (1673–1722) was the leading representative of Halle Pietism in England. He first moved to England to establish a school for German children; later, he became court chaplain for Prince George of Denmark (consort to Queen Anne). For more on Boehm see Daniel L. Brunner, *Halle Pietists in England: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993).

husband being gone to London to the yearly meeting."[115] Webb's contemporary, Elizabeth Rawlinson, was described as "often being made willing to leave an affectionate husband, and several tender children to visit the churches, both in this nation and Ireland several times over." While the sense of eschatological urgency in the prophecies of early Quaker women had dissipated by the end of the century, the sense of a calling to travel in the ministry remained strong. During the first three-quarters of the eighteenth century, Rebecca Larson estimates that 1,300 to 1,500 women ministers were active in the transatlantic Quaker community.[116] The continued activity of female ministers was due in large part to the established infrastructure of family members and Friends who helped out with the familial responsibilities that these women left behind.

Quaker itinerant ministers did not travel alone; most women (and some men) who ventured across the Atlantic or throughout the British Isles did so in pairs. Elizabeth Webb, for example, had multiple traveling companions during her years of visiting Friends on both sides of the Atlantic. Each traveling partner decided where and how long she wanted to travel, which meant that a woman could find herself with a new companion mid-trip. Elizabeth Webb describes how, while in West Jersey, "it came weightily upon my companion Mary Rogers to go to Barbados. So she laid it before a meeting of ministering friends and we were sensible that it was of the Lord." Rogers and Webb made one final trip to Philadelphia, where Webb found a new traveling companion, Elizabeth Lloyd.[117] Similarly, the young Esther Palmer noted that she traveled 520 miles with Susannah Freeborn before they parted ways. Palmer then traveled with Mary Lawson

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115 Webb, "Memoirs," MS 975B/28.

116 "A Testimony from the Monthly Meeting of Lancaster, concerning Elizabeth Rawlinson," Temp MSS 745, TCMD vol 1/325-29, Society of Friends Library, London; Larson, *Daughters of Light,* 63.

117 Larson, *Daughters of Light*, 298; Webb, "Memoirs, MS 975B/13-4.

"after I parted with S[usannah] F[reeborn] in love and unity, she being easy to return home." Lawson became Palmer's traveling companion for 1,685 Miles. But upon leaving the yearly meeting in Philadelphia, Palmer had not even cleared "eastern shore Maryland and Virginia" before she and Mary Banister became traveling companions. Palmer, Freeborn, Lawson, and Banister wrote joint accounts of their travels, with each woman contributing entries. At least in some cases, Friends paired traveling companions in a process that echoed other trends toward the standardization of Quaker practices. For example, Palmer traveled the last leg of her trip through the colonies with Rebecca Owen, who became her companion "by the advice of Friends and the consent of her father."[118]

In addition to the backing of her family and her traveling companion, the female minister who ventured far from home found an extensive network of support from Friends throughout the Atlantic Quaker community. Fellow Quakers supplied room and board to traveling Friends; they also served as guides at times, helping to secure passage or negotiate with third parties. Others made financial contributions to facilitate the journeys of Quakers who could not afford travel costs.[119] It was common for traveling Quakers to stay in the houses of both widows and male heads of households. Frequently, women Quakers who stayed at a Friend's house would hold at least one meeting either in the home or in a nearby meeting-house if one existed.[120] The focus of each leg of the journey was on the meeting itself and on worshiping with other Friends.

In a few instances, though, Friends received hospitality from individuals outside the Quaker community. Both Elizabeth Webb and Esther Palmer indicated that they were

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118 Esther Palmer et al., "Journals of Esther Palmer," MS Box X1/10, f. 6, Society of Friends Library, London. Palmer, who grew up in a Long Island as a Quaker, married Richard Champion of Bristol five years before her death in 1715. See also Gilbert Cope, ed., "The Journals of Esther Palmer, in America," *The Journal of the Friends Historical Society* 6., no. 1-3 (1909): 38-40, 63-71, 133-139.

119 Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism*, *1st ed.,* 360.

120 See for example, Palmer et al., "The Journals of Esther Palmer," MS Box X1/10.

welcomed into the houses of non-Quakers at some point during their journeys, either for worship or for shelter. Webb described how she visited the home of a fellow Quaker after meeting: "his wife was not a friend, yet she desired us to have a meeting in the family, which we had and the love of God was mightily manifested amongst us."[121] Similarly, Esther Palmer and Mary Banister arrived at John Robeson's, where "we had a meeting at his house no Friend but very kind to us we lay there all night." At another point, Isaac Watson hosted a meeting upon Palmer and Banister's arrival, after which Luke Watson provided hospitality for the traveling pair; neither Isaac nor Luke was a Quaker.[122]

Some of this hospitality was no doubt borne out of necessity and attempts at survival. During the time of King Philip's War, for example, Alice Curwen related that Quakers had been "scattered because of the great distress of the Indians' war." She and her husband took refuge at a "Friend's House beyond the river, where there were about two hundred people (some Friends, and others) who were come thither for safety, and had fortified the house very strongly about for fear of these bloody Indians, which had killed two of our Friends within three miles of that place."[123] Quakers did receive support at times from non-Friends. Indeed, from the early days of the movement, Quakers took lists of sympathetic individuals, such as Baptists (another religious minority), who might be willing to serve as contacts along the way.[124]

The majority of time that traveling Quakers were away from home, though, was spent among Friends. More specifically, travelers had significant interactions with other Quaker travelers. The experience of traveling as a Quaker minister—and the honor that it

121 Webb, "Memoirs," MS 975B/15.
122 Palmer et al., "The Journals of Esther Palmer," MS Box X1/10, f. 5.
123 Curwen, "A relation," Vol 70, Box 131/12.
124 Rosemary Moore, *The Light in their Consciences*, 124. Chapter Five will explore further the interactions of various individuals and religious groups in the Atlantic.

brought an individual in the Society of Friends—created what Gregory Ablavsky has argued was a community unto itself, a community of traveling Quaker ministers.[125] The journals of Quakers who traveled in the ministry certainly confirm Ablavsky's contention. Their accounts indicate that they met up with each other throughout their journeys, sometimes traveling together, sometimes worshipping together. The Quaker missionary Thomas Chalkley, for example, remarked in an account of his travels that he and Elizabeth Webb were on the same ship from Virginia to England in 1698/9.[126] Webb moved to Pennsylvania soon afterwards, and Esther Palmer stayed with Webb in 1705 during her trip through the colonies: "we set forward from Philadelphia...and were that day at Providence Meeting and lay that night at Elizabeth Webb's 30 Miles from Philadelphia. Esther Palmer also met up with Samuel Bownas, a prolific traveler and Quaker minister, at Choptanck. John Richardson, who journeyed with Samuel Bownas, recorded traveling with Elizabeth Webb in 1701, stating that he "sometimes fell into company with Elizabeth Webb and Sarah Clement."[127] Through their respective experiences of itinerancy and ministry, these Quakers had great respect for one another; their frequent interactions during their travels suggest that not only did traveling Quakers reinforce the bonds of transatlantic Quakerism, but they also functioned as a community unto themselves.

During their travels, Quaker ministers (both male and female) served as circulators of information. They were what one historian has called "cultural 'carriers'," connecting

125 Gregory Ablavsky, "Empire of Friends: Quaker Travelers in the Eighteenth-Century Transatlantic World" (Davenport College Thesis: Yale University, 2005), ii.

126 Thomas Chalkley, *A Journal or, Historical Account of the Life, Travels and Christian Experiences, of That Antient, Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, Thomas Chalkley*, 2nd ed. (London, 1751), 24.

127 Esther Palmer, "Diary of Esther Palmer," February, 1705, in *The Journal of Esther Palmer and Mary Lawson* (Philadelphia: American Friend Office, 1909), 20; Palmer et. al., "Palmer et al., "Journals of Esther Palmer," MS Box X1/10, f. 3; John Richardson, *The Journals of the lives and travels of Samuel Bownas and John Richardson* (Philadelphia, 1759), Part II, 63-4.

the various parts of the Atlantic by bringing ideas, letters, and printed writings to and from their destinations.[128] A key aid to this process of cultural and information transfer was the printing press, which helped minimize the effects of distance and transatlantic migration on Friends' sense of community. We have already seen in this chapter how central print culture was to the early Quakers; it continued to be so in the second generation. The censorship and editing of the Morning Meeting meant that most Quaker-sponsored publications of the late seventeenth century had an exhortative purpose and were aimed predominantly at Quaker audiences. But Quakers continued to be aware of the larger implications of a society in which print culture served as a forum for religious debate. As important as the printed word was for forging networks and unity among Friends spread out across thousands of miles, it also continued to have a polemical function, allowing Quakers to defend themselves and their beliefs as they engaged in religious debate. For example, the Society of Friends sponsored the spirited and polemical pamphlets of Anne Docwra at the turn of the eighteenth century.[129]

The relatively high literacy rates of Quaker men and women ensured that Quaker publications reached their intended audience. At a certain level, however, literacy became moot. In early modern society, with its blurred lines between oral and print culture, the printed and spoken word existed in a dialectical relationship. Oral speech transferred into

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128 The term "cultural 'carrier'" belongs to Frederick Tolles, who first proposed the idea in his 1960 book, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture,* 3-4. Quaker travelers reinforce the historiographical argument that traversing the Atlantic was not a one-sided venture of leaving England for America. Migrations and communications went westward *and* eastward. On this argument see David Cressy, *Coming Over: Migration and Communication Between England and New England in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), "Preface." See also Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

129 Docwra, a member of the gentry who had studied the law extensively, participated in a pamphlet debate with the disgruntled former Quaker Francis Bugg, her nephew. See Michael Mullett, "Anne Docwra," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

print, and printed works worked their way back into orality. Many Quaker writings, for example, were read aloud in Quaker meetings.[130] It was fitting, then, that the Quakers, who placed great weight on the spontaneous nature of prophecy and the movings of the spirit, turned to the printed word. Print allowed Friends to expand their audiences without compromising the inspired element of Quaker public speech. The printing press became an important tool for countering the centrifugal forces of transatlantic travel.

The sense of community that had been so important to the early Quakers continued into the second generation, but its foundations were changing. Quakers found new ways to build community through the standardization and institutionalization of their movement, and through the forging of human and informational networks that allowed them to create some semblance of unity across thousands of miles. The relationship between three categories—community, prophecy, and election—had been defining to early Quaker female prophets. As the next section argues, the significant changes to one of these categories, notions of community, led to considerable effects on the other two.

Second-Generation Quakers: Prophecy and Election

William Braithwaite summarized the changes to the second generation of Quaker theology and practice by stating that the Quaker movement

> began as a fellowship, thrilling with intense life, with the great purposes of God ringing in its ears and driving it forth to adventurous, if sometimes mistaken service, and later by...the accretions of habit, the stereotyping force of tradition,

130 Adam Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 411; Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers,* 72. Early modernists have debated for a while now how to assess (or whether one *can* assess) literacy rates. More recently, the focus has turned to the implications of literacy. Scholarship has shown that we cannot draw clear lines between oral and print culture in early modern society. Books were circulated and read aloud, and illiteracy did not equate to being cut off from manuscript or print culture; many illiterate people encountered texts. See, for example, David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Fox, *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500-1700.*

> and the pressure of the outside world, it established a strong organization and lost somewhat of its soul."[131]

The intensity, adventure, and "soul" of the early Quakers were all indicative of their fringe status as radical dissenters. But as the community changed in the ways outlined above, prophecy adapted in the face of these changes. Not surprisingly, language of the elect remnant became less useful to Quaker prophets because this language had addressed notions of religious and civic community that were no longer as relevant.

As an interest in eschatology began to wane among late seventeenth-century Quakers, and as the Second Day Morning Meeting began to censor Friends' writings, key changes developed in the nature of Quakers' words—both written and spoken—that we can attribute in large part to a shift in audience. Fewer Quakers issued eschatological warnings that the day of the Lord was at hand. Rather, Friends turned inward toward testimonies, travel journals, and works of instruction aimed at a mostly Quaker audience. There were several notable exceptions of women who continued to issue admonitory and enthusiastic discourses, but for the most part, women who prophesied did so to a friendly audience of fellow Quakers. Those who traveled in the ministry and spoke at various Quaker meetings still believed that they were speaking for God. However, their audience responded differently than did the audiences of their first generation counterparts. The experiences of second-generation Quakers like Elizabeth Webb were a far cry from those of Elizabeth Hooten, whose public rantings in the streets and Congregational churches of Boston resulted in her being repeatedly whipped and chased out of town. Webb continually encountered a friendly reception—even among her non-Quaker visitors. Indeed, her description of a group of intruders on a Quaker meeting shows the extent to

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131 Braithwaite, *The Second Period of Quakerism, 1st. ed.*, 324.

which the tables had been turned; Quakers were now functioning, at least in some instances, as the "establishment:"

> One day we had a meeting at Timicock, near Oyster bay, before the ranters came and made a disturbance some singing and ranting, others howling with hideous noises all in confusion and disorder. The transformation of the devil is such in these ranters that it cannot be imagined nor scarcely credited.[132]

Despite the changes to their audience or the nature of their writing, many Quaker women continued to regard themselves as speaking for God. Testimonies, for example, remained prophetic in nature because Friends continued to believe that God was speaking through the testifier. Prophecy also kept its transient quality, which meant that even traveling ministers—who undertook a journey with the intention of speaking in meetings—did not necessarily speak at every meeting they visited. Elizabeth Webb's traveling partner, Elizabeth Lloyd, experienced a period of silence during her travels. Webb wrote from Virginia that she "had a good meeting at Ann Akehurst's, having no helper in meetings now but the Lord alone, my innocent companion Elizabeth Lloyd having no public testimony."[133]

An emphasis on the Spirit also remained integral to Quaker meetings, even after the considerable restructuring of the meeting system. John Kelsall remarked about the 1711 Yearly Meeting at Builth (Brecknockshire, Wales) that "there was a great power in the meeting, and the tender visitations of the Lord largely and freely extended, and Friends

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132 Webb, "Memoirs," MS 975B/11. In his notes to Webb's manuscript, Frederick Tolles notes that "Many Friends who visited Long Island spoke of their meetings being disturbed by the antics of Ranters—religious enthusiasts, Antinomian in theology, and uninhibitedly emotional in behavior." See Webb, *Memoirs,* MS 975B, n. 49. Kenneth Carroll suggests that at least some of these "Ranters" were actually of Quaker origin and were excluded from the New England Yearly Meeting in 1697 (the year that Webb began her journey) after disrupting it. See Kenneth Carroll, "Singing in the Spirit of Early Quakerism," *Quaker History* 73, no.1 (1984): 11-12.

133 Webb, "Memoirs," MS 975B/19.

were much comforted in the truth and one with another."[134] Some Quaker women even retained patterns of speech employed by their fiery predecessors. Samuel Bownas (b. 1676), recorded an experience at a Quaker meeting during his apprenticeship:

> A young woman, named Anne Wilson, was there and preached; she was very zealous, and fixing my eye upon her, she with a great zeal pointed her finger at me, uttering these words with much power, "A traditional Quaker, thou comest to Meeting as thou went from it (the last time) and goest from it as thou came to it, but art not better for thy coming, what wilt thou do in the end?"[135]

Wilson's zeal strongly influenced the young Bownas, who himself became a Quaker preacher.

But in the aftermath of the move toward structure and censorship, some of the more radical women prophets encountered resistance. The push for censorship spearheaded by leading Friends influenced who was able to get published or speak in meetings. Women continued to claim the right to prophesy, but the question of women's public religious role was clearly on the minds many Quakers—especially as concerned the newly restructured Quaker meeting. There was no open debate on the issue of Quaker women's speaking in meetings, just as there was no one tradition of defending female prophecy.[136] However, Friends often discussed the issue in reference to larger debates surrounding the newly instituted women's meetings. Overall, the debate over women's meetings became as much about defining the role of women as it did about defining the best way to organize the Society of Friends. For example, Anne Whitehead's defense of women's meetings described the role of the Quaker woman in terms that closely resembled that of more hierarchical models of seventeenth-century female piety. Her writing, based heavily

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134 John Kelsall, "An Account of Friends Who Visited Dolobran, 1701-1712," MS Vol. S 193/4.164.

135 Samuel Bownas, *An Account of the life, travels, and Christian experiences in the work of the ministry of Samuel Bownas* (London, 1756), 5.

136 Elaine Hobby, "Handmaids of the Lord and Mothers in Israel: Early Vindications of Quaker Prophecy," 90.

on the Pauline epistles, indicated a departure from the discourse of the early Quakers, who imitated male figures or engaged in dramatic signs such as wearing sackcloth. In response to critics of the new meeting system who worried that women's meetings were imposed and constricting, Whitehead responded that the meetings would allow female Quakers to develop and fulfill their religious duty:

> as the good women of old were helpers in the work of the Gospel, in such things as are proper to us, as visiting and relieving the sick, the poor more especially and destitute amongst us, that they be helped, as also the poor widows, and fatherless orphans, that the distressed in all things be rightly answered, the children at nurse be rightly educated, and well brought up, in order to a future well-being in the creation. Again, we being met together, the elder women to instruct the younger to all wholesome things, loving their own husbands and children, to be discreet, chaste, sober, keeping at home.[137]

Whitehead replaced the model of the aggressive Old Testament prophet with that of a pious woman who had a specific and gendered role to fill in her religious community and the domestic sphere.

As we see from Whitehead's response, debates over female prophecy and the place of women's meetings were multifaceted. Some criticism of the women's meetings, for example, emerged out of concern over the imposition of structure on a religion that had promoted itself as spirit-led. But there was also a contingent of Friends who were against women's meetings because they believed in *limiting* the role of Quaker women, and that giving women leadership over their own meeting was a step in the wrong direction. John Story, who led a schism in the early 1670s over the issue of the new meeting structure, represented this view. According to Elizabeth Stirredge, he reportedly told two women in

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137 Anne Whitehead and Mary Elson, *An epistle for true love, unity, and order in the Church of Christ, against the spirit of discord, disorder and confusion &c. recommended to friends in truth, chiefly for the sake of the weak and unstable minded* (London, 1680), 6-7. Whitehead was a leading administrative figure in post-Restoration Quakerism and in the implementation of women's meetings. She was one of the first Quakers to preach in London, having moved there in 1654 after her convincement. See Bonnelyn Young Kunze, "Anne Whitehead," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Wiltshire to “go home about their business, and wash their dishes, and not go about to preach...that Paul did absolutely forbid women to preach.”[138]

Similarly, Susannah Blandford declared that she was “of the Apostle's mind: 'Let such women (as want instruction, or would usurp authority over the man) keep silence in the church, and give place to man, to whom God hath given preeminence, and made fit for that great work.” She desired only “to preach to my children, friends, neighbors, and servants”—in other words, she emphasized the domestic sphere.[139] Blandford went so far as to upend the status of the prophet as “chosen” by claiming that providence had allowed her *not* to succumb to visions or revelations:

> [I] have seen many fall on the right hand, and on the left, where also I might but have had for my preservation, the cloud over me by day to keep me low, that I might not be exalted, neither by visions, sights, nor revelations; many have been hurt thereby, and cast that on others, which concerned themselves.[140]

In contrast, Susannah Whitrow, the daughter of the prophet Joan Whitrow, lamented that she had for awhile been tempted by “lying vanities,” including a belief against women's speaking in meetings. She believed this fault to be sufficiently grievous that she singled it out when making her deathbed confession: “Oh! how I have been against a woman's speaking in a meeting! But now, whether it comes from man, woman or child, it is precious indeed.”[141] Not all women prophets addressed the issue of female prophecy or speaking in meetings. Most fell somewhere along the middle of the spectrum, continuing to prophesy if they believed themselves so called but often taking on new concerns.

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138 Elizabeth Stirredge, *Strength in weakness manifest* (London, 1711), 73.

139 Blandford, *A small account given forth by one that hath been a traveller for these 40 years in the good old way,* 22-3.

140 Ibid., 12; See also Mack, *Visionary Women*, 392-93. Blandford's response was likely driven, at least in part, by her unhappiness with the Society of Friends. She noted that some called her a "dissenting Quaker,” which she did not desire to be. See Blandford, *A small account given forth by one that hath been a traveller for these 40 years in the good old way,* 14.

141 Rebecca Travers et al., *The Work of God in a Dying Maid: Being a Short Account of the Dealings of the Lord with one Susannah Whitrow* (London, 1677), 19.

As for those who did continue to prophesy or to speak in meetings, their messages changed. The Welsh Quaker John Kelsall summarized the messages of many traveling ministers who visited Dolobran between 1701 and 1712. His accounts reveal that a key focus of testimonies (both among male and female ministers) was to exhort other Quakers to engage in behaviors and spiritual practices that would strengthen the Quaker individual, family, and community of Friends.[142] As Kelsall's records indicate, the organizational program of Fox and other Quaker leaders had reached outlying regions of Quakerism, such as Wales, by the turn of the eighteenth century.

Of particular concern to a number of second-generation Quaker prophets was the future of the movement. The concern over the next generation is a sociological problem inherent in any religious movement that continues into the second generation: how does a religious group encourage in its children the same zeal that brought their parents to the budding movement? Quakers developed a policy of birthright membership before 1700.[143] This obviated some of the problems faced by groups such as the Separatist Puritans, who did not automatically extend full membership to offspring. Nonetheless, numerous Friends, both male and female, feared that the next generation would depart from Quaker principles. Barbara Bevan, herself a young Quaker, traveled with her father from Pennsylvania to Wales, where she pleaded that the younger sort might stay away from pride, vanity, and worldly fashions and customs.[144] Ednah Walker, who visited the Dolobran Meeting in 1710, was "was much concerned that all might prize God's love and

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142 See John Kelsall, "An Account of Friends Who Visited Dolobran, 1701-1712," MS Vol. S 193/4; Kelsall, "Journal of John Kelsall," MS Vol. S 194/1, Society of Friends Library, London.

143 Barbour and Frost, *The Quakers,* 116; J. William Frost, *The Quaker Family in Colonial America: A Portrait of the Society of Friends* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1973), 68. For more on the problem of children and church membership in Separatist churches, see Edmund Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963).

144 "A Short Testimony concerning our Friend Barbara Bevan…," Portfolio 16/61, Society of Friends Library, London.

visitations but more particularly that the young might mind the Lord in their youth." Kelsall noted that Walker "was large on this head, earnestly pressing both parents and children to their respective duties."[145]

By the early eighteenth century, most Quaker women prophets preached in meetings or traveled as established ministers supported by the Society of Friends. Prophets adapted to the realities of a second-generation religious movement that had begun to spread throughout the Atlantic. In one sense, female prophecy did not change. Quaker prophets continued to believe that when they spoke as prophets—whether to the king or to fellow Friends—God spoke a message through them. This fundamental understanding of the prophet's role remained constant. But the female Quaker prophet's audience, message, and understanding of community did evolve. The second-generation prophet who spoke to a community of Friends in meetings throughout the Atlantic world gradually became the norm, and the early prophet who had given warnings and turned to language of election and the elect remnant gradually declined. [146]

Did these changes produce a decline in female Quakers' engagement with the public or aspects of public religious life? Clearly, a comparison of Ednah Walker's appeal to the moral regulation of the young—given to an audience of fellow believers—with Mary Packe's direct address to the king suggests so. However, one limitation of historiography on the second generation of Quaker women is that it has looked at

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145 Kelsall, "An Account of Friends Who Visited Dolobran, 1701-1712," MS 193/4.152.

146 One key exception occurred around the time of the Glorious Revolution, when the relationship between Quaker prophecy and the nation again came to the forefront as women such as Judith Boulbie and Joan Whitrow returned to the language of first-generation Quaker prophets in addressing the king. See, for example, Judith Boulbie, "A Warning and Lamentation over England (1686)," Portfolio 1/38, Society of Friends Library, London; Joan Whitrow, *The humble address of the Widow Whitrowe to King William with a faithful warning to the inhabitants of England to haste and prepare by true repentance and deep humiliation to meet the Lord, before his indignation burns like fire and breaks forth into a mighty flame so that none can quench it* (London, 1689).

women's speech and actions *within* the movement. The implications of changes to female prophecy not only affected Quaker women within their religious communities but also in their interactions with others. As Chapter Four will show, a perspective that looks past the Quakers allows us to see how a few Friends who continued to embrace radical ideas about election and prophecy—ideas that had become too radical for the community of Friends—turned to a new community in the early eighteenth century: the French Prophets. Moreover, as Chapter Five will argue, Quaker women prophets throughout the Atlantic encountered other radical Protestants and found new ways to participate in a religious public sphere. The intersection of Quaker female prophecy, election, and notions of civic and religious community studied in this chapter thus requires not only a chronological study of Friends, but also one that looks past the group's boundaries to address how they interacted with other religious groups.

3

"Cloathed with the Sun:" Ann Bathurst and the Gendering of Prophecy

In his 1725 pamphlet, *The Great Crisis,* cleric Richard Roach noted that the proliferation of female prophets and visionaries like Antoinette Bourignon, Madame de Guyon, and Jane Lead served as a signal that the world had arrived at a time of "preparation" for the second coming of Christ:

> [T]he female sex, as here commissioned and instructed by their Mother Wisdom, will act the reverse to their former temptation [of Eve], and now tempt and draw the male upwards, in order to the recovery of paradise again, even on earth; and that in a far more glorious state than that form whence they fell.[1]

By 1725, Roach had been participating for several decades in an international movement of millenarians who interpreted the prophetic activity of women (including English Philadelphians, French Prophets, and radical German Pietists) as having apocalyptic overtones. In the following chapters, I consider how late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century millenarian prophets both on the Continent and in Britain developed particular understandings of female election and its role in what they perceived to be the end times. This chapter focuses on the Philadelphian Society through a contextualized case study of one of its most active members, Ann Bathurst (c. 1638-1704).

Much of the work concerning the Philadelphians has examined Jane Lead, an internationally-published writer and the leader of the Philadelphian Society. In this chapter, I consider the visionary Ann Bathurst, the second most important woman in the

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1 Richard Roach, *The Great Crisis: Or, The Mystery of the Times and Seasons Unfolded* (London, 1725 [1727]), 97. For more on Roach's beliefs see Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), Chapter 6.

seventeenth-century Philadelphian community.[2] Born c. 1638, she experienced a Puritan upbringing before embracing Behmenism at some point in the 1660s. Her visions, recorded between 1679 and 1696, were replete with gendered language, such as metaphors of conjugality and childbirth. She drew on this feminized language to construct herself as one elected by God and endowed with special spiritual gifts. As such, I argue that her writing brings a new perspective to the scholarly debate over whether the gendering of religious discourse in the late seventeenth century limited the scope of women's religious roles.

Recently, Sarah Apetrei has made a significant contribution to this debate by showing how an anti-Calvinist response to predestined election opened up space for women such as Bathurst to claim religious and apocalyptic vocations as women.[3] My interest here is in election not solely in its Calvinist or anti-Calvinist context, but as constructed more broadly. I focus on how Bathurst evoked a feminized language to suggest that she, as a subjective individual, had been chosen by God to "give birth" spiritually to members who would usher in the new millennium on earth. She claimed through her prophetic visions that she embodied a number of traits of a female apocalyptic figure, namely being an intercessor between God and humans and being "impregnated" with the Holy Spirit. Her example indicates that some of the radical ideas about women and election that were circulating among later Philadelphians (namely

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2 Jane Lead's last name has been written as both "Lead" and "Leade," while Bathurst's first name has been recorded as both "Ann" and "Anne." With a few exceptions, such as Julie Hirst's biography on Lead [Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005)], most recent scholarship uses the respective spellings of "Lead" and "Ann." Accordingly, I have adopted the same practice. See Avra Kouffman, "Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst," *Things of the Spirit: Women Writers Constructing Spirituality,* ed. Kristina K. Groover (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2004), 105n.

3 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 211.

Richard Roach), as well as among other millenarian groups in the early eighteenth century, in fact began much earlier in the Philadelphian movement.

Boehme and the Roots of the Philadelphian Society

The group who became known as the Philadelphians was heavily influenced by Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), the German mystic theologian whose thought, at its root, involved a reworking of concepts of divine gender to include a female aspect.[4] His writings appealed both to intellectuals and to religious radicals. Concepts of transcendence and corporeality were at the heart of Boehme's mysticism. One of his most prominent doctrines was his theory of substance, that God did not create the world *ex nihilo* but rather out of divine being. Boehme believed that humans could return to their primordial state and reunite with the deity through the indwelling of Christ and the agency of Divine Wisdom (or Sophia), the divine feminine. Boehme stressed the concept of the soul's marriage to Christ, a metaphor found in the writings of many mystics. However, he reworked the concept to suggest that the soul's marriage was to Divine Wisdom herself. Boehme believed that for a marriage to take place between the soul and Divine Wisdom, the human soul had to become completely disassociated from all external things through a long and difficult process.[5]

The crux of Boehme's contribution, a reworking of the Godhead (or divinity) to include the female figure of Divine Wisdom, did not go unnoticed. Boehme's influence on seventeenth-century radical religion was international in nature. One of the most

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4 See Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996). The English often spelled Boehme's name as “Behmen,” hence the derivative term of “Behmenists.”

5 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*, 192-93; Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1948), 29-30.

notable persons whom Boehme influenced was the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, who borrowed from Boehme, for example, in her writings on the Garden of Eden. Boehme's works were printed in English translation in successive volumes between 1644 and 1662, a period that overlapped with the sectarian proliferation of the Civil Wars. The English Behmenists not only read Boehme, but they also communicated with some of his continental European disciples, such as radical Pietists.[6]

The initial leader of the English Behmenist movement was John Pordage (1607-1681), a physician and cleric whose religious beliefs were shaped both by Boehme and by the English Antinomians. Pordage had associations with some of the leading Antinomians and religious radicals of the mid seventeenth-century, such as John Everard, Giles Randall, William Everard, and Abiezer Coppe. He first began to lead a prophetic community out of his rectory in Bradfield, Berkshire (c. 1647), but he lost his post in 1654 for denying the divinity of Christ. He stayed at Bradfield for a number of years.[7]

In August 1649, Pordage experienced a visionary revelation of two worlds, or principles, a vision that was likely inspired by Boehme's doctrine of the three principles: dark, light, and the product of the dialectic between the two.[8] Pordage focused in particular on the Behmenist principle of Divine Wisdom, which he called "the root of my life." Wisdom, or the Virgin Sophia, functioned in Pordage's writings as a divine reality

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6 Alexander MacEwen, *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), 85-6; William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism, 2nd ed.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 40; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 16.

7 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 106; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 192. Among those who joined Pordage's circle at Bradfield was the Civil War prophet Elizabeth Poole, a former Baptist whom the Council of Officers consulted as a prophet in the months leading up to King Charles' execution. See Manfred Brod, "Elizabeth Poole," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography,* eds. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

8 Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 37; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 193.

conceived by the Trinity. Pordage identified her (at various points) with each member of the Trinity, and her essential quality was a passivity characterized by virginity and purity.[9]

Pordage began to develop a fledgling community that focused on the figure of Divine Wisdom and that emphasized direct spiritual experience and visions.[10] Behmenist theosophy was intensely individual and experiential,[11] and visions were a defining characteristic of Pordage's circle just as they had been for Boehme. Boehme, Pordage, and Lead, for example, all had a defining spiritual experience or vision that could be compared to the Calvinist moment of conversion or the Quaker moment of convincement. In 1600, Boehme had a vision that he believed gave him insight into the ordering of the world and its relationship to God.[12] Pordage's 1649 vision held much the same function, serving as a point from which he began a new life whose aim was to leave behind the worldly externals in order to become worthy of being Divine Wisdom's bridegroom. As for Jane Lead, Divine Wisdom appeared to her in a vision in 1670: "Behold, I am God's eternal Virgin Wisdom...I am to unseal the treasures of God's deep wisdom unto thee, and will be as Rebecca was unto Jacob, a true natural mother; for out of my womb thou shalt be brought forth after the manner of a Spirit, conceived and born again."[13] As we see from Lead's words, these initial experiences were not merely the first vision of many, but rather a transforming experience that led to the individual's rebirth as

9 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 106; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 194.
10 Kouffman, "Reflections on the Sacred; The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst," 94.
11 Arthur Versluis, *Wisdom's Child: A Christian Esoteric Tradition* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1999), 56.
12 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 4.
13 Jane Lead, *A Fountain of gardens watered by the rivers of divine pleasure, vol. 1* (London, 1696), 17-8.

a visionary. These experiences marked the recipient as one chosen to receive great spiritual insight.

After his initial vision, Pordage began to attract a community of fellow Behmenists, some of whom also began to experience revelations and visions. At some point after the Restoration, Pordage moved to London, where Jane Lead first met his group.[14] The role of Lead, who eventually lived with Pordage and his wife for several years, remains somewhat unclear. According to Nils Thune, Lead was the *de facto* leading figure among the London Behmenists even before Pordage died in 1681. Brian Gibbons, however, disputes this view. He notes that Pordage's private congregation included about one hundred members in 1670, but that after the death of Pordage it declined to only three: Lead and Pordage's brother and sister in-law.[15] Gibbons' claim would be more convincing if he pointed to specific evidence to support it. What we do know is that Lead emerged as the clear leader of the English Behmenists after Pordage's death. In 1694, Lead, Ann Bathurst, and others formed the group that would officially become known as the Philadelphian Society for the Advancement of Piety and Divine Philosophy.[16]

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14 Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 51; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 107. Lead gives the date of her "first acquaintance" with Pordage as 1663 (Jane Lead, "Preface," in John Pordage, *Theologica Mystica* (London, 1683), 2.) Francis Lee, however, wrote in a letter to Henry Dodwell that Pordage and Lead's "familiar friendship" began in August 1673 or 1674, "(the date differently through mistake entered in two places) that they first agreed to wait together in prayer and pure dedication." See Lee, "Reply to Henry Dodwell," 9 April 1699, in Christopher Walton, ed., *Notes and Materials for an Adequate Biography of…William Law* (London, 1854), 203.

15 Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 62, 71; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 144.

16 While the Philadelphian Society did not take its official title until 1694, the English Behmenists under the leadership of Pordage and Lead are sometimes referred to in scholarship as "the Philadelphians." I have chosen to adopt this practice to avoid confusion and to emphasize the group's continuity.

The Philadelphians took their name from the eschatological church mentioned in the third chapter of Revelation, a church described as having been favored by God.[17] The society was founded by Lead with the help of Richard Roach, Francis Lee (Lead's son in-law), and Bathurst. The group rejected the idea that they were a church, calling themselves a "society" and not discouraging participation in the Anglican Church. Richard Roach, for example, compared the Philadelphians with the Essenes, who were not a sect or church but, rather, transcended institutions.[18] Roach even continued to maintain his career as an Anglican clergyman. Appointed rector of St. Augustine, Hackney, he remained there until his death at age 68 in 1730.[19] In his correspondence, he indicated that he saw no conflict between his own spiritual practices as a Philadelphian and his responsibilities as an Anglican cleric, sometimes even performing both within the same day.[20]

More descriptively, the Philadelphians referred to themselves as "the Religious Society for the Reformation of Manners, for the Advancement of a Heroical Christian Piety, and Universal Love and Peace Towards All." This title suggests the influence of the Reformation of Manners, which included both Religious Societies (starting from the 1670s) and Societies for the Reformation of Manners (starting from the 1690s).[21] Other religious groups of this period who emphasized the voluntary nature of their association also employed the term society—hence the Society of Friends and the Society for the

17 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 196.

18 Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2002), 523; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 201.

19 Brian J. Gibbons, "Richard Roach," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

20 See for example, "Letter from Richard Roach to a Friend," 8 May 1696, Papers of Richard Roach, Rawlinson MSS. D., 832/63-4, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

21 For an overview of these two groups see Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), Chapter 4.

Propagation of the Gospel. Moreover, for several months in 1697 the Philadelphians published the *Theosophical Transactions of the Royal Society,* a periodical that clearly took inspiration from the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society.*[22]

Philadelphian worship services were similar to Quaker meetings. They opened with prayer and scripture readings, followed by a period of silence during which anyone who was inspired might speak. The group initially met at a house provided for Lead by a German nobleman, Baron von Knyphausen, who had previously lent his support to Antoinette Bourignon.[23] Later, the Philadelphians held meetings at Baldwins Gardens (Bathurst's residence), Clerkenwell and Hungerford Market near Charing Cross, and several locations in central East London.[24]

Scholarship on the English Behmenists from their arrival in London in the 1660s until the initiation of the Philadelphian Society in 1694 has remained patchy. Nils Thune's published dissertation, printed in English translation in 1948, has served as the seminal work on English Behmenism. In the past fifteen years, Brian Gibbons has considered the role of gender in Behmenist mysticism, while Julie Hirst has studied Lead from a biographical standpoint. Paula McDowell's article on the Philadelphian Society in

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22 See Chapter 5 of this dissertation for more on the *Theosophical Transactions*.

23 Baron von Knyphausen was one of Bourignon's main supporters, and he housed the religious community associated with Bourignon before his falling out with her. For more on his role in radical religious circles see Markus Matthias, "'*Preußisches' Beamtentum mit radikalpietistischer 'Privatreligion': Dodo II. von Innhausen und Knyphausen (1641–1698),*" in *Der Radikale Pietismus. Zwischenbilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung*, eds. Wolfgang Breul, Marcus Meier, and Lothar Vogel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2010), 189-209.

24 Hillel Schwartz, Th*e French Prophets in England: A Social History of a Millenarian Group in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 47; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 196. While the Philadelphian service resembled the Quaker meeting in certain aspects, English Quakers and Philadelphians chose to emphasize their differences. The Quakers were a large and organized group by the time the Philadelphians began to publish their writings, and Friends did not find the comparisons drawn between them and the radical Philadelphians to be helpful to their public image. Philadelphians, in turn, saw the Quakers as affected. See Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," 526-27.

Enlightenment England and Donald Durnbaugh's essay on Jane Lead and the Philadelphians are important for placing the Philadelphians within the context of wider European ideas and traditions. [25] Most recently (2010), Sarah Apetrei's book on women, feminism, and religion in early Enlightenment England has addressed the radical implications of the role of women in the early eighteenth-century Philadelphian Society.[26]

As the publication date of Apetrei's monograph illustrates, much of the secondary literature on English Behmenism and the Philadelphians has emerged within the past fifteen years. It has tended to focus on Jane Lead, due to her status as an internationally published author whose works influenced groups ranging from eighteenth-century German Pietists to twentieth-century Pentecostals.[27] Ann Bathurst has received considerably less attention, with the exception of a chapter in Apetrei's book. Although Bathurst is mentioned, analyzed, or excerpted briefly in a number of works, her spiritual diary—which spanned over seventeen years and hundreds of pages—remains largely untapped by scholars. Even Avra Kouffman, in her essay on the diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst, notes that she was able to study only a portion of Bathurt's entries.[28] I attempt to correct this oversight through my study of prophecy and election in Ann Bathurst's writing. Bathurst served as an important leader in Pordage's London circle from the early days of the movement. Her diary gives insight into the Philadelphian movement in the years when Lead led the movement and, more specifically, into late seventeenth-century female millenarianism in its Behmenist context.

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25 See Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians*; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought;* Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic*; McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society;" Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Jane Ward Leade (1624-1704) and the Philadelphians," in *The Pietist Theologians,* ed. Carter Lindberg (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005), 128-146.

26 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*.

27 Ibid*,* 188.

28 Kouffman, "Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst," 106n.

Ann Bathurst, c. 1638-1704: Her Background

Little is known about Ann Bathurst's early life, aside from what she offers in the first pages of her diary. Born c. 1638, she grew up in a religious family, which included a sister with whom she was close. As a young adult, Bathurst married and had several children. She gave birth to at least one daughter and three sons, several of whom died before reaching adulthood.[29]

By age forty, Bathurst was associated with Pordage, and she was a widow. This is an important biographical point. Lead, too, was widowed, and she faced substantial financial hardships that played a role in her decision to move in with Pordage and his wife—a decision that her former brother in-law criticized.[30] We do not know the financial situation of Bathurst upon her husband's death, but her widowhood likely had considerable influence both on her physical and spiritual life. It was not uncommon for women who had lost their husbands to move in with other widows or kin or to take in lodgers or employees.[31] Bathurst took lodgings in the house of Joanna Oxenbridge, a widow whose house in Baldwins Gardens became a Behmenist meeting place for many years; there is some indication that Bathurst also lived with Pordage for a while.[32]

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29 Ann Bathurst, *Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions, vol. 1*, Rawlinson MSS D., 1262/3, 308-09, Bodleian Library, Oxford; Ann Bathurst, *Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions, vol. 2,* Rawlinson MSS D., 1263/13, 592, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Désirée Hirst claims that Bathurst was born Ann Gammon in 1610. However, this is incorrect, as the Ann Bathurst considered in this chapter was about forty at the time she began to write her diary in 1679. See Hirst, *Hidden Riches: Traditional Symbolism from the Renaissance to Blake* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), 104n.

30 Kouffman, "Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst," 98.

31 B. S. Capp, *When Gossips Meet: Women, Family, and Neighbourhood in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 36.

32 Richard Roach, "An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Philadelphian Society," Rawl. MSS D., 833/65;, Bodleian Library, Oxford; see also Rawlinson MSS D., 1338, postscript, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

The English widow differed from her continental counterpart in two important ways. First, English tradition allowed widows to head their own households. Usually, English widows only went to live with their married children in cases of necessity, and remarriage was not encouraged.[33] Second, as Protestants, English widows did not have the option to become a lay *devota* or to retire to a convent. In some ways, then, English widows had more opportunities for independence than their continental counterparts, but they also had fewer options. Bathurst represents a woman caught in this system. Her Catholic counterparts might likely have made their way to a religious order. Bathurst, however, fulfilled her religious inclinations through joining the community of Philadelphians.

Bathurst's diary spans the years from 1679 until 1696, during which time she was affiliated with Pordage and then with Lead. [34] In 1697, when the Philadelphian Society began a campaign to advertise itself through publications, the group grew considerably, even gaining attention at the transnational level. By this time, Bathurst was “aged and sickly,” to the point that she was no longer able to bear large crowds; it was at this time that the Philadelphians added additional meetings at Hungerford Market and Westmorland House. However, Bathurst remained an important figure in the movement until she died (a few months after Lead) in 1704. After Lead's death, Richard Roach noted that Joanna Oxenbridge and Ann Bathurst were “two principal persons in carrying on the spiritual work: and both enlightened persons and both having great and wonderful

33 Barbara J. Todd, “The Virtuous Widow in Protestant England,” in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (eds. Sandra Cavallo and Lyndan Warner (New York: Longman, 1999), 66-7.

34 Bathurst wrote frequently, sometimes as often as on consecutive days. But she also skipped months at a time. Entries exist for all years between 1679 and 1696, however.

experiences and manifestations from the heavenly word."[35] Roach felt an obligation to relocate to Baldwins Gardens after Bathurst's death to fill the void left by her absence. He even indicated that Lead may have seen Bathurst as her potential successor.[36]

Bathurst's diary offers much clearer insight into her spiritual life than it does her physical one, and her writings form a spiritual autobiography that drew—especially in the opening pages—on the tradition of the Puritan conversion narrative. Bathurst placed a description of her experiences prior to 1679 at the beginning of her diary. We learn that she grew up in a household that identified with at least some Puritan practices. She stressed more than once that she was "taught" when young, especially concerning matters such as prayer. She remarked that she was "much was suck'd in from pious parents and religious education, whereby both by precept and example" she learned to pray.[37]

Bathurst's heightened spiritual experiences began early in life. From the age of ten, she was bothered by a sense of her sinfulness, "as if all my life had been a continued act of sin."[38] At age eighteen, she underwent her first significant spiritual crisis, which in many ways reflected the typical crisis found in Protestant conversion narratives. Bathurst's wrote how, "seeing the strict practice of some about me, it awakened in me a serious search how it was with my soul, to what end I was born, and to what end I ought to live." Attempting to pray, she found herself unable to do so. Eventually, like a number of her contemporaries, Bathurst's spiritual despair led to physical sickness. She feared she would die having "no assurance of a better life." Visitors to her sickbed tried to encourage her by reminding her that she had been raised in sobriety and knew nothing

35 Rawl. MSS D., 833/65-6.
36 Ibid., 28, 57; Sylvia Bowerbank, "Ann Bathurst," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.
37 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/2.
38 Ibid.

"of the vanities that most walked in." But no encouragement could quell her fears. Like Sarah Wight, she was obsessed with her sinfulness: "all my sins were laid before me...yet not one particular sin remembered, but that all my whole life was like one act of sin, and that hell was to receive me." As with many conversion narratives, the resolution of Bathurst's crisis came from her perception of receiving grace: "but whither God was willing to save me, this I feared...then it was answered, if [God] was not as willing as well as able, none could have been saved; for it is only of free grace that we are saved." Bathurst believed that God told her, "I have pardoned thy sins freely and will remember them no more;" she interpreted this as a confirmation of her salvation, and her spiritual (and physical) illness resolved.[39]

Up to this point, Bathurst's narrative has read like that of many of her Puritan contemporaries: serious childhood religious impressions followed by a hardness of heart, an awakening of religious conscience, a period of attempted self-exertion that led to more despair, which finally resulted in repentance and reconciliation. However, at this point Bathurst's narrative took a new direction. Whereas the typical Puritan or Nonconformist conversion narrative ended with the author's release from guilt and gratitude for undeserved mercy, Bathurst received only temporary comfort from her knowledge of grace.[40] Instead, she entered into another period of despair.

Ten or eleven years after her first crisis, in the thirtieth year of her life, Bathurst "was taken out of the peace and rest, and immediately put into a wilderness to be tempted." She indicated that she recognized the exact minute of this experience, which took place on 3 April 1667. This period of temptation lasted for more than ten years,

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39 Ibid., 2-4.

40 D. Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Evangelical Conversion Narrative: Spiritual Autobiography in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 51-2.

during which time she experienced visions of the temptations that she would undergo before they happened. According to Bathurst, eleven years after these temptations began, on 23 June 1678, "a year of Jubilee was proclaimed, and prophesied to me by an angel or spirit in a dream or vision; and after confirmed by another angel in such a like dream." This "year of Jubilee" began on 23 December 1678.[41] A few weeks later, Bathurst began to document her visions in detail.[42]

Bathurst's Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions

In choosing to reveal her visions through the format of a diary, Bathurst was following an established practice among her religious community. Pordage's diary from the year 1675 described his spiritual regeneration; it was published under the title *Sophia.*[43] Lead kept a diary of her spiritual revelations from 1670 to 1686, which she published in two parts beginning in 1696 under the title *A Fountain of Gardens Watered by the Rivers of Divine Pleasure*. Bathurst's diary invoked many of the elements of Lead's. As Avra Kouffman has pointed out, Bathurst borrowed heavily from Lead for the more mystical elements of her visions. She and Lead both believed, for example, that certain mystic states were not compatible with the corporeal nature; one had to be enveloped by an "aerial body" to have such mystical experiences. Similarly, both women

41 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/6-7.

42 I have suggested in previous chapters that some women, especially Calvinists such as Sarah Wight, displaced concerns over their salvation by embracing the idea that their prophetic calling served as a sign that they were among God's elect. This same pattern might apply to Bathurst. She resolved her spiritual crisis not through a perceived confirmation of her salvation, but rather through the idea that she had been chosen to receive prophecies and visions. Sarah Apetrei makes a similar point, noting that Bathurst's visions led her to a revised understanding of God's nature. Bathurst became, in her own words, "undeceived" of the doctrine of election. See Apetrei *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 212.

43 Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 49.

described states of spiritual exaltation that were only available only some people.[44] Like Lead, Bathurst sometimes explained her visions through visual representations, such as diagrams or drawings accompanied by explanations. During a particularly mystical phase of her writing (the early 1680s), Bathurst drew a diagram of four concentric circles to represent different essences. The outermost circle was labeled "The Chaos;" the second circle was "The One Element or White Mist;" the third circle was "The Eternal Majestic Stillness;" and the innermost circle was "The Deity."[45]

Bathurst drew heavily on the example of Lead in both the format and content of her documented visions. Her diary was not, however, a mere pastiche. One key difference between the two diaries was their intended audience. When Lead published her spiritual diary in 1696, the Philadelphian Society was one year into its short-lived mission to proclaim their message to the world through publications and open meetings. This mission began (not coincidentally) the same year as the lapse of the Licensing Act, which controlled and censored the printed word. Between 1695 and 1704, the Philadelphians published a number of pamphlets and books, including several authored by Lead. Lead's *Fountain of Gardens,* the most important of these publications, was intended for a broad audience—anyone who would read it.[46]

Lead also exuded considerable confidence about her status as a prophet; her writing expressed a sense of authority and communicated her self-proclaimed expertise

44 Kouffman, "Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst," 101.
45 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/170.
46 See McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," 516, 519. In 1695, the Philadelphians decided to hold "public meetings." They ended these meetings in 1703, unhappy with how their society had been received. The following year, with the death of Lead, the rate of Philadelphian publications dropped precipitously. Much of Lead's published material was funded by German Behmenists. The international focus of the Philadelphian movement in its later years is addressed further in Chapter Five.

on the subject of religion.[47] Stating her intentions in issuing the *Fountain of Gardens,* she wrote: “I am under an Obligation to discharge my Trust and Stewardship herein: this that is here publish'd, not having been given for a *Private* Use, but for an *Universal* Advance into deeper and higher *Manifestations* of the Mind of God.”[48] She placed the potential significance of her writing on a grand scale. While Lead was clearly the most important leader of the Philadelphian movement during this time, her diary went through layers of editing as it was published. Bathurst did not have the sense of leadership in her authorial voice that we see in Lead’s journal, but because of this we see in her writing more of an intense focus on the self and on her personal religious experiences. Her visions offer a glimpse into the Philadelphian movement and into the influences and preoccupations of a radical Protestant living in late seventeenth-century London.

Bathurst, while not writing with the sense of authority of Lead, did intend others to benefit from her writing. She indicated in the introduction to her diary that, though she concealed God's “teachings and conduct for many years,” she later realized “what use it might be of for my self and others.” Using the phrasing of many early modern women who penned religious writings, Bathurst noted that she “was much pressed in spirit” to write down her visions, as well as having been “solicited by some friends so to do for the better reception of what further manifestations the Lord now in these later days has made declared unto me (not for myself only, but others also).”[49] Such a statement stands out: while diary-keeping was relatively common among religious women in Stuart England, public consumption of women's diaries was not.[50]

47 See Kouffman, “Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst,” 91.
48 Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens*, “The Epistle of the Author.”
49 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/1.
50 Kouffman, “Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst,” 90-1.

Several individuals copied Bathurst's journal entries from 1679 into a manuscript that is now housed at the Bodleian, indicating that at least some portions of her journal were recopied for circulation.[51] Harold Love, who has given the term "scribal publication" to this phenomenon of copying and circulating manuscript writing, argues that scribal publication remained an important way to circulate information during the seventeenth century, especially within specific circles or communities.[52] Bathurst's account of her visions was likely read among the Philadelphian community, its intended audience.

Indeed, Bathurst addressed her audience directly at times: "My Friends, I sometimes write that which I dare not review whilst the Spirit of wine is upon me, but hast[e] it down in writing to empty my full soul." At another point, she commented that her writing would only be understood by those guided by the same spirit as she had: "For I have told you plain, but you will not believe that I mean as I say, unless you have the same witness of the spirit in your own soul."[53] Thus, it is important to note the intended audience of Bathurst's writing. While she recorded her personal spiritual experiences, her goal in documenting them was not only to create "a lively memory of what is brought to me," but also to direct and enlighten her reader. As she told her readers, "count not (my Friends) what I write hard things, or that it was not lawful to utter, wait but a while and you shall understand, that the promise is a fulfilling so that they which run may read."[54] Toward the late 1680s, in particular, Bathurst used terms such as "we" or "my friends" with increasing frequency, yet another indication that she was writing to her religious

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51 See Rawl. MSS D., 1338.

52 See Harold Love, *Scribal Publication in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993).

53 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/527; Rawl. MSS D., 1263/56.

54 Rawl. MSS D., 1263/3; Rawl. MSS D., 1262/530.

community.[55] Importantly, though, while Bathurst stressed that she hoped her writing would benefit others spiritually, her writing was not proselytical.[56] She did not see herself as one sent to warn the “people;” she was not like the Quaker or Fifth Monarchist prophets who saw their role as that of gathering others into God's remnant.

Unlike Lead, Bathurst had no editor or publisher. Perhaps because her readership was restricted to her religious community, Bathurst's writings remained more limited in scope than did Lead's. The pronoun “I” appears much more frequently in her writing. Bathurst's subjective perspective produced less impact; she did not contribute to the formation of the Philadelphian Society and its beliefs in the way that Lead did. However, it is this intense focus on the self that allows us considerable insight both into her self-construction as a female prophet and into her beliefs about her election.

Bathurst as a Prophet

Bathurst's understanding of herself as a prophet was complex and at times contradictory. Bathurst was a mystic, but she was also a millenarian. She believed that the Philadelphian community represented a group of worshippers who would play a special role in ushering in the new Church. Here, then, we see one of the key tensions that shaped Bathurst's discourse. Even though her visions were intensely personal and focused on direct spiritual experience, she operated (and lived her daily life) within the framework of a religious community that greatly informed her writing. This section looks at the influences and tensions that shaped Bathurst's prophetic discourse.

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55 See, for example, Rawl. MSS D., 1262/268.

56 In general, the Philadelphians were not proselytizers. However, by the late seventeenth-century they became increasingly interested in the potential of the printing press to spread their message.

Most of the prophets in this study left behind considerably shorter records, so we can glean from Bathurst's writings an especially clear sense of how she saw herself as a prophet. For Bathurst, divine inspiration could take on various forms, “for the Spirit brings forth in diverse ways, and the Spirit's birth is in diverse operations; sometimes in a word of power to instruct, sometimes in a word of revelation, sometimes the Spirit operates in a word of healing.” She used a number of terms to describe her experiences, such as “transportation” and, more frequently, “manifestation(s).”[57] These manifestations ranged from visions of divine figures, such as Christ, to more abstract entities such as “redeeming love.”[58]

Bathurst also referred to herself as a conduit for prophecy. For Bathurst, prophecy and manifestations both came through the vehicle of the written word. In an entry dated 30 April 1685, she remarked: “[S]ometimes I feel like a spirit of prophecy in me, and it prophesies saying: The spirit of the Lord is upon me, and saith, 'write'; then I say, 'what shall I write'?” Throughout her diary, she returned to the idea that she was literally “pressed” to write down the prophecies she received. The act of writing—or not writing—was beyond her control:

> Sometimes I think surely I have stopped my pen, and not let it come forth, with that it should have uttered: But Lord thou hast said our way shall be so plain, that though fools yet shall not err. Therefore I wait for the guidance of thy spirit, when to write and when sometimes to be silent.[59]

Like many of her predecessors and contemporaries, Bathurst implied that it was not *she* who was the author of her prophetic discourse.

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57 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/517, 281, 1, 9, 455, 527.
58 Ibid., 403, 527.
59 Ibid., 248, 455, 530, 553-54.

When referring to her spiritual experiences, Bathurst most often employed the term “visions.” They often occurred “at night after I was abed, (as for the most part then are the sweetest incomes).”[60] Whereas Jane Lead specifically stated that “God's eternal Virgin-Wisdom” visited her and promised to show her many visions, the source of Bathurst's visions often remained nebulous.[61] The focus of Bathurst was less on the source of the vision and more on the vision itself. Her visions tended to follow a pattern. She would have a vision of a figure, such as Christ, and she would make requests to that figure. Her questions were always answered, and her dreams and visions had resolution.[62]

Moreover, Bathurst's visions were highly detailed and specific. For example, in a vision from 12 August 1679, she gave detailed physical descriptions of biblical patriarchs, prophets, and apostles:

> Abraham was a large and tall man, long visage, dark eyes, dark brown hair. Isaac was like him, but not so tall nor big, though a tall man, flagging brown hair. Abraham looked the elder, but neither looked old: Jacob looked young, also, a short fat man of a middling stature, fat round visage, light hair, gray eyes...Moses was as tall or taller than Abraham, but a little fuller set, and fuller face: Aaron a lesser man, sharper countenance. ...Then I desired to see Jeremiah, who was sanctified from the womb, he was a comely person in face, and in shape, somewhat full stature, lightish brown hair. Then I desired to see Isaiah the prophet, who (as 'tis said) was sawn asunder with a wooden saw. He had a reddish brown hair. Then I saw St. John the Divine, having a sweet countenance. They were in the glory of God, as in a cloud, which greatly ravished me, that God was pleased to condescend to answer me. [63]

By describing her vision in such detail, she likely intended to lend veracity to her account and show how favored she was by God to have received such insight.

60 Ibid., 25. Lead's visions also often occurred at night. Thune points out the connection between sleeplessness and religious revelations. See Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 201.
61 Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens, vol. 1,* 18.
62 For example, see Rawl. MSS D., 1262/15.
63 Ibid., 37.

Bathurst had a notable level of awareness about the debates and conversations going on around her. In 1694, for example, she made a reference to Bishop Ussher (1581–1656), the former Church of Ireland archbishop, citing that "there be many that stay in the outward court as Bishop Usher [sic] terms it, which are outward formal professors, yet have not entered with the holy place worshiping from the heart and life in the soul."[64] A posthumous publication of Ussher's prophecy, issued in 1681, included his commentary on the outward court and may have been Bathurst's source.[65] While Bathurst did not express anti-Catholic sentiments in her own writing, the anti-Jacobean climate of late seventeenth-century England adapted and popularized Ussher's writings to address the threat of Catholic rule, and his pamphlet was familiar to many during the time in which Bathurst wrote.[66] Bathurst was also influenced by Quaker ideas, and especially the Quaker concept of the Light, or inward light. She referred to the "Light" several times; in 1679, she made a direct reference to the "inward light," a term commonly found in Quaker writing.[67]

Another influence on Bathurst's prophecy and visions was Behmenism and its interpretations of alchemy and the Kabbalah. Boehme's vocabulary had some alchemical influences, and Lead also drew on alchemical terms to describe how the outer shell of flesh and sin could be transformed into an inner realization of the divine.[68] Bathurst often linked gold figures and objects with descriptions of the divine. Her writing also pointed to other traces of spiritual alchemy, including her interest in the sun and moon and her

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64 Rawl. MSS D., 1263/34.

65 James Ussher, *Bishop Ushers second prophesie which he delivered to his daughter on his sick-bed wherein is contained divers prophetick sayings for the years 1680, 1681, 1682, 1683, 1684, which were by him predicted for the said years* (London, 1681), 2, 4.

66 Alan Ford, "James Ussher (1581-1656)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

67 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/57.

68 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 75; Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic,* 55.

frequent use of nuptial imagery. However, Bathurst's use of alchemical terms did not indicate that she had a great familiarity with the subject; rather, she likely used these terms because they were widely found in the literature of the Behmenists with whom she associated. The same could be said of Bathurst's interest in the Kabbalah. She took these influences from the writings of her associates.[69]

Bathurst's originality was in how she applied Behmenist principles to herself, as an individual. Because Bathurst's writing centered on the self, it is perhaps not surprising that one of the most central and recurring features of her visions was a focus on her body and its relation to her soul. Bathurst expressed the idea that there was an inward and an outward self. Unlike some mystics, however, she did not ignore the outward. Toward the end of her diary, in 1692, Bathurst mused: “Shall my inward man adorn the outward that my face may shine to shew to others I have been with God as Moses's did?”[70] Bathurst also suggested that the inward could instruct the outward: “I have had many seeming natural pains on my body, my outward man, to bring the knowledge of the inward to the outward; and for the inward to penetrate through the outward, with living strength and vigour, warm flame, living powers and divine virtue that flowers from the inward free.” She referred to the outward both as a figure and a pattern of the inward.[71] As Avra Kouffman points out, both Lead and Bathurst drew attention to their bodies while at the same time they attempted to transcend them.[72] For Bathurst, the goal was for the outward to be instructed by the inward and molded into the inward's likeness.

69 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 69. English Behmenism included elements from the Jewish mystical tradition of the Kabbalah.
70 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/488.
71 Ibid., 457, 233, 375.
72 Kouffman, “Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst,” 103.

Because the outward and inward were so closely connected, inward struggles often manifested themselves in physical reactions. In several entries, Bathurst described being drunk or "sick of [with] love," a phrase that she adapted from the Song of Solomon ("as the Spouse sayth in the Canticles").[73] In 1692, for example, she wrote that she "drank abundantly, and now I am sick of love, but no words are given to utter because I have drunk of the wine of the Kingdom. O how sick am I as one ready to die, sick in spirit, sick in body as if a bodily sickness had seized me."[74] For Bathurst, the body and spirit were connected; intense spiritual experiences manifested themselves in the body. Indeed, she focused on the body to a greater extent than Lead did.

In at least one respect, Bathurst's conception of the body in her visions anticipated later language. Bathurst's visions expressed a focus on evisceration that would appear in spiritual narratives of the eighteenth century. According to Susan Juster, post-Enlightenment evangelical memoirs included records of dreams and spiritual night-terrors that displayed a fear of evisceration. Juster sees this fear as part of the attempt to repress the self or escape one's body in order to focus on the visionary realm. She gives the example of a nineteenth-century black Shaker, Rebecca Jackson, who dreamed that that a Methodist preacher cut her chest open in the form of a cross "and took all my bowels out and laid them on the floor by my right side."[75] In an entry dated 14 September 1679, Bathurst recorded a vision in which she was eviscerated by Christ. She wrote the following:

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73 Rawl. MSS D., 1263/89. Bathurst also referenced the biblical example of "Hannah, whom Eli thought was drunk, but who was in fact praying 'for a Samuel, for a prophet of the Lord.'" See Rawl. MSS D., 1262/356.

74 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/501.

75 Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 109.

> He opened my stomach and bowels, and filled them as with part of his shady presence, and cloudy influences, and the other part of him being over me, for some time, and after looked very searchingly, and caused me to remember that place...After he took out my bowels, renewing and cleansing them, and cast out the small dark spirits which were as the spawn of the great one, that was cast out before, and I desired, and he commanded them to depart to their center of darkness: and when He had cleansed my bowels, he took oil rubbing them with it between his hands; which shady hands I saw, and himself like a shady figure: having rubbed them and oiled them a second time, he looked to see if they were so clear as to be seen through; and took the end of one up, and cruet of oil being by him, he poured it in till all the outside of the bowels were oiled also: and I cried out, "O thou anointed of the Father! Art thou come to anoint me with this precious garden oil and sweet odors? not my bowels only, but my head and my hands."[76]

For Bathurst, however, this dream was not one of violence, a night-terror like the one that caused Jackson to awake in fright.[77] It was one of anointing and election. The vision continued with Bathurst's spleen, lungs, and heart being cleansed, as well. Each organ's special function (as understood in a seventeenth-century anatomical sense) had spiritual significance. Her spleen—thought to contribute to the regulation of emotions—was "emptied and cleansed, with oil poured into it," for the purpose that she might have "no wrath, nor malice, nor passion" left in her.[78] The breath in her lungs became the breath of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the physical body became the locus of Bathurst's spiritual experience. But while her body was transformed in this vision, she did not seek to repress or escape it.

76 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/51-2.

77 For more on Jackson, see Rebecca Cox Jackson, *Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson, Black Visionary, Shaker Eldress*, ed. Jean McMahon Humez (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1981), 94-5.

78 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/52-3.

Bathurst did, however, also have out-of-body experiences in her visions.[79] Multiple times, she wrote about her "angel," a separate entity that represented her spiritual self. Angels were a common theme in Behmenist and Philadelphian literature. Böhme and Lead, for example, both believed that there was an angelic world or order in between humans and God.[80] Lead's diary contains numerous references to angels as messengers, guardians, and guides. What we see in Bathurst's writing, however, are references to her body as having a purified, more spiritually whole counterpart called an "angel." That Bathurst referred to this point over and over again points once more to how her diary maintained a strong focus on the self and on personal experience. In June 1679, Bathurst wrote, "I saw myself—my spirit or angel—go from me, as a pure body of oriental pearl—like all one pure oriental pearl it seemed with such a shining beauty, but the back of it (my angel, me) was only towards me."[81]

Bathurst draws comparisons to medieval and early modern Catholic mysticism in her focus on angelic figures who have an intimate relationship with a specific individual. Anne Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs have pointed out that the cult of the guardian angel was popular in fifteenth-century devotional life. These guardian angels served as both protectors and intercessors for individuals.[82] In a sense, Bathurst took the tradition of the

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79 While I use the term "out-of-body," it is important to note that Behmenism conceived of the body-spirit divide in a unique way. According to Boehme, the soul—and even God—had a corporeal form. Boehme distinguished between this heavenly corporeality and the materiality of the flesh in the fallen order. See, for example, Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 122.

80 Boehme described the angelic world in great detail in his first book, *Aurora.* See also Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 35.

81 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/18.

82 Anne F. Sutton and Livia Visser-Fuchs, "The Cult of Angels in Late Fifteenth-Century England: An Hours of the Guardian Angel presented to Queen Elizabeth Woodville," in *Women and the Book: Assessing the Visual Evidence*, eds. Jane H. M. Taylor and Lesley Smith (Buffalo, NY: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 233. Bathurst's seventeenth-century Catholic contemporary, Jeanne des Anges, also wrote about a guardian angel. In the case of Jeanne, known for her claims of demonic possession, the angel took on the form of a young man who resembled her confessor. See Michel de Certeau, *The Possession at Loudon*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 213.

guardian angel one step further: not only did she interact with a personal angel, but (as we will see later in this chapter) she literally embodied the role of an angelic intercessor. Bathurst's understanding of her angelic self surpassed the late medieval tradition of the guardian angel to encompass a literal self-identification with this angel.

Bathurst's angel frequently interacted with other "angels," other figures that were the spiritual embodiments of fellow Philadelphians, family members, or friends—both living and deceased.[83] This highlights how even though Behmenist mysticism and theosophy focused on personal visions and direct spiritual experience, a communal life was also at the heart of the Philadelphian experience. In Bathurst's visions, these angels traveled and even undertook mission work: "Then I saw Mr. B—ly's angel sent to the Indies to call them, and my Friend's Angel with the Pope, and Light go from her to the Turks, and mine sent to the Heathens.[84] They also conversed with the "Bright Body," a term that Bathurst and Lead both used to represent Christ's transfigured body, in whose likeness human bodies would be renewed.[85]

Despite the intensely personal nature of such visions, Bathurst was not a solitary religious figure; her religious life was marked by the community in which she lived. While many of her visions occurred at night, Bathurst also experienced visions when worshiping with other Philadelphians. As we have seen, Philadelphians encouraged such direct spiritual experiences in their worship services.[86] Other members of the Philadelphian community made numerous appearances in Bathurst's visions, usually in

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83 For example, see Rawl. MSS D., 116.
84 Ibid., 119.
85 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 195.
86 In July 1679, for example, Bathurst recorded the following vision while worshipping with other Philadelphians: "I saw when we met together, a pleasant green field, for some time, but did not much observe it; and of a sudden, a light for some time." See Rawl. MSS D., 1262/23.

their "angelic," or purely spiritual forms. On 9 December 1680, for example, Bathurst described the following:

> As I overheard Mr. B—ly at prayer, his angel ascended to the glory of the Father, and bowed and lay down on his face, at the foot of the glory: and he was raised up and came to me and laid his hand on my head, for I was much pained in my head; his angel continued walking, and looking and speaking to me. After his angel ascended to the glory, and the Father declared how soon he would appear in his glorious power; and then his angel came to me and said, he was sent from the Father to declare to me, that he would come forth in his glory in such a time.[87]

Such visions involving other Philadelphians' "angels" spoke to Bathurst's understanding of herself and her fellow Philadelphians as highly evolved spiritual beings. Jane Lead shared a similar vision involving the transformation of stones of fire into angelical figures, the "Virgin Wisdom's Angelical Offspring" who would be called the Church of the First-Born. [88]

As a late seventeenth-century prophet, Bathurst represents a transitional figure among the prophets in this study. She was intensely millenarian, but she had no concern to create a New Jerusalem out of England, like the Fifth Monarchists did. Bathurst belonged to the strain of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth millenarianism that had little interest in overturning the temporal social order. We see this transitional quality most clearly, however, in Bathurst's approach to the body and its relationship to her prophetic experience. She did not see her body a pure conduit, as did either the early Quakers who produced degendered prophetic discourse, or Sarah Wight whose prophetic visions first came to her when she was in a trance-like state. But neither was Bathurst like

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87 Ibid., 118-19. Bathurst may have been referring to Thomas Bromley (d. 1691), a member of Pordage's community at Bradfield who continued to maintain ties with the community in London. See Ariel Hessayon, "Thomas Bromley," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*

88 Jane Lead, *A Message to the Philadelphian Society*, *Whithersoever dispersed over the whole Earth,. Together with a Call to the Several Gathered Churches Among Protestants in This Nation of England* (London, 1696), 83.

the typical French Prophet, who flailed and jerked her body as she prophesied.[89] She did not seek to transcend her earthly self, but rather to achieve a higher spiritual state while in her earthly body. Most notably, Bathurst gendered her body (and, indeed, much of her imagery in general) as female. As we will see in the next section, Bathurst abandoned the previous generation of prophets' emphasis that there "was neither male nor female" for the idea that in this time of eschatological significance, she had been elected by God—as a woman—for a specific purpose.

Bathurst and Election

The Philadelphians did not believe in a particular election to salvation. They rejected the Calvinist tenet that some individuals were elected to salvation. Nor did the Philadelphians see their society as *the* elect church. As we have seen, they stressed that they were an ecumenical society, and they criticized sectarianism.[90] Lead, for example, believed that the state of "Christendom is at this day miserably torn and rent through the manifold divisions and sects of it, all equally pretending to be the True Church and Spouses of Christ."[91] For them, the true Church was the one that would usher in the new age; it was universal—open to all. Jane Lead even went so far as to promote the doctrine of universal restoration, in which all individuals would be restored to the primordial state, and in which there was no permanent hell.[92]

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89 On the role of the body in prophecy see Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution*, 100-03.

90 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 7.

91 Jane Lead, "Reasons for the Foundation and Promotion of Our Society," *Theosophical Transactions of the Philadelphian Society, vol. 3* (London, 1697), 195.

92 McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," 524. Lead's concept of universal restoration stressed that all would be restored to a primordial state *in the age to come*; such a state, she believed, had not yet arrived. For more on universal restoration see Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 225-42.

For the Philadelphians, election was situated within an eschatological framework. The "elect" group of believers, as they understood it based on their interpretation of Revelation, played a particular role in heralding the new age to come. Lead, for example, believed that the millennium would involve the establishment of a new Church on earth. Furthermore, she thought that a group of individuals would pave the way for this Church through the guidance of Divine Wisdom.[93] As Lead stated, "This only is required on our part, to suffer the sprit of burning to do upon us the refining work...to meditate for all these adorning power and gifts that may demonstrate we are in election to be the beginning of that priestly Church, that is coming out of the wilderness."[94] This was the sense of collective election to which the Philadelphians subscribed.

The Philadelphians also believed that God elected individuals for particular purposes, especially in relation to the end times. When they spoke of individual election, it was most often in reference to individuals who were elect for some purpose, such as to herald the emergence of the new Church that the Philadelphians believed was imminent. Bathurst and Lead both suggested that God elected individuals to receive direct spiritual revelations. Bathurst, for example, described how "a very great and glorious thing it is to be chosen of God, not only to know this Covenant to one's self, but to declare and make it known to others."[95] Both women also emphasized that they were part of a long tradition of individuals chosen to receive God's message. As Lead wrote, "For such a superior wise understanding Spirit doth still survive in some elected hereunto, as in Moses, Samuel, and Solomon."[96]

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93 Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 78-9.
94 Lead, *A Message to the Philadelphian Society*, 38-9.
95 Rawl. MSS D.,1262/273.
96 Lead, *A Message to the Philadelphian Society*, 60.

It was this understanding of personal election that Bathurst brought to her writing. She believed that she had been chosen to have close communion with God. As Avra Kouffman points out, Bathurst underwent a sort of "induction" ceremony into God's elite in a vision recorded in July 1680. Bathurst described how she was "taken to the B. B. [Bright Body] and became like one naked." Then she was clothed in shining garments as the Apostle Peter cast a thin white garment over her. Like Moses and Aaron, who were present at this ceremony, she was "adorned with such garments as they had of very rich gold...and girt about with a golden girdle." At this point, those present welcomed her:

> [A]ll the Patriarchs and Apostles stood on each side of me as I was coming forth, and all spoke with great love and kindness to me as I went along by them, being so richly adorned for the glory of the Father and the Son. After this, a word came to me in this manner, 'did not I say to thee, I would come and dwell with thee? Now I am come by the breathing and flowings of Life in you.'[97]

This ceremony not only marked Bathurst as one with whom the Spirit of God "dwelt," but it also brought her into the company of the apostles and prophets. They stood by her and acknowledged her as an equal.

But Bathurst's understanding of her election went much deeper than this vision. She not only believed herself to have been an elect individual, but also an elect *woman.* A number of scholars have pointed to an emergence of a feminine voice in late seventeenth-century women's writing.[98] Paula McDowell, among others, connects the emergence of this voice with the transition from pre-modern interiority, which was collective and social, to the autonomous and gendered self of modern individualism. As McDowell points out, though, the establishment of women as gendered subjects did not produce

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97 See Kouffman, "Reflections on the Sacred: The Mystical Diaries of Jane Lead and Ann Bathurst," 101-02.

98 See Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace, 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 213.

freedom or equality.[99] Phyllis Mack makes a similar argument about late seventeenth-century Quaker prophets. As we saw in the last chapter, the early Quakers imitated male biblical prophets, and they belonged to the prophetic tradition that saw the body as a degendered and passive vessel through which the spirit passed. Gradually, as Quaker women prophets continued into the second generation, they began to feminize their religious discourse. While Mack tries to stay away from a language of decline, it creeps into her argument that women faced more limited opportunities for participation in public religion as late seventeenth-century religious discourse became feminized.[100] Similarly, Patricia Crawford also proposes that religious discourse became feminized by 1700, as the Enlightenment produced a dichotomy between faith and reason that linked women with affective religion rather than with the rationalism that allowed for ideal citizenship.[101] Scholarship thus suggests at least two processes at work here: a shift in how prophets gendered their prophecy as dissenting groups became more mainstream, and a shift in female religious discourse as the Enlightenment began to emphasize the distinction between faith and reason.

While some scholars have suggested that the feminization of discourse pushed women into the domestic sphere and limited their opportunities for participation in public religious life, this argument has recently been brought into question. As Sarah Apetrei contends, a number of late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century women began to see themselves and their sex as the true defenders of faith, rationality, and morality. Apetrei argues that there was an emerging discourse dominated by millenarians, including the

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99 Ibid.

100 Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 412.

101 See Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (New York: Routledge Press, 1993), 204-208.

Philadelphians, that promoted the idea of a distinctly female contribution to Protestant renewal.[102] In the writings of Richard Roach, in particular, the idea developed that women had been chosen to play a role as ambassadors of God's feminine, restorative power in the last days.[103]

Other scholars have also analyzed female religious roles among the Philadelphians. Gibbons argues that by the late seventeenth century, when Bathurst was writing her diary, the Philadelphians had begun to develop two opposing views on women and their place in the movement. Some, such as Francis Lee, Lead's son in-law, adopted a relatively conservative position that restricted his understanding of Divine Wisdom to the intellectual rather than the personal level. Gibbons goes so far as to describe Lee's thought on women as generally derogatory. Others like Richard Roach took a direction that Gibbons calls loosely feminist.[104] Roach believed that there was a "female embassy"—a proliferation of female prophets and visionaries who heralded the end days. They included women such as Antoinette Bourignon, Mme Guyon, Jane Lead, Rosamunde von Asseburg, Sarah Wiltshire, and the French Prophets. These women, because of their close relationship with Divine Wisdom, were to play a special eschatological role that involved reforming the male sex.[105] Roach and others, including the late seventeenth-century female prophet M. Marsin, interpreted Psalm 68:11 as a prophecy about how a number of women would give forth God's message in the end days.[106] Roach likely considered Bathurst a part of this tradition. His relationship with

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102 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*, 17, 207.
103 Ibid., 17, 195-96.
104 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 168, 172-73*,* 143.
105 Ibid., 156; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 240.
106 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 225. Psalm 68:11 reads, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." The pronoun in the original text was gendered feminine.

Bathurst was sufficiently close that, after her death, he recorded how he had a "sudden descent of Mrs. Bathurst's spirit upon me."[107]

More specifically, Jane Lead has also received attention from scholars interested in whether there was a late seventeenth-century decline in the scope of female religious participation. Phyllis Mack, for example, asserts that Lead transformed Böhme's idea of Divine Wisdom into a passive receptacle for God's revelation. She argues that Lead belonged to a tradition of female mysticism and nascent feminism that was detached from visions of social solidarity or social transformation.[108] As such, Mack contends that the eighteenth-century Shakers were the inheritors of the radical tradition of the early Quakers, rather than the Philadelphians. Taking a different position, Gibbons sees Lead as the head of a tradition that assigned women an important role in reforming society in anticipation of the end times. He argues that this tradition eventually evolved into the doctrine of female messianism (women as bearers of redemption) found among the French Prophets and the Shakers. But he does not suggest that any great claims can be made for Lead's own feminism.[109] Gibbons, like Apetrei, rather considers Roach to have been the pivotal figure who assigned women an important role as heralders of the end times.[110]

This is where a study of Bathurst is particularly useful. Her focus, like that of the French Prophets, was not on the abstract figure of Divine Wisdom but rather on how she, as an individual, had been chosen to personify aspects of a female apocalyptic figure. In a manuscript treatise written shortly after Lead's death in 1704, Richard Roach argued that

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107 Rawl. MSS D., 833/27-8.

108 Mack, *Visionary Women,* 410.

109 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 162.

110 According to Apetrei, these notions began to surface in Roach's writings as early as 1697, when the Philadelphian Society began their public ministry. See Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in the Early English Enlightenment,* 233; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 143.

some women had "been chosen and distinguished with admirable talents for the information of the age." According to Roach, these women were connected both with Wisdom's pregnancy and birth of a new creation, and with her mediation between earth and heaven.[111] While Roach promoted this idea at the turn of the eighteenth century, Bathurst's writing reveals that the idea was present (among at least one English Philadelphian) two decades before Roach. Bathurst's diary suggests that she believed herself to be chosen for both of these roles that Roach cited. She saw herself both as a mediator and as one who had been chosen to "give birth" spiritually to the new creation of the millennium.

In the early years of her diary, Bathurst was particularly concerned with the idea that she had been chosen to be a mediator or intercessor between God and humans. Most often she directed this intercession toward the nation. In 1679, she asked God in a vision, "Lord, what wilt Thou do with this nation?" According to Bathurst, God's response was that she should not occupy herself with national concerns or public affairs of the world but rather attend to "inward teachings."[112] This tension between the spiritual and the temporal is readily apparent in much of Bathurst's writing; while she was both a mystic and a millenarian, she retained a marked focus on the temporal world in her writing.

Bathurst's concerns reappeared a couple of weeks later (July 25) in a vision of God's judgment on the nation, in which she saw a hand pour out a cup of blood as a sign of judgment. Three times, Bathurst cried out in haste and anguish to God: "Spare thy People!" On the first occasion she noted that God "seemed to put the request away, as if

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111 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in the Early English Enlightenment.,* 240. See also Richard Roach, "What are Philadelphians and what is the Ground of their Society?," Rawl. MSS D., 833/54-8.

112 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/15.

he had said, let me alone, thou shalt be safe." The second time, Bathurst received the reply that "There shall not any one of them [God's People] be destroyed." Bathurst wrote that after her third plea to God, "the Lord stayed his hand and took me up to him, and overshadowed me in a cloud of love, and held me in his divine embraces, and asked me in great sweetness and tenderness, whether I could not be content with his will." At this point in the vision, Bathurst learned that only the wicked would be destroyed; God even showed her the men, women, and youth who would be spared. But Bathurst still pleaded for God's mercy. She declared that her prayers were heard; the cup was "taken out of the hand of justice" and replaced by a smaller cup. The next day, when the blood poured out of that smaller cup, she "was much in earnest request for the staying of [God's] Hand, yea even to run between and catch the blood, till at length I saw it no more."[113]

As this vision shows, Bathurst believed herself to be an intercessor between God and the nation. In this role, she saw herself as belonging to the tradition of biblical prophets who addressed the sins of the nation. She compared herself to Moses, believing that she also bore a great burden for a sinful people: "Let not the Lord angry with me, and I will plead for this nation. As it satisfied not Moses, when Thou bid him let Thee alone to destroy that sinful People, and Thou would make of him a great nation, yet he would not let Thee alone, but prayed and prevailed." Nearly four years later, on 24 April 1683, she made an implicit comparison of herself to other biblical prophets:

> I saw Habakkuk, Jeremiah, Haggai, Joel, Amos. They seemed to have been prophets, who had been sensible of the sins of the nation, and had felt in themselves by a divine sense the weight of judgment due to offenders; and upon that account had been great mourners, and great admirers of the power, wisdom, love, mercy, pity, patience, forbearing, and long suffering of God."

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113 Ibid., 30-31.

On 12 May 1683 she went so far as to assign herself sacrificial status due to the weight of her intercessory burden: “my soul was made a sacrifice for the sins of others, even a burnt offering."[114]

Like many early modern prophets, Bathurst used the term “nation” in its civic and temporal sense, even naming England as the specific nation over which God held a cup of blood.[115] In April 1688—just a few months before the “Glorious Revolution that same year—Bathurst had another vision that featured a number of the prophets, including Amos, Haggai, Nahum, Micah, Malachi, Job, and Manasseh. At one point, Manasseh brought Mary Tudor before Bathurst, “that I should pray for her, for God had pardoned him who had shed much bled, and therefore sinners were to be prayed for.” Likewise, Bathurst was also shown Henry VIII, William the Conqueror, William Rufus, “Crookbacked Richard,” James I, his wife Anne, and Elizabeth I, who were “sinners to be prayed for, that we may be in perfect love, and so fit for the Kingdom of Heaven.”[116]

Bathurst's attention to the political nation of England and her role as an intercessor for its people is not surprising, given the period in which she wrote. The years surrounding the Revolution of 1688 produced a surge in millenarianism that sometimes had overt political overtones. But while Bathurst displayed an interest in England, she did not see it as a New Jerusalem, as did a number of the Civil War prophets. Consonant with Bathurst's subjective discourse, the emphasis was not on the nation itself but rather on what she could do for the nation as one chosen to intercede and pray for it. Moreover, unlike the early Quakers who issued warnings to England, Bathurst did not speak directly to a national audience. She spoke instead to God *on behalf* of the nation, a key shift in her

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114 Ibid., 188 , 195-96.
115 Ibid., 31.
116 Ibid., 307-08.

intended audience and prophetic role. In some ways, Bathurst's actions suggest a decline in the female prophet's public role: she was not addressing a public audience. But Bathurst was an early modern woman whose hierarchical understanding of the universe culminated in God. Her belief that she had been chosen as an intercessor between God and humans made equally, if not more, of a statement than if she had prophesied in the streets or published warnings to England. Agency could take on more forms than participation in the public sphere or public religion, as Bathurst's understanding of herself as an intercessor reminds us.

Bathurst's view that "most prophecies and promises tend to our general man as we stand in the body...[and] the signification many times is national," was also not uncommon during this period.[117] The political and religious transformations of the late 1680s and 1690s, including the Revolution of 1688 and the Act of Toleration (1689), produced a series of what Jane Shaw has called "miracle events" and providential signs that were often interpreted in a national context. One of these signs was the earthquake in Jamaica on 7 June 1692 that destroyed Port Royal; it was followed by an earthquake tremor in London two months later. Both events were interpreted as signs of God's displeasure with the British, and in particular Londoners.[118]

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117 Rawl. MSS D., 1263/90.

118 Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 125-26; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 177. Continental Europe also faced a number of events during the last decades of the seventeenth century that led to a rise in millenarian prophecies. The wars of Louis XIV, which led to destruction throughout southwestern Germany, and the siege of Vienna in 1683 are two examples. Bathurst's focus was Britain and the British Atlantic, but it is important to emphasize that the events to which Britons assigned eschatological significance had a broader European context. See James Van Horn Melton, "Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany," in *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. James Bradley and Dale Van Kley (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 295.

Bathurst addressed the Jamaican earthquake in an entry dating from 14 August 1692, about a month before the London tremor. Once again, she placed great emphasis on her role as an intercessor:

> But prayer arose for many particularly in Jamaica, being greatly distressed by reason of one earthquake. And my spirit was at Jamaica lying on my face at prayer (I thought at Liguanea that God would make it a Zoar, and bring his Lots out of Sodom before it was destroyed). And I lay stretched out on the earth, licking the dust and then breathing into the earth, as brooding over it for a new creation; and my breast I feel flame whilst I relate this. Great depths my soul enters into in much silence, yet the flame encreaseth in my breast and bowels. One thing I saw my spirit do as it lay with its face on the earth (as I though the place was Liguanea) viz. I milked milk out of my breasts on the Earth, and pleaded that the earth was the Lord's and the fullness thereof, that He gives and He takes away![119]

Bathurst's response to the earthquake, a vision in which her spirit "traveled" to Jamaica to plead with God, indicates how such events could be interpreted or adapted in a number of ways to fit the parameters of various religious groups or causes. Bathurst's focus was not on the implications of the earthquake for England, per se, but rather on how she—as one chosen to mediate (like the Virgin Wisdom)—"traveled" to Jamaica to plead for its people. The vision also shows that Bathurst, though living in a religious community, was at least on some levels an active participant in the broader culture of late seventeenth-century England. While she did not physically travel to Jamaica, like some Quakers did, she had an interest in its existence and its connection to England.

As we have seen, Roach stated that some women would be caught up not only in Divine Wisdom's role as a mediator between heaven and earth, but in her pregnancy and the birth of a new creation as well. Bathurst also subscribed to this belief. In her visions, she drew heavily on a language of conjugality and childbirth. We see this language as early as the first entries in Bathurst's diary. In 1679, she requested "holiness throughout

119 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/481.

being the fine linen of the saints." She saw in a vision a "figure like a man-child...round his head was like a sun streaming out, he was compassed as in an oval much of the color of a rainbow." Bathurst was told that she was this rainbow-colored sun figure.[120] The vision drew on passages from Revelation. The image of the rainbow appears both in Revelation 4:3 and 10:1 as encircling a Christ-figure. And by "requesting the fine linen of the saints," Bathurst linked herself with the female figure that represented the Church, who was described in Revelation 19:8 ("And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints").

Bathurst repeatedly invoked bridal and conjugal imagery to suggest her intimacy with Christ. Bridal imagery was common in seventeenth-century European religious discourse. It drew on traditions from medieval mysticism, German mysticism (*Brautmystik*), and the kabbalistic idea that the union of husband and wife was an actualization of divine love. Such imagery was especially popular among women writers.[121] Mary Astell, for example, wrote divine meditations that referred to her espousal to Christ. Lead's visions also suggested that she believed her soul was progressing toward a nuptial union with Christ that would transform the fleshly body, producing a "full and perfect change into...a spiritual corporeity." Lead borrowed this idea from Behmenist thought, which proposed that Wisdom transfigured the flesh into the likeness of Christ and espoused the soul in a mystical marriage (*unio mystica*). At the collective level, the Behmenist understanding of *unio mystica* suggested that all spiritual flesh would ultimately be absorbed into a single divine substance. Thus, *unio mystica* was

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120 Ibid., 27.
121 Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 64-8.

connected to the doctrine of universal restoration that Lead and Bathurst both embraced.[122]

As evident from the above examples, the idea of *unio mystica* could take on various nuances—mystical, eschatological, individual, collective. Bathurst, for example, embraced the Behmenist idea that Divine Wisdom espoused Christ; she saw Wisdom as the "spouse and bride of the soul," and the "Virgin-Maid impregnated by the Holy Ghost, and the overshadowings of the Almighty."[123] Notably, however, Bathurst also extended this imagery to herself, suggesting that *she* was betrothed and married to Christ, and then impregnated with the Holy Spirit. While the idea of mystical marriage appeared in the discourse of a number of early modern mystics, it is important to note the intensely personal nature of Bathurst's language.

The clearest summation of what Bathurst believed regarding her "nuptials" and "impregnation" can be found in an entry from November 1691. Citing the biblical Mary as a precedent, she noted that "the womb hath ever since been made conceivable. (I would be here understood spiritually) and that holy thing is of the Holy Ghost, the blessed spirit of God in man, conceiving spirit with power and a going forth to the outward branches." She described being "full of admiration and astonishing wonder" at the betrothing and espousal of her Lord, for which she listed the specific date of 22 August 1679. She noted that the nuptial began 9 September 1679. This was followed by her conception. Like Mary, Bathurst believed herself to have been visited by the Angel Gabriel, who came as a messenger to tell her of the "revelation of God" in her; on 19 July

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122 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 87, 196, 191, 195, 246. Bathurst believed that "all nature shall be redeemed, for nature, sensible nature is sensible of a better state." She also stated that "man must be redeemed, and it cannot be otherwise; for he came out from God and was his offspring." See Rawl. MSS D., 1263/41 and Rawl. MSS D., 1262/521.

123 Rawl. MSS D., 309, 243.

1691 there “proceeded the power of the most High, and a Holy Conception of the Seed and Word of Life.”[124]

Some of Bathurst's most detailed visions occurred over several days in August and September of 1679, the time she described as her betrothing and espousal. In a vision, she was encompassed by the Eternal Trinity:

> whom I felt diffuse his life quite through me...It was no less than the intimate dear love and conjugal affection. He shareth to us his spouse, being a betrothing to him in an eternal union and marriage (which I at that time said that this was being married to Christ).[125]

Bathurst invoked a phrase from Song of Solomon, “let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth,” and two fiery streams came out of his mouth to create rings around her head and lips. Bathurst interpreted this experience as a pledge of God's love, a betrothing; she proclaimed, “O Jesus! I am thine, thou hast ravished me!”[126]

This conjugal and at times erotic imagery continued as she described her visions over the next couple of days. On 11 September, the “glorified person of Christ” visited Bathurst's bed, “as if he were with me asleep.” She related in great detail his physical body, focusing in particular on his ear and hair. The next morning, she awoke to find that “the beloved of my soul lay by me.” Later, Bathurst “entreated the Lord for his wonted favors, and that if He saw anything in me that was not becoming a spouse betrothed to so dear and glorious a savior as himself, that he would be pleased to cure me and keep me.” The next night, she again found “his glorious person” by her, “as if he were with me asleep. The following day, again borrowing imagery from the Song of Solomon, she wrote that “the glorified person of Christ seemed often to kiss me, with the kisses of his

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124 Ibid., 376.
125 Ibid., 39-40.
126 Ibid., 45-6.

mouth, for his love is better than wine, rejoicing very much in me, overshadowing and communicating himself in a most endearing conjugal assertion, filling and answering my whole desire." Bathurst's "nuptials" became an ongoing theme of her diary. Twelve years after her initial visions, she was still declaring, "I am married to him, the nuptials are come. I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine, who has had me into his banqueting house and hath filled me with love."[127]

By personalizing the idea of a mystical marriage, Bathurst set herself apart as one chosen to receive tremendous spiritual favor. In October 1681, she had a vision in which two other prominent members of the Philadelphian community, identified as "Mrs. F." and "Mr. B.,"[128] learned of her elevated "marital" status:

> The glory of the Son appeared like that of a king, and my angel sat, as a high priest in priestly garments on his right hand, and Mrs F.'s angel all in pure white virtue on my right hand...and they stood all attending to hear and see the will of the Father, to be declared to me, which they had known before. Then Mrs. F.'s angel went to the Father and bowed down and prayed much for his blessing on us, and that we might be kept in the Virgin Spirit, purely united to him. The Father said to her, he had espoused me himself. She further interceded that we might be helpers in the great work he had appointed me for. And added as Thou, O Father, hast said, that she and I were thy first Creation, and as my Lord and Husband bid us to remember we were the first of the new creation, so there was also another great benefit promised to us viz. redemption.[129]

In this vision, Bathurst suggested that while the others in her group were set apart, they were to be helpers in the work appointed for her. According to Bathurst's vision, God proclaimed that she, Mrs. F., and Mr. B. would form sort of a trinitarian relationship in

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127 Ibid., 48-51, 333.

128 In her diary, Bathurst often used initials that did not match the names of the individuals to whom she referred. Due to comments Bathurst makes later in the vision, however, it is clear that she saw herself, Mrs. F., and Mr. B. as the spiritual leaders of their religious community. See Ibid., 153.

129 Ibid., 151-52.

order to help each other in God's "great work of the three-one God." But in this relationship that mirrored the Trinity, it was Bathurst who was marked as the "Father."[130]

Bathurst also believed that like Divine Wisdom, she would become a "mother of many nations." As early as September 1680, she wrote: "Next day came this word, a mother of many nations shall you be, and great shall be my glory." Three years later, she asked God, "as Moses, have I born all this people, that I must feel the pain and birth of them?" She believed that God responded by asking her, "why is this so grievous to you? And why should you wonder at it? When I have said unto you, that you shall be a mother of many nations, and that great shall be your rewards." Even as late as 1691, she reiterated that God had told her, "A mother of nations shall you be, when a riddle is told us, how easy is it; when faith opens the deep mysteries, and gives us to know the instinct of heavenly nature."[131]

It is not surprising to find a female prophet from this period using maternal imagery. As Phyllis Mack had pointed out, seventeenth-century women were taught to see moral and spiritual significance in childbirth and the mother/child relationship.[132] Bathurst, however, took this language of maternity and infused it with eschatological significance. The Philadelphians connected Divine Wisdom with the female apocalyptic figure in Revelation 12, who gave birth to a messianic figure ("man-child") who would

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130 Ibid, 153. Bathurst was not the only female prophet of her era to suggest that she was head of a trinitarian relationship. Eva von Buttlar, who embraced Behmenist mysticism after reading Pordage, founded a millenarian group in Allendorf that was based on the Philadelphian Society. She proclaimed herself to be betrothed to the Holy Spirit. She also believed that she and her two principle followers, Winter and Appenfeller, were representatives of both the Holy Family (Mary, Joseph, and Jesus) and the Holy Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). See Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 146-47.

131 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/91, 193, 198, 347.

132 Mack, *Visionary Women,* 93.

usher in the new age.[133] Bathurst personalized the traits of this female figure. As we have already seen, she had a vision in which she was represented as "a sun streaming out" of a figure like a man-child. She also exclaimed how her soul was big, "like one impregnated with the Holy Ghost."[134] And Bathurst's frequent exclamations of being in "travail" or labor pains appeared with increasing frequency during the course of her writing.

At times, Bathurst suggested that it was the act of writing itself that produced labor pains—she was trying to "give birth" to words and revelations. In March 1685/6, she commented that she "was like one in hard travel, and pained to be delivered of a birth of word." Several years later, she offered even more insight into how she saw the relationship between her writing and these "labor pains:"

> I feel as I've often said, like pains of a woman in travail; and sometimes it is for others to bring forth their gifts or power of God, as he wills or moves in them: and for this I thank God. Sometimes it is as a weight of glories on my head, as if it rested on me, till I write down the visits and manifestations of his love and peace. Most times I'm pressed in spirit to manifest the power of God, and to write it down for my own memory, and to bring forth that light to manifestation.[135]

Bathurst's claim that she was "pained" to deliver words from God is a variation of the frequent prophetic phrase of being "pressed in spirit." She portrayed the act of writing down her visions as beyond her control.

Bathurst also connected the theme of a continual "travail" with the idea that she was giving birth to a "man-child." For example, she wrote, "I travel for love, and when it is born, it will be the man-child that shall rule all nations, the man of his right hand of chief power." This man-child was not a physical entity but rather it represented the Holy

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133 See, for example, Lead, *A Message to the Philadelphian Society,* 11-2. Divine Wisdom, as an apocalyptic maternal figure, was also antitype to Mary, who gave birth to a messianic figure, and to the biblical Sarah, the "mother of many nations." Furthermore for radical Protestants such as the Philadelphians, Divine Wisdom offered a female component to the divine that was largely absent in much Protestant religious practice.

134 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/347-48.

135 Ibid., 267, 455.

Spirit, through whom Bathurst believed the new universal Church would emerge.

Referencing the apocalyptic female figure of Revelation 12, she stated:

> I see a woman clothed with the sun and the moon under her feet and on her head a crown of twelve stars, and she being in travail cried out being with child, I feel a travail for visions to be brought forth. O the birth of the Holy Ghost, that man-child that must rule all nations, and though the dragon may seek to destroy this man-child the male-power of the Spirit, but it shall be caught up.[136]

While Bathurst spoke of "giving birth" in the spiritual sense, the pain of this labor was intensely physical; at one point it even forced her to "retire from everything, even from good discourse."[137]

It is this idea—that Bathurst believed she was "giving birth" spiritually to the new Church—that shows how she drew on female imagery to take a leading role in what she believed to be the end times. Were Bathurst the only late seventeenth-century prophet to suggest that she was to fulfill an eschatological role as a woman, her example would be interesting but of little significance for the larger culture of late seventeenth-century millenarianism. But Bathurst was one of a number of women to make that suggestion. Jane Lead, for example, provides a similar example. As this chapter has argued, Lead's prophecy was more centered on the idea of Divine Wisdom in the abstract. While Lead believed herself to be chosen by God to take a leading role in the end days, she tended not to conflate the image of Divine Wisdom with herself; nor was her spiritual diary as focused on the self as Bathurst's. However, Lead did suggest that an eschatological female figure could become personified in a human being. In one of the initial visions recorded in her spiritual diary, *A Fountain of Gardens*, Lead referred to the woman described in Revelation 12. She expressed doubt to God that this woman would be

136 Rawl. MSS D., 1263/12, 75.
137 Rawl. MSS D., 1262/306.

manifested in corporeal form. She was given the answer that, indeed, this figure would be a woman; Virgin Wisdom would draw over "her virgin veil of purity" to "personate" this chosen woman, who would give birth to a man-child.

Moreover, Lead also suggested that she was elected to a role connected to the birth of the man-child. According to Lead, God told her:

> Therefore I give this word to you in particular, that ye may know, there is somewhat of grace to you peculiarly by this prophecy, which is upon renewing...If now then ye can ascend with all your might to this tree of life, you may find quick removes to him, who is that ghostly overshadowing power, who can impregnate with this last all-saving Birth.

She noted how some years prior, like the biblical Hannah, she had asked for a son to dedicate him to be a temple priest, and prophet. She suggested that God had instead rewarded her with a spiritual birth:

> Though thy petition was not granted in that way, as to have a son by earthly generation, but much better it shall be, if thou shalt see the travel of thy soul and spirit in the birth of a pure *Nazarite,* given unto thee from the Lord. Which is a thousand degrees beyond what once thou were greatly solicitous after, to wit, a fleshly birth. Since which time, much hath been wrought for thee, Wisdom hath so highly favoured thee, as to cast thee into her virgin mould, or else no way capable to embrace such a man-child, who shall have power to do great and mighty things on the earth, and to hold up the four winds, an *Elias s*pirit, to shut and open the heavens.

Lead believed that this man-child would manifest ("personate") itself in the physical form of one of the male Philadelphians. She added (most likely in a later editing of her work) that this person had failed to achieve the spiritual perfection necessary for that role.[138] While she did not expound on her role as an eschatological female figure to the extent

138 See Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens, vol. 2,* 125-133. While delving into the psychological motivations of historical figures is difficult and, at some level, impossible, it is important to highlight that Lead took an interest in the idea of a "spiritual birth" after she failed to give birth physically to a son.

that Bathurst did, it is likely that Lead—who wrote down these visions in 1675/6, influenced Bathurst's writing.[139]

The idea also appeared outside the Philadelphian society. In a letter composed c. 1670, the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon (d. 1686) claimed that she had never read the writings of Boehme: “but I have heard many things (from those who have read the said Boehme) which all conform to my sentiments: and I believe devoutly that he wrote under a particular Light of God.” Bourignon continued with a statement that, characteristic of her writing, turned the focus back to her status as an elect prophet: “and even some Germans have assured me that the said Boehme prophesied about me, and that he said that there would be a Light who would speak the divine mysteries and truths of God more clearly than he.” Bourignon interpreted herself as the one to whom Boehme was referring when he “seemed to want to speak of a Virgin, saying even, that she had already been born, and that he had seen her: with many other particularities.” She noted that these German Behmenists believed that “when I was manifested to the world, that there would be a golden age.”[140] She thus connected herself with the idea of a millenarian female figure who would usher in a new age.

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139 Lead revisited the idea of her connection to the birth of a man-child much later, once Francis Lee joined the group in the 1690s (over a decade after Bathurst's “nuptials”). Willi Temme remarks that starting in the 1690s, Lead ascribed to herself the role of an eschatological mediator of salvation, and that she saw Lee as the man-child who would rule all nations. Temme also mentions a letter from Friedrich Breckling to Francke, dated June 1697, which suggested that Lead's followers revered her as the apocalyptic figure in Revelation 12. However, Thune and Gibbons both question Breckling's statement about Lead's followers because it was attached to the false rumor that Lead had given birth to a bastard child in Bayreuth. See Temme, "From Jakob Böhme via Jane Leade to Eva von Buttlar,” in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820,* eds. Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horn Melton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 106; Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 128; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 151.

140 Antoinette Bourignon, *Oeuvres, vol. 19* (Amsterdam, 1686), 49-50. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Bourignon are my own. Bourignon insisted throughout her writing that she was not well-read, however her influences belie this. Most likely, she made such statements to stress that the nature of her writing was inspirational, coming from God rather than from a “learned woman.”

We see, then, that even in the 1670s, individuals in Germany, Frisia (where Bourignon landed), and England were searching for female figures who embodied the traits of Boehme's Divine Wisdom and served as heralders of the end times. Over the next few decades, the interest in female apocalyptic figures proliferated. Importantly, a number of these groups throughout the Atlantic had extensive connections with the Philadelphians. In 1694, a radical Transylvanian Pietist, Johannes Kelpius, left Rotterdam with a group of about twenty followers to travel to Pennsylvania in order to await the Second Coming. On the way they spent six months in England, where they developed close ties with the Philadelphian Society. Once in Pennsylvania, they set up a community called the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness, based on the apocalyptic woman in Revelation 12.[141] Several years after Kelpius left for Pennsylvania, the French Prophets emerged on the London scene and also established a close relationship with the Philadelphians. Samuel Keimer (the printer under whom Benjamin Franklin apprenticed) described his experience at a meeting of French Prophets as follows: “We had no less than five women amongst us; (four of which, I think, had great blessings from most, if not all the Prophets) and each of these women pretended her self to be the woman mentioned in the Revelations of John, who was cloathed with the sun.”[142]

The fourth and fifth chapters of this dissertation will explore how the Philadelphians' belief in a female election led them to seek out a number of other groups throughout the Atlantic who held similar views, including various communities of radical Pietists and, most notably, the French Prophets. Recent scholarship has tended to promote

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141 Donald F. Durnbaugh, “Communication Networks as One Aspect of Pietist Definition,” in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820*, 36-7.

142 Samuel Keimer, *Brand Pluck'd from the Burning Exemplify'd Unparallel'd Case of Samuel Keimer* (London, 1718), 80.

Richard Roach as having been the pivotal figure connecting the Philadelphians with these eighteenth-century millenarian groups. It was Roach who, in the early eighteenth century, assigned women the personal attributes of Divine Wisdom, an idea that evolved over time into a doctrine of female messianism.[143] Yet as this chapter has shown, Bathurst's example reveals that well before Roach, the concept of an apocalyptic female figure did not remain an abstraction among English Philadelphians. As early as 1680, Bathurst believed herself to embody the traits of such a figure. Her example confirms that the emergence of a feminized discourse among prophets did not necessarily signal a decline in the scope of female religious roles. As I have argued, female prophecy and election continued to thrive among radical religious groups. It flourished even as the nature of prophetic discourse adapted and evolved in response to cultural, religious, and political change.

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143 See Gibbons, *Gender In Mystical and Occult Thought,* 161-62; Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 195-96, 207.

4

The Philadelphians, the French Prophets, and the Problem of Prophetic Authority, c. 1706-1715

This chapter looks at the Philadelphian Society in the early eighteenth century. It was during these years that the Philadelphians first met with the French Prophets, a group of radical Calvinists who came to London from southern France to escape persecution. Chapter Four considers notions of gender, prophecy, and authority among the Philadelphians and the French Prophets in the first decade after the French Prophets' arrival in London (c. 1706-1715). Gender was never a stable construct in female prophecy.[1] However, the emergence of female prophets who made claims of having been chosen as *women* for certain roles coincided with the emergence of a type of prophecy that was both more dramatic and more public. This led to the emergence of prophecy—especially female prophecy—as a particularly fraught category in early eighteenth-century London. At the heart of this tension was the issue of prophetic authority, or the authority claimed by the prophet as the putative voice of God. As this chapter argues, Philadelphians and French Prophets negotiated prophetic authority with their audiences through a process of debate, patronage, and performance that involved the prophet, her religious community, her followers, and her opponents.

Chapter Four begins with a comparative analysis of gender, election, and prophecy among the Philadelphians and French Prophets. I then build on this analysis through an examination of three early eighteenth-century case studies, all of which illuminate the crisis in prophetic authority that preoccupied prophets and their audiences.

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[1] As Judith Butler has argued, gender is performative and is constantly reiterated and produced through acts of performance. See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1999).

The first case study, a series of recorded debates between the Philadelphians and the French Prophets (1710-1712), highlights the central role that questions of prophetic authority played in dissolving the merger between the two groups. Next, I consider the dynamics of the relationship between female prophet and follower, and the ways in which this relationship raised questions of prophetic authority. I focus in particular on the relationship between Richard Roach and Sarah Wiltshire, and on an episode involving Wiltshire's healing of a young woman in 1710/11. The third case study addresses the implications of the "theatricalization" of prophecy for the French Prophets' authority. I consider Thomas D'Urfey's satirical play, *The Modern Prophets* (1709), placing it in the context of broader cultural attacks on the French Prophets, female religious enthusiasm, and prophetic authority.

The Philadelphians and the French Prophets

Before studying how the French Prophets and the Philadelphians negotiated prophetic authority in early eighteenth-century London, it is first necessary to examine their respective beliefs about election and prophecy. The Philadelphians, including Jane Lead, leaned toward an understanding of universal restoration—the idea that all souls would ultimately be reconciled with God. They spoke of "the elect" as individuals (or, collectively, as the Church) who were chosen to undertake specific roles in the millenarian process leading to universal redemption. Jane Lead, for example, believed the Philadelphian Society to be part of an elect and priestly Church. Reconciling the idea of an "elect" with the idea of universal redemption, she wrote:

> Then was it further said, That God did well know that so many Ages and Generations were thus to pass away, before the Perfect Redemption should be

> finish'd, as to the Universality. Yet it was given me to understand that Christ in all Ages was still gathering to him self some who were perfected as the Foundation and Beginning of the Blessed Church, whom he took care of both before and after Death for their Compleatment, to be joined to him. Then was I bid not to sorrow as without hope, but that there would be even in this present Time a New Springing Generation, that should be as the First-Born from the Dead, and carry the Marks of Christ's Resurrection, being redeem'd from the Earth, and from Mortality, into the Number of the Hundred and Forty Four Thousand. For so it was presaged in me by the Prophetical Spirit of Jesus.[2]

Lead also made a similar reference to the 144,000 in her spiritual diary, *A Fountain of Gardens,* in an entry dated 7 March 1666/7.[3] The number 144,000 appears three times in the Book of Revelation in reference to the number of sealed (or set apart) individuals from the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Rev. 7:3-8; Rev. 14:1, 3-5).

Lead's seemingly contradictory comments on election have led Julie Hirst to argue for a theological shift in Lead's work, from a predestinarian position in *The Fountain of Gardens* to the embrace of the doctrine of *apocatastasis* (universal restoration of souls at the end of time) by the 1690s. However, as Sarah Apetrei has recently pointed out, Lead's predestinarian element does not necessarily conflict with the idea of a future full restoration.[4] While Lead may have believed that she and other Philadelphians were elected for millenarian work and preparation, such a view did not contradict the idea of an eventual universal salvation.

Lead's statements about theological subjects such as election were inherently linked to the prophetic because she saw herself as an *inspired* woman. It is important to recognize, for example, how Lead communicated the above statements as being a direct revelation ("For so it was presaged in me by the Prophetical Spirit of Jesus"). The

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[2] Jane Lead, *A Message to the Philadelphian Society, Whithersoever Dispersed Over the Whole Earth* (London, 1696), 38-9; 48; 86-7.

[3] See Jane Lead, *A Fountain of Gardens,* vol. 2 (London, 1697), 100-1.

[4] Julie Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2005), 114-15; Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 225n.

reference to an elect 144,000 is a scriptural one that refers to the sealing of 12,000 persons from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. Revelation 7:1-8), but Lead made clear that the number was given to her through a prophetic revelation. She was not the only prophet to adopt this posture. Antoinette Bourignon made similar statements, noting for example that “the more I forget my own thoughts, the more I receive the inspiration from Heaven, the sense of the scriptures, and the words to be able to express them to others. Numerous persons are astonished how I can adduce so many passages of Scripture without having ever read them.”[5] Lead and Bourignon gained clout (and a following) by communicating the idea that they were inspired. While their writings were peppered with scriptural references, they downplayed this aspect in order to stress that their prophecies were direct revelations from God. Paradoxically, however, the presence of such references (even if indirect) also reinforced their prophecy as biblically grounded and in accordance with scripture.

The most ardent advocate for the “extraordinary gifts” of female prophets was the Anglican clergyman Richard Roach, who joined the Philadelphians in 1694. While Roach subscribed to the Philadelphian belief in Divine Wisdom, he developed the idea of the female aspect of the godhead even further by suggesting that women were representatives of Divine Wisdom, a “female embassy” of women millenarian heralders and reformers.[6] According to Roach, “It has pleased God, in this last Age, to visit many Persons of both Sexes, but more especially the Female, with his Extraordinary Powers; who have been, as Mary Magadalen was in her Time, Ambassadresses of the Resurrection of Christ, now in

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[5] Antoinette Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres,* vol. 16, (L'Antéchrist Découvert, Part 1), 116. Translation Mine.

[6] Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and its Development in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 156.

Spirit and Power of Dominion."[7] As this statement suggests, Roach did not believe that women were the only favored or chosen ones of his time.[8] He did, however, see women as having a particular eschatological role that was unique to their sex.

Roach's ideas about the female embassy came from his understanding of the periodization of salvation history. Roach believed there were three dispensations. The first was the legal, Mosaic one; it was followed by the Gospel dispensation of grace, and then the age of the Spirit. All three dispensations were closely linked to Divine Wisdom. In the first, Sophia manifested herself as the shekinah, who "joined with Moses and Aaron in the wise and Formal Constitution of their Morall Judiciall and Ceremonial Law." In the second dispensation, she was at work through Mary, the mother of Christ. In the third dispensation, the one that marked Roach's time, she commissioned women to join in the work preparing for the coming kingdom.[9]

Furthermore, Roach saw each stage as producing a lessening of the restrictions first placed on the female sex with Eve. Especially important to Roach was the idea of the woman who would bring forth the promised seed, a type that appeared early on in the example of Sarah. This type played an integral role in the process toward women's restoration to their original state. Roach believed this type would be "completed and perfected" through the female figure represented in Revelation 12, who "shall bring forth that Manchild wherewith she is in Travail: who is to be caught up to God and to his Throne and afterwards to come and Rule all nations with a Rod of Iron." Therefore,

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7 Richard Roach, *The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant* (London, 1727), 48; See also Roach, *The Great Crisis: Or, The Mystery of the Times and Seasons Unfolded* (London, 1725 [1727]), 136.

8 Like Lead, Roach saw the Philadelphians as chosen. See, for example, Roach, *The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant.*

9 Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 239; Richard Roach, "Papers of the Revd Mr Richard Roach MA Formerly Fellow of St Johns College Oxford," Rawlinson MSS D., 832/82, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

according to Roach, "we must not blame [women] if…they outstrip and run before us in the Glorious Work of this day, less can the man be offended at the Recovery and the Restoration of the Primeval Parity." Women, according to Roach, had been chosen for special work in these times, and they should be given the freedom to exercise their prophetic gifts.[10]

Roach was certainly not the only one to suggest that women had been chosen for a special role as millenarian reformers. As we saw in the previous chapter, this belief became prevalent among a number of groups and individuals during the late seventeenth century. However, Roach took this idea further than any of his contemporaries. Given the weight that he assigned to the female embassy, it is not surprising that he sought out other women prophets upon the death of Lead.

After the death of Jane Lead in 1704, the Philadelphians grew apart and dispersed. Francis Lee, Lead's son in-law and a leading figure of the group, eventually ended his affiliation with the Philadelphians and religious enthusiasm. For Lee, the Philadelphians had revolved around the figure of Jane Lead, "our dearest and most Venerable Mother." Richard Roach, on the other hand, maintained his millenarian Behmenist beliefs until he died in 1730.[11] He continued to search for other dissenters who shared his beliefs, including other female prophets. In a pamphlet published shortly before his death, he placed Lead in the context other women, namely Mme de Guyon and Antoinette Bourignon, whom he also saw as millenarian female reformers. Moreover, he became a

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[10] Richard Roach, "Mr. Roach, a Philadelphian. His Answer to some queries," Lambeth Palace MSS 942/141, pp. 11-12, Lambeth Palace Library, London.

[11] Francis Lee, "Letters of Francis Lee," Lambeth MSS 1559/13, Lambeth Palace Library, London; Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1948), 141, 138.

follower of the prophet Sarah Wiltshire, a former Quaker who left the movement to join with the French Prophets and the Philadelphians.[12]

About the same time that the Philadelphians began to decline and disperse following Lead's death, the French Prophets arrived on the London religious scene. They came from the Cévennes, in the south of France, where they had engaged in a failed uprising in the aftermath of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Three of the leaders first came to London in 1706, and the group met with Roach and other Philadelphians as early as March 1707. The French Prophets, a millenarian Calvinist group, became increasingly anglicized once in London; three-quarters of the total new membership was English. They attracted followers from among the Philadelphians, Quakers, and Baptists. At least ten Philadelphians joined the French Prophets.[13]

The influx of English followers from varying religious backgrounds created a relatively fluid theology that eschewed the strict Calvinism practiced by the prophets of the Cévennes. But while the theology of the French Prophets was fluid in the decade after their arrival in London, the prophecy of most who joined the group emphasized the end of the world and God's judgment. The preface to one collection of transcribed prophecies summed up the French Prophets' message as "altogether agreeable to Scripture…it calls Men to Repentance. It warns them of the approaching Judgments. It presents to them the tender Mercys of God, and the Graces of the Spirit."[14] The French Prophets focused on

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[12] Richard Roach, *The Great Crisis*, 97; Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 299.

[13] Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 85-90. One can also refer to English members of the French Prophets as "English Prophets." However, I have chosen to use the term "French Prophets" to represent both French and English members of the movement. The "French Prophets" became a distinct movement from the Camisards when they came to London, and their adherents belonged to the same movement whether they were French or English.

[14] Mary Aspinal, et. al., *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings of the Eternal Spirit* (London, 1708), vi.

what they believed were the two dispensations, mercy and judgment. Compared to the esoteric prophetic knowledge of Jane Lead, the French Prophets practiced a more exoteric understanding of the prophetic role. Their task, as God's messengers, was to warn audiences to heed God's call for repentance in this time of God's mercy, before the judgment of God superseded. One vituperative prophet, Ann Good, proclaimed (in God's voice): "But if ye will not seek after me, ye shall find no rest, I tell ye. For I will torment every one of you, and that most bitterly in Hell-Fire."[15] We can categorize such a view as a form of pre-millenialism,[16] conventionally defined as the belief that universal catastrophe will occur as God intervenes to destroy the world in preparation for establishing a millennial rule and salvation. Even more accurate would be Catherine Wessinger's term "catastrophic millennialism," a term that Wessinger proposes in place of premillenialism, stating that the religious pattern is limited neither to Christianity nor to arguments over whether Christ's arrival will pre-date or post-date the millennium.[17]

In terms of the chosen, the French Prophets spoke both of those who would survive God's judgment and of those who would prophesy as messengers in these last days. They emphasized that this was a time for repentance and preparation. Contrary to their strict Calvinist predecessors in France, the group had room for a diversity of beliefs. The prophet Ann Watts announced that "there remains Admittance for each particular as will so obey." Mary Keimer, speaking in the voice of God, proclaimed that "'tis not my

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15 Ibid., 99, 90.

16 Millenarianism and millennialism are often used as interchangeable terms. Millenialism, however, has specific biblical reference to the postapocalyptic thousand-year reign of Christ. See "Introduction: Patterns of Contemporary Apocalypticism," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem,* eds. Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (New York: Routledge, 1997), 9.

17 See Catherine Wessinger, "Millenialism With and Without the Mayhem," in *Millennium, Messiahs, and Mayhem,* 49.

Will to cast any off."[18] The French Prophets also spoke of a New Jerusalem that would arise when all abomination was cleansed from the earth. As one prophet stated, God has chosen "you to be some of the Foundation Stones."[19] Who, exactly, comprised this "you" varied in French Prophets' discourse, but the Prophets themselves clearly saw themselves as belonging to this special group. The Prophets, as messengers sent from God to warn the people, believed they were chosen individuals. Mary Beer spoke of the "instruments," the "chosen vessels" that God had selected for glorious and great work. John Glover, speaking in the voice of God, announced to the French Prophet Thomas Dutton: "Thou art called, and chosen to be an instrument in my hand."[20] With such statements, French Prophets attempted to make sure that their audience understood their chosen status; they sought recognition of their prophetic authority.

The French Prophets' audiences, however, rarely responded positively. We see with the French Prophets a return to a more public audience. Like the Civil War prophets and the early Quakers, they spoke to a general—and, often, hostile—public, rather than to a group of like-minded believers.[21] Audiences, in general, were urban and public—a far cry from the domestic settings of the Philadelphians or later Quakers. The French Prophets traveled to a number of cities to deliver specific warnings, including Bristol, London, Dublin, and Edinburgh. In this manner, they mirrored mid seventeenth-century prophets, such as Esther Biddle, who delivered warnings to specific cities. A pattern

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[18] Mary Beer, et al., *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings Pronounc'd Under the Operation of the Holy Eternal Spirit, To the Inhabitants in and about the City of Bristol, etc*. (Bristol, 1709), 19, 50.

[19] Aspinal, et al., *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings of the Eternal Spirit*, 8, 93.

[20] Ibid., 5; Thomas Dutton, et. al., *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the city of Edenburgh [sic], in Scotland; by the mouths of Thomas Dutton, Guy Nutt, and John Glover* (London, 1710), "The Orders, or Directions of the Eternal Spirit, to Guy Nutt, Thomas Dutton, John Glover…."

[21] While prophets had always faced public attacks from opponents, the French Prophets' opponents launched an especially strong attack on the group. See, for example, Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium: A Study of the Opposition to the French Prophets in England, 1706-1710* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Monographs, 1978).

developed among the French Prophets in which a group of several prophets (male and female) would travel to a specific city, prophesy over the course of several days, and then print a transcribed version of their collected "warnings."

French Prophets often tried to emphasize their prophetic authority to audiences by comparing themselves to biblical forbears. They saw themselves as part of a tradition of biblical prophecy that included both the Old and New Testaments. For example, Mary Turner, who may have once been a Quaker,[22] recalled the biblical tradition of traveling to a city to preach:

> When your Lord gave Commission to the Apostles, to go and preach the glad Tidings of the Gospel of Peace unto all nations, he warned them, that whenever they went into a City, where their Message was not received, nor the Messengers, that they should depart out of that City, shaking off the Dust of their Feet, for a Witness against that People.[23]

In another case, Mary Beer reminded her audience of John the Baptist's prophetic role: "You have read in the Scriptures, have read of John, who came to prepare the way for your Lord and Saviour: He said, 'I am a Voice, crying in the Wilderness, saying, Repent, repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand'…Have you not heard the same Call now, the same Cry?...As John was, then, sent before the Coming of your Lord in Flesh; so are these my Servants sent, now, to warn you of his Coming in Spirit. "[24] The prophet Mary Turner also suggested that John the Baptist and the French Prophets existed in a typological relationship. John, the "great Prophet of old," was the forerunner to Christ's

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[22] Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 323.

[23] Mary Turner, et. al., *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the priest and people of Chichester, pronounc'd by Mary Turner, Ann Topham, and Anna Maria King* (London, 1709), 5-6.

[24] Aspinal, et al., *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings of the Eternal Spirit*, 15.

first appearance, just as the French Prophets were messengers sent to prepare the way for Christ's second appearance.[25]

While the French Prophets took time to develop the idea of the "prophet," they did not theorize the female prophet to the extent that the Philadelphians did. French Prophets did recognize women as prophets, and the idea of the inspired woman was part of their defense of prophecy: "Can you see no fulfilling of the holy Word of God; which sheweth, that this may be the Time, by his Spirit visiting each Sex?"[26] The French Prophets emphasized that God, in these last days, would speak through anyone, even the young. Among those who prophesied in 1708, for example, were 11 year-old Ann Good and 13 year-olds Mary Beer and Anna Maria King.[27] However, female French Prophets, unlike their Philadelphian counterparts, did not enjoy full participation in all aspects of their community's religious life. Women prophesied, led assemblies, issued new names to followers, and participated in missions and the publication of books. But men dominated in both the ministerial functions of the group and in number.[28]

Hillel Schwartz, seeking to explain the tensions between male and female French Prophets during these years, suggests that problems may have arisen partly as an unconscious response to sexual feelings that could not be acted upon without violating or damaging the group's moral code. Furthermore, Schwartz proposes that the restricted opportunities available to women within the movement may help explain why female French Prophets chose a more "extravagant" and dramatic style of prophecy than many of their male counterparts. Because women could not participate in many of the

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[25] Turner, et. al., *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the priest and people of Chichester*, 3.

[26] Jonathan Taylor, *Warnings of the eternal spirit, spoken at Birmingham in Warwickshire; by the mouths of Jonathan Taylor, and Hannah Wharton* (London, 1711), 69.

[27] See Aspinal, et al., *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings of the Eternal Spirit.*

[28] Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 135-6.

ministerial roles of the French Prophets, they were restricted to prophesying. Yet they often did so in a very public way.[29] Indeed, between 1708 and 1712, all prophets who broke away from the movement and whom the French Prophets labeled as false were women. In 1709, for example, the French Prophet John Potter expelled Dorothy Harling for proclaiming that she was the woman described in Revelation 12. Harling left with a small number of followers.[30]

Schwartz draws in part on sociological theory in suggesting these explanations, but I would argue that the French Prophets' behavior must also be placed in the broader context of religious radicalism. When female French Prophets prophesied in a public way by imitating the Whore of Babylon or the woman in Revelation 12, they were acting out roles that would have been familiar to other radical groups of the time—including the Philadelphians. Certainly, there were differences. The French Prophets performed more dramatically than their Philadelphian counterparts, prophesying before large crowds or in public venues. And, as this chapter will contend, the group setting of the French Prophets resulted in female prophets having less autonomy as prophets than they had in the Philadelphian movement. Female French Prophets were subject to the direction of the group in a way that their Philadelphian counterparts were not. Nonetheless, the Philadelphians and the French Prophets both found the idea of a millenarianism in which women had a specifically feminized role compelling, and they both incorporated it into their prophecy. As the next sections will show, however, the French Prophets and the

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[29] Ibid., 141, 135.

[30] Ibid., 32, 35, 102, 134-46, 210-11. Samuel Keimer notes that no less than five other French Prophets also claimed to be the woman in Revelation 12 when under inspiration. See Keimer, *A Brand Pluck'd,* 80.

Philadelphians disagreed on fundamental issues of prophecy and election that prevented a lasting alliance between the two groups.

Episode One: A Failed Alliance

The French Prophets and the Philadelphians attempted to join together in the years after the French Prophets came to London. However, differences concerning doctrine and prophecy ultimately hampered the relationship between the Philadelphians and the French Prophets. This section considers a series of debates between the two groups that point to the continued importance of prophecy and election as central points of discussion among early modern radical Protestants. The crucial question at stake in these debates was one of prophetic authority: who had the authority to speak for God, and how did one communicate this authority?

The London Philadelphians had split into two groups—one at Hungerford Market and the other at Baldwins Gardens—several years before the arrival of the French Prophets in 1706. The latter group had joined with the "New Prophets," as Roach called the French Prophets, and Roach noted that "many of the Scattered of the Philadelphian fold were Collected and United to this fresh and new Appearance." Over time, however, the Baldwins Gardens' group dwindled to merely a few members. Roach was called upon to remedy the situation, and the Philadelphians and French Prophets mutually decided to end their alliance. A second attempt at a merger occurred in 1707, when the Philadelphians, French Prophets, and even some Quakers began meeting together at

Stocking Weavers' Hall. Roach was involved in this attempt, as well, but the merger did not produce what he hoped an alliance between the two groups might achieve.[31]

By 1710, the association between Roach and the French Prophets still remained uncertain. It was in this year that Roach decided to join forces with a fellow Philadelphian, Sarah Wiltshire, to attempt a synthesis of the Philadelphians and French Prophets. He hoped through this merger to fix the imperfections of the two groups.[32] Roach believed that Wiltshire had received what he called “a gift of a different kind,” being a partaker “of a spirit of both ministrations in union.” According to Roach, Wiltshire spoke in the voice of God like the French Prophets, yet she prophesied without bodily agitation like the Philadelphians.[33] But Wiltshire, even if she operated as a sort of bridge between the two groups, could not reconcile their differences. The attempt to merge the two groups ended in failure.

We have two accounts of debates that came out of this failed merger. One comes from Samuel Keimer, a disillusioned former member of the French Prophets who had originally joined the movement along with his mother and sister. Keimer's critique of the French Prophets emphasized the group's violent tendencies. He described Wiltshire as “a Woman of great Accomplishments, who had receiv'd fine Promises from the Spirit, who preach'd that Christ Jesus had interceded with his Father, that the Judgments which the rest of the Prophets had predicted, should not be inflicted.” According to Keimer, however, the French Prophets did not acknowledge Wiltshire's proclamations: “this Doctrine was oppos'd and exploded by the Spirit thro' Mary Keimer, and the Spirit precipitatedly hurry'd a young Fellow to Sarah Wiltshire, and under Agitations, he beat

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[31] Richard Roach, Rawlinson MSS D., 833/20, 31-2, Bodleian Library, Oxford.
[32] Schwartz, *The French Prophets*, 142.
[33] Rawl. MSS D., 832/77.

her in a violent manner."[34] Here we see the body used not as an oracle through which prophecy emanated, but rather as a physical force used stamped out false prophecy.

Keimer's account of the incident forms part of a larger criticism of the group's violent tendencies. But the same event—or a very similar one—is detailed in the French Prophets' "Polemica Sacro-Prophetica Anti-ROACHiana-WILTSHIREiana," a manuscript account of debates between the French Prophets and Roach and Wiltshire. In this account we gain insight into what, exactly, the debates between the two groups were about and how the violent exchange came to take place. These debates, transcribed by the French Prophets between June 1710 and June 1712, show the main cause of doctrinal disagreement to have been one of an emphasis on mercy versus judgment. The French Prophets accused Roach (and Wiltshire, his "copartner in the Philadelphian Way") of emphasizing "the love of God" at the expense of God's "equally glorious attribute of justice." In response, Roach accused the French Prophets of privileging the Law over grace.[35]

The doctrinal debate here was over the nature of the approaching millennium and whether the emphasis should be on God's great judgment or on preparation for a universal restoration. The later Philadelphians, as stated above, espoused a theology that leaned toward universalism, in which all would ultimately be restored to salvation through God's grace. Indeed, Roach publicly acknowledged his position on universal restoration by writing the preface to Jeremiah White's book, *The restoration of all things: or, a vindication of the goodness and grace of God. To be manifested at last in the*

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[34] Samuel Keimer, *A Brand Pluck'd from the Burning Exemplify'd Unparallel'd Case of Samuel Keimer* (London, 1718), 54. See also Calhoun Winton, "Keimer, Samuel (1689–1742)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. Lawrence Goldman, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

[35] "Polemica Sacro-Prophetica Anti-ROACHiana-WILTSHIREiana," Rawlinson MSS D., 1318/55-6, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

recovery of his whole creation out of their fall (London, 1712). The French Prophet John Lacy responded in November of that same year with an inspiration "occasioned by the perusing" of this book, in which he attacked the book's views on the "universal salvation of wicked men and devils also: (according to Origen's Doctrine)."[36]

But while this doctrinal conflict divided the two groups, there was a larger issue at stake: the question of prophetic authority. In a letter to a member of the group at Baldwins Gardens during the time in which they were meeting with the French Prophets. Roach had harsh words for any person who required "a Confirmation in and through himself" for any prophecy given to someone else. He asked, "Would one of the Ancient Jews to whom God sent his Prophets with a Message of his Will say I will not Believe thee O Samuell O Nathan etc. unless God give me an Extraordinary Manifestation of this Message also?"[37] Here we see key issues at play over who had the authority to prophesy and, as it followed, whether one's audience should recognize such prophecy as God's message. This debate over prophecy and authority continued to plague the interactions between Roach and the French Prophets for several years.

At a meeting of the French Prophets in June 1710, the debate boiled over in an exchange between Mary Keimer and Richard Roach. Roach began to read some of his prayers, along with an "inspiration or two" of Wiltshire's that she had first given at Baldwins Gardens. At this point, "the Spirit came upon Mary Keimer." With closed eyes, she grabbed Roach's left sleeve with her left hand. Shaking an imaginary rod in her right hand, she began to speak in a loud voice:

> M.K. Who sent thee?
> R.R. The God of Love.

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[36] Polemica Sacro Prophetica Anti-ROACHiana-WHITE-ORIGENiana," Rawl. MSS D., 1318/67.
[37] Roach, "Letter to Mrs. Jeffries," n.d., Rawl. MSS D., 833/21.

> K. By what dost thou know?
> R. By the witness of his Spirit with ME, in his Love.
> K. Take thou care, lest a false-Peace have possess'd thy soul, and thou goest on believing thou art sent from God, when thou art not sent from Him.
> R. 'Tis more than a Peace in the Soul; 'tis a Testimony.
> K. Take heed: God is the same. He Manifests not himself in many things, nay in very many which thou blindly believed He does. For, He can in no wise, nor in Any case Contradict Himself. Has He not Already Declar'd that this is not his Word? How darest thou then Presume in this Manner to Appear Declaring that It is the Voice of God when it is not?
> R. How Knowest thou that this is not the Voice of God? Or by What Spirit speakest thou? Speakest thou by the Eternal Love, or Speakest thou in part from the Eternal Justice?[38]

The debate centered on Roach's sense of assurance regarding his prophetic authority: was it real or did he have a "false-peace?" Roach emphasized his authority, claiming that he had a "testimony." But Keimer countered with the suggestion that Roach was a false prophet, even if Roach did not recognize it himself.

Differences in how the two groups prophesied contributed to these questions of prophetic authority. As we see in the above example, Roach read aloud prayers and written prophecies that had already been given in another meeting. Like other Philadelphians, Wiltshire and Roach spoke without significant physical animation (or "agitation," as they and the French Prophets called it). Both Roach and Wiltshire were literate, and they delivered much of their prophecy through the written word.[39] Keimer, on the other hand, while not unconscious, prophesied with her eyes closed. Her prophecy was highly physical; she shook one arm as if it held an imaginary rod, while grabbing onto Roach with her other arm. She prophesied in a loud voice. Moreover, she alternated between her own voice (which spoke of God in the third-person) and the voice of God

[38] Rawl. MSS D., 1318/55.

[39] The letters of Wiltshire and Roach reveal a difference in their writing skills. Roach, as an Oxford-educated clergyman, wrote without the errors of Wiltshire, who possessed more rudimentary writing skills.

(which used the first-person to refer to God). For example, immediately after Keimer engaged in the above dialogue with Roach, she shifted to the voice of God: "Consider Thou, O Man! I will confound thee, yea and bring my lofty thoughts down…How Darest Thou Presume to speak unto Me? I can with the Breath of My nostrils, blow thee into Dust. I am, I am, I am, I am, I am! And by that Name will I be known."[40] The use of the first-person was not only a powerful rhetorical tool, but it also suggested higher personal authority: the less the prophet had to channel God, the more she demonstrated her prophetic power to her audience.

Moreover, prophets did not merely alternate between their voice and God's, but the "voice of God" transitioned from prophet to prophet. For example, as soon as Mary Keimer finished her speech against Roach, the prophetic spirit left Keimer and transferred to Ann Topham, who continued to prophesy in a similar manner.[41] It is important to note that this type of prophecy required a group context. As the next section will show, the French Prophets often performed prophecy as part of a group, in which the individual's prophetic performance formed part of (and also became subject to) the narrative of the larger group.

The somatic effects of the French Prophets' prophecy also served to reinforce prophetic authority. According to Susan Juster, the French Prophets emphasized through their prophetic performances that God spoke *through* rather than *in* them. Rather than prophecy flowing through their bodies, spiritual power pulsed through their limbs and

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40 Rawl. MSS D., 1318/56.
41 Ibid., 1318/56.

muscles causing jerky and convulsive movements.[42] I propose that in addition to exhibiting a different transmission of prophecy through the body, the French Prophets' somatic effects of prophecy communicated a different message about God and power, especially in contrast to the trance-like utterings of a "passive vessel" like Sarah Wight. For example, in the debate between Mary Keimer and Richard Roach, Keimer's shaking of her arm and her loud voice made a statement about God's impending judgment just as her words did. So while the body was not passive in the sense that it agitated, it was under the control of divine inspiration. The body worked to reinforce both the prophet's message and her prophetic authority.[43]

The manifestation of prophecy via the individual and her body was a considerable part of prophetic authority, but it was not the sum. In the debate between Keimer and Roach, for example, the central debate over who spoke the true word of God also involved fundamental questions of prophecy's origin. As Roach asked Keimer, did she speak on behalf of a God of "eternal love" or a God of "eternal justice?" These were questions of origin: from where did the prophecy originate? From God? From delusion? From demonic inspiration? Was it doctrinally sound? Did it contradict scripture? In other words, was this prophet God-inspired or a "false prophet?"

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[42] Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 121, 96, 101-3. A hallmark of the French Prophets, this prophetic model marked a trend away from seventeenth-century prophecy, such as that of Quaker female prophets who sought an indwelling of the spirit in their bodies. Juster sees Lead as a transitional figure between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century models of prophecy.

[43] The arm as an instrument of divine power could take on a number of religious associations. For example, medieval arm reliquaries making the gesture of the sign of the cross could signify instruments working on behalf of the Church and calling on the grace of God. The arm, while signifying power (including the power to convey grace), functioned as part of the whole. In the case of medieval reliquaries, for example, the arm was fragmented from the body but still under the control of the head (Christ). See Cynthia Hahn, "The Voices of the Saints: Speaking Reliquaries," *Gesta* 36, no. 1 (1997): 20-31.

The idea of the “false prophet” came to the forefront in the debates between the French Prophets and the Philadelphians. We have already seen how Keimer accused Roach of having a false peace that led him to believe he had been sent from God. The issue of false prophecy arose in other debates between the two groups, as well. In late September 1710, Wiltshire, in attendance at a meeting between the two groups, began to speak “very deliberately” when Louis Joyneau, “under Agitations, went to her.” Joyneau “[was] made to Fence against her with his Head, hitting against her many times.” Wiltshire continued speaking, while Joyneau continued to assault her every time she uttered a statement. At one point he hit her so hard “so as by shaking her to shatter her voice.” Two years later, the French Prophet Henrietta Irwin was “made to go and select out a letter of Mr. Roaches (in vindicating of his spirit)…and then to tear it in pieces.” In the voice of God, Irwin proclaimed this act “as a sign whereof I have now torn in pieces that which is none of mine; but a spirit, deluding the simple.”[44]

These attacks on false prophecy formed part of a broader discourse on religious enthusiasm. Ann Taves has shown how anti-enthusiasts such as Meric Casaubon and Henry More redefined enthusiasm in the mid seventeenth century. They distinguished enthusiasm, which they associated with false inspiration or false experience, from sectarianism, which they associated with false ecclesiology and heresy. Furthermore, with the publication of Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), anti-enthusiasts began to frame religious dissent in terms of mental disease rather than heresy. Now enthusiasts became “deluded” in scientific terms.[45] Rather than being intentionally

[44] Rawl. MSS D., 1318/63-66.
[45] Ann Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 17-8.

heretical or schismatic, they had a natural, scientific cause behind their religious enthusiasm.

Anti-enthusiasts frequently portrayed the French Prophets as an example of enthusiasm and false or deluded prophecy.[46] But, as these debates show, the French Prophets also leveled claims of false prophecy against their own opponents, the Philadelphians. The question of prophetic authority and the origin of prophecy was thus one that any opponent of a prophet could draw upon. According to Mary Keimer, for example, Roach was not only theologically wrong: he was deluded by a "false peace" into thinking that he had the authority to speak for God. Moreover, as the behavior of Keimer, Joyneau, and Irwin indicated, such false words needed to be drowned out, beaten out, or torn to shreds by the true voice of God.

Episode Two: Roach, Wiltshire, and the Healing of Mary Heath

Prophetic authority was not only an issue between the French Prophets and the Philadelphians, but also within their respective groups. This section examines how the dynamics of the relationship between female prophet and follower raised questions of prophetic authority in the Philadelphian movement. It analyzes the relationship between Richard Roach and the female prophet Sarah Wiltshire, focusing on the role of gender and prophetic authority in Wiltshire's 1710/11 healing of Mary Heath and Roach's subsequent handling of the event.

Followers not only helped the female prophet to secure her position within her religious community: they also allowed her to reach an audience beyond that of her immediate community by funding, promoting, and even printing her prophetic messages.

[46] See Juster, *Doomsayers*, 28; Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*, 15-19.

Networks of religious minorities arose around female prophecy to support and promote its existence. Like the economic networks that David Hancock has described, these religious networks involved relationships that were personal, nonhierarchical, and voluntary. [47] The individual agency of prophets must be studied alongside their role as members of these larger networks because the former relied heavily on the support of the latter.

In groups such as the Philadelphians, where women took leading roles, relationships between the prophet and her followers became highly defined. This was not the case among all female prophets during this era. Early eighteenth-century Quakers like Deborah Bell continued to defend female prophecy based on biblical justifications, such as the one that there was neither male nor female in Christ (Galatians 3:28). They did not elevate female prophets to the soteriological role that the Philadelphians did.[48] But women such as Jane Lead, Antoinette Bourignon, or Eva von Buttlar did not just prophesy—they became leaders of religious communities whose members believed that these women had a special millenarian role. As Bourignon suggested, her admirers in Germany considered her a representation of the female figure in Revelation 12.[49] This type of prophet could not maintain her role without the support of a following who worked actively to ensure that her prophecy entered the public sphere.

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[47] David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Trade and Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 145. For more on the role of networks in facilitating female prophecy see Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

[48] Deborah Bell, *A Short Journal of the labours and travels...Deborah Bell* (London, 1762), 31-40.

[49] Antoinette Bourignon, *Oeuvres, vol. 19* (Amsterdam, 1717), 49-50.

In most cases, these followers and patrons were male.[50] In both Europe and Britain we find examples of male followers who promoted, facilitated, and funded the prophecy of women. These men served as brokers of female election, allowing female prophets such as Bourignon, Asseburg, and Lead to achieve the status they did in an age where women's travel and interaction in the public sphere were restricted. Pierre Poiret (1646-1719), for example, played an invaluable role in the dissemination of Bourignon's writings. A Reformed pastor from Metz, Poiret had connections throughout Europe. He spent time with Spener's group while serving Huguenot refugees in Germany, where he first discovered Bourignon. He was also in contact with the English Behmenists and with Scottish Bourignonians. Poiret edited Bourignon's writings, as well as those of the mystic Mme de Guyon.[51] While there were a number of such followers who facilitated female prophecy—including Johann Wilhelm Petersen, Baron von Knyphausen, Francis Lee, and Christian de Cort—nowhere was the relationship between female prophet and follower more developed than in the example of Richard Roach and Sarah Wiltshire.[52]

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[50] One significant exception occurred in Germany, where Elisabeth of the Palatinate served as a patron to various radical Protestants. As Lucinda Martin points out, however, Elisabeth was more concerned with freedom of conscience than she was with any specific religious practice. See Martin, "Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas at Austin, 2002), 130.

[51] Alexander MacEwen, *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1910), 173; Patricia A. Ward, *Experimental Theology in America: Madame Guyon, Fénelon, and Their Readers* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 47; Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought*, 15-6.

[52] On Johann Wilhelm Petersen and Rosamund von Asseburg see Petersen, *Letter to Some Divines* (London, 1695); Aspects of Francis Lee's relationship with Jane Lead, his mother in-law, are documented in his letters sent to others at the time of her death. See Francis Lee, "Letters of Francis Lee, c. 1704," Lambeth Palace MSS 1559, Lambeth Palace Library, London; On Baron von Knyphausen and Christian de Cort, see Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres,* 19 vols. (Amsterdam, 1686), passim. There is also a recent article by Markus Matthias that names Knyphausen as the key promoter of English Behmenism in Germany. See Markus Matthias, *"'Preußisches' Beamtentum mit radikalpietistischer 'Privatreligion': Dodo II. von Innhausen und Knyphausen (1641–1698),"* in *Der Radikale Pietismus. Zwischenbilanz und Perspektiven der Forschung*, eds. Wolfgang Breul, Marcus Meier, and Lothar Vogel (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2010), 189-209.

Roach saw Wiltshire as part of the manifestation of female prophets or "ambassadresses." In order to support Wiltshire in this role, Roach served as a liaison between Wiltshire's prophecy and the public. Nearly twenty years after Roach read aloud Wiltshire's prophecies to the French Prophets, sparking his debate with Mary Keimer, he published excerpts of Wiltshire's written prophecies in *The Imperial Standard of the Messiah Triumphant.* These prophecies, addressed mainly to the "elect," were exhortative and millenarian in nature.[53] But Roach did more than just ensure that Wiltshire's messages were disseminated to a broader public. He also entered into a partnership with her. Writing to a friend in February 1710/11, he proclaimed that "this person [Wiltshire] and I have been joined in a work together, to wrestle against the ministration of judgm[en]t in the Late Prophets and have had several contests with them in their public meetings."[54] The events surrounding Wiltshire's healing of a young woman in 1710 provide the clearest example of the multi-faceted partnership between Roach and Wiltshire. In this narrative of healing, Roach served a hybrid role as promoter, mentor, and partner of Wiltshire.

Sarah Wiltshire's healing formed part of a larger trend in late Stuart England. Jane Shaw has noted that the 1690s were a particularly fertile time for miracle claims, due in part to the political and religious upheaval that followed the Glorious Revolution.[55] There were two types of women associated with healing: those who received spontaneous healing, and those who healed others. Among the former type was the French Huguenot Marie Maillard. On 26 November 1693, the thirteen year-old Maillard was miraculously healed of a limp while reading a passage from the second chapter of Mark (specifically,

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[53] See, for example, Roach, *The Imperial Standard of the Messiah Triumphant,* 50-2.
[54] Rawl. MSS D., 832/77.
[55] Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 125-30.

the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum). Maillard, a refugee and servant in London, garnered immediate attention from neighbors, doctors, ministers, and the general public. Even Gilbert Burnet, then Bishop of Salisbury, paid Maillard a visit. Within the year, an anonymous ballad and a narrative of the miracle appeared in print. Maillard's healing also produced several similar cases among young women in London during the mid-1690s.[56]

As early as 1 February 1693/4, only about two months after Maillard's healing, the Philadelphian prophet Ann Bathurst commented on the event in her diary.[57] Bathurst had an interest in healing, in part because she believed that she also had received the power of healing. In 1691, she wrote, "I had very sensible union and strong communion with an overflow of love from the Spirit or Soul-Essence of a Friend…and thereafter an exerting forth to sensibility, the power of healing." After the earthquake in Jamaica in 1692, Bathurst described the power of healing as emanating from her "left hand, warming and glowing into my hand and arm." In 1696, she noted that she had once been healed by

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[56] See *A plain and true relation of a very extraordinary cure of Marianne Maillard in a letter to a friend* (London, 1693); *An Exact Relation of the Wonderful Cure of Mary Maillard, ... Who Was or the First Thirteen Years of Her Life* (London, 1730); Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment*, 119-21. A similar example of a printed account producing an outbreak of activity happened in Middle Germany after the publication of Rosamunde von Asseburg's visions in 1691. Judd Stitziel examines the cases of five ecstatic women (*begeisterte Mägde*) in Stitziel, "God, the Devil, Medicine, and the Word: A Controversy over Ecstatic Women in Protestant Middle Germany 1691-1693," *Central European History* 29, no. 3 (1996): 309-337. Both Maillard's and von Asseburg's examples remind us of how print culture functioned in the seventeenth century. The cases all clustered in a geographic region (London and Middle Germany, respectively), and the blurred lines between print and oral transmission of the accounts are clear. The *begeisterte Mägde* that Stitziel cites were illiterate; similarly, the Londoner Susanna Arch learned about Maillard's cure not through reading about it but rather at church. It should be pointed out that von Asseburg was literate, though, and illiteracy was not necessarily a feature of German women prophets.

[57] Ann Bathurst, *Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions,* Rawlinson MSS D., 1263/27.

another Philadelphian "by a warm touch from his right hand on the palm of my right hand, impressing a warm tincture in my hand as you would press wax with a seal."[58]

By February 1710/11, when Sarah Wiltshire performed her act of healing, the broader cultural response to miracle claims had undergone a recent change. Increasingly, claims of miracles and healing were rejected without investigation. As Shaw argues, the French Prophets caused this turning point. Shaw suggests a number of reasons why French Prophets failed to attract interest in their claims. For example, French Prophets' miracles often took place in private houses, and witnesses came from within the group, leading to the opinion that such miracles were less than credible. Moreover, the behavior of the French Prophets when under inspiration was seen as outlandish and uncouth; it was contrary to the norms of emerging politeness discourse and to the expected behavior of gentlemen, who made up a sizeable portion of London's French Prophets. Perhaps the most salient reason for the lack of investigation into the claims came from the French Prophets' failure in 1708 to achieve their well-publicized attempt to resurrect Thomas Emes, a medical practitioner and French Prophet, several months after his death.[59]

The extant sources on Wiltshire's healing do not reveal whether the event failed to reach the printing presses due to the new climate regarding miracle claims, or whether other reasons kept the healing out of the public sphere. The sources do suggest, however, that Roach played a critical role in trying to publicize the event and shape its narrative form. Both Roach and Wiltshire wrote accounts of the healing. It is clear that Roach's goal in writing an account was to set up Wiltshire's own narrative, which he did by giving the background on the situation. We learn that the idea for the healing first came

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58 Ann Bathurst, *Rhapsodical Meditations and Visions,* Rawlinson MSS D., 1262/369, 481; Rawl. MSS D., 1263/94.

59 Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England,* 153-57.

from a Philadelphian named Mrs. Laughton, whose niece, Mary Heath, had been at Bethlem Hospital for the past few months suffering from "lunacy and lameness."[60] Roach commented that Heath "had been a studious and ingenious person" before she was "seized with a distraction of the worst kind." On 15 January 1710/11, Sarah Wiltshire first received a vague answer to prayer that a miraculous healing would take place. Three weeks later, on 5 February, Heath was released from the hospital and went to stay with her aunt in London. Roach noted that Heath "had also lost the use of both her legs, and could move no otherwise than upon her knees." Desperate for a cure, Mrs. Laughton had appealed to the churches, to the meetings, to the Philadelphians and even to the University of Halle, "where she had heard there was a fresh spring of faith rising."[61]

The healing took place in two parts. In the first part, Roach played an integral role. Heath's aunt and Roach sat in a room together with Heath, and Roach described how he had a sort of spiritual battle that almost led to a fainting fit. After a "fresh and powerful gale of the Holy Spirit," he broke forth in prayer and received an answer in which the word "miracle" was repeated several times. He also indicated that he felt called at this point to leave the room. Shortly after Roach left, Heath regained her senses and "took the Bible or some other book into her hands and read with good understanding."[62] At this point, then, Heath had been cured of her "distraction."

Roach was not present for the second part of the healing, which took place on 14 February. As with the first part, he believed that it was God's will that he should leave

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[60] Rawl. MSS D., 833/33; On Mary Heath see "Admission Register, Bethlem, 28 March 1702-24 to December 1715, re: Mary Heath," Series Box A12/1, ARA-03/159, Bethlem Royal Hospital Archives, Kent.

[61] Rawl. MSS D., 833/33, 35-6.

[62] Ibid., 833/33, 37. Note that Heath "proved" that she was cured of distraction by reading from the Bible or another book. Jane Shaw suggests that women who were at the center of miracle and healing stories depended on their literate piety to establish their reputations as believable and respectable. See Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England,* 9.

the room. Wiltshire, in her account, described how "the Power came upon me." She felt Heath's leg and found "the sinews to be very hard," which worried her because she had received the promise from God that a healing would take place. Fifteen minutes later, however, this promise was fulfilled. In words strikingly similar to Ann Bathurst's description of the healing power, she wrote that "I felt an unusual warmth in my right Hand, which caused a throbbing like the motion of a pulse, and I heard a soft still voice pronounce these words, 'Do thou touch, and I will heal.'" At this point, Mrs. Laughton commented to Wiltshire that she had known miracles to be performed "by the healing operation." Wiltshire did not reply; she spoke of the healing to no one until she had the chance to discuss it with Roach. Two days later, Wiltshire heard that Heath had walked across the room without a cane or other assistance.[63]

Immediately, Roach began to take an interest in how he presented the healing to others. Ten days after the event, he wrote a letter to a friend, in which he discussed the healing, among other events in the life of the Philadelphians and French Prophets.[64] Roach and Wiltshire wrote longer accounts of the healing much later (Wiltshire's was dated 12 August 1713). These accounts likely came about because Roach decided to get the miracle recognized and validated by the Philadelphians. He took great interest in how he and Wiltshire presented the story. Wiltshire's account, for example, carefully emphasized that she spoke with no one about the healing until she had the opportunity to relate the whole matter to Roach in private. Moreover, Roach's precision in listing specific dates, names, and places suggests that he considered himself a credible witness. What stands out most in this process, however, was Roach's effort to "coach" Wiltshire

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[63] Rawl. MSS D., 833/33-4.
[64] Rawl. MSS D., 832/77-79.

by editing her narrative. Roach went through a draft of Wiltshire's account and made several suggestions to improve it. For example, he commented on her description of the power she felt in her hand at the moment of healing: "That description of the power in the hand is very good—viz—'I felt an unusual warmth in my right hand, which caused a throbbing like the motion of a pulse'; (and may be inserted to good advantage)." Elsewhere in the text, where Wiltshire had described how she felt Heath's sinews and prayed to God, Roach noted: "It should be expressed what that voice was, viz. 'do thou touch and I will heal.'"[65]

Crucially, Roach also edited Wiltshire's statement that she left the room without mentioning the miracle to anyone, so as to make her remark more emphatic.[66] This suggests that he saw himself in a role that lent authority to the situation. Wiltshire, as a female healer, did not declare the miracle; rather, she spoke to a reputable male member of her religious community who could then vouch for her. Roach's relationship to Wiltshire in this respect brings to mind similar cases in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Venice, where—as in the Philadelphian community—women dominated as visionaries. There, male spiritual directors or confessors could become "brokers" of female visionaries, just like Roach was of Wiltshire's prophecy and healing: they advised, corrected, validated, and (in some cases) promoted female visionaries. They were also acutely aware of how others might scrutinize the motives of the female visionaries with whom they associated.[67]

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[65] Ibid., 833/43-44. The edited version of Wiltshire's narrative is found among Roach's papers. It does not include his name, but it is clear that Roach was the editor of the document based on his handwriting.

[66] Ibid., 833/44. The edited text reads, "so I immediately left them without mentioning [here Roach crossed out a word and replaced it with the phrase, "anything of what I had secretly manifested on this occasion"] till I had an opportunity with Mr. Roach in private…"

[67] See Anne Jacobson Schutte, *Aspiring Saints: Pretense of Holiness, Inquisition, and Gender in the Republic of Venice, 1618-1750* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

After Roach and Wiltshire finished writing their accounts, Roach sent them out to be considered by other Philadelphians. In a letter dated 10 December 1713, he received a reply. Francis Lee, J. Coughen, and James Keith—all physicians—examined the account at the request of Roach, Wiltshire, and Mary Laughton (Heath's aunt). They read and compared several accounts and decided that, while they believed in the sincerity of several persons, "there doth not appear to us any sufficient evidence that the cure wrought upon the said Mrs. Mary Heath can strictly and properly be called miraculous."[68] The decision did not accuse Wiltshire of being deluded or a "sham healer," but neither did it confirm the healing as a miracle. In analyzing how this decision came about, we cannot overlook the fact that there was considerable tension among the Philadelphians at this point. Lee and Roach had drifted apart after the death of Lead, and there was also dissension among the Baldwins Gardens meeting group. Evidence from Roach's and Wiltshire's correspondence suggests that the elders at Baldwins Gardens did not get along with Wiltshire.[69]

More broadly, however, the entire case points to an awareness among those involved of the need to establish spiritual authority. Female prophets such as Wiltshire, Rosemund von Asseburg, Antoinette Bourignon, and Jane Lead relied on well-connected male followers to promote their prophecies in the public sphere. It was Roach who edited Wiltshire's narrative and presented it to Philadelphian doctors for verification; it was Roach who entered into partnership with Wiltshire and read aloud her prophecies to the French Prophets. Moreover, it was Roach who published Wiltshire's prophecy in *The*

[68] Rawl. MSS D., 833/47.
[69] Ibid., 832/34; 833/45. Schwartz records Coughen as a Philadelphian-turned-French Prophet, born c. 1680. See Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 306. On James Keith see Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 227-28.

Imperial Standard of the Messiah Triumphant. This relationship between female prophet and male "broker" came at a cost, however, in that it raised questions of prophetic authority by inserting another human agent into the prophetic process. Roach's public promotion of Wiltshire as a prophet and healer required him to participate in the prophetic or healing process. In editing Wiltshire's narrative and presenting it to Philadelphian doctors for verification, in reading aloud Wiltshire's prophecies to the French Prophets, and in publishing Wiltshire's prophecy*,* Roach became involved in the transmission of the message from prophet to audience.

This process could—and did—lead to accusations that the prophecy of a female prophet was not her own. For example, Francis Lee received a letter from the clergyman Henry Dodwell in 1698 questioning whether Lead's prophecies were really her own:

> I know not how your mother in-law is qualified to write the style in which her books are penned. But this I have observed, that there are many things ingredient in that style, which are quite out of the way of the education, or conversation, or even reading of women…I very much doubt whether she would be able to give an account of the terms used in the writings which go under her name, if she were critically examined concerning them. But I think I have discovered footsteps of another, and a more likely author of them. I mean Dr. Pordage. I find she has been very intimate with him ever since the time that she has set up for prophetic visions. She calls him her fellow-traveller; she generally pretends to have her revelations when he was praying by her.

Drawing on examples from the early Church, Dodwell reminded Lee how it was frequently the case among heretics "to make their women disciples believe themselves prophetesses."[70]

What we see in this episode, then, is a return to the question that marked the debate between Keimer and Roach: how did the inspired person communicate that her prophecies—or healings or miracles—originated from God? Roach and Wiltshire were

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[70] "Letter from Henry Dodwell to Francis Lee," 23 August 1698, in Christopher Walton, ed., *Notes and Materials for an Adequate Biography of…William Law* (London, 1854), 192-93.

conscious of this problem as they framed their narratives of Wiltshire's healing of Mary Heath in order to get the miracle recognized by other Philadelphians. But the styling of prophecy to address questions of its authority and origin came at a cost, especially in the case of female prophets such as Wiltshire. The reliance of female prophets on followers who could help validate their prophecy or bring their work into the public sphere raised questions of prophetic authority because the role of the followers became an issue. While Wiltshire's audience did not directly accuse her of feigning the miracle, Roach and Wiltshire clearly expressed a heightened consciousness of how they conveyed the event to others. There was an element of performativity in the process. The next section will explore this connection between prophetic authority and the performative nature of prophecy more fully through a study of the French Prophets.

Episode Three: The French Prophets, Theatricality, and D'Urfey's *Modern Prophets*

A defining feature of the French Prophets was the extent to which their agitations, healings, and prophecies occurred in public settings. While Civil War prophets had performed in the streets, late seventeenth-century prophets—including Pietists, Quakers, Labadists, and Philadelphians—had generally restricted their non-written prophecies to meetinghouses and domestic settings. But the French Prophets returned once again to a more public "stage;" indeed, one could argue that they produced a more theatrical prophecy than that of their late seventeenth-century counterparts. Not only did they sometimes prophesy in settings that attracted crowds of onlookers, but their performances also generated a flurry of printed works condemning these strange agitations as contrived. The French Prophets' theatricality and prophetic authority thereby became a central issue.

This last section considers prophetic authority as negotiated between prophet and critic. It looks at the French Prophets (and in particular the prophet Elizabeth Gray) to consider how the treatment of prophecy as a "performance" highlighted the problem of prophetic authority.

In his brief consideration of the French Prophets' theatricality, Hillel Schwartz explores how French Prophets' performances might have reflected the personal concerns of the actors. In other words, he looks at the group for clues about the individual.[71] My focus here, however, is to consider how the theatricality of the French Prophets raised new concerns about prophetic authority. Theatricality, as Elizabeth Burns defines it, is "any kind of behavior perceived and interpreted by others and described (mentally or explicitly) in theatrical terms." In ordinary life (as opposed to the theater) theatricality implies or indicates composed or constructed behavior.[72] For prophets, then, accusations of theatricality equated to attacks on prophetic authority because constructed prophecy was not divinely inspired. The human agent of such prophecy, rather than being a passive vessel of God's message, instead became a scheming or deluded actor.

The French Prophets faced such accusations immediately after they came to London. The millenarianism of the French Prophets, which Hillel Schwartz describes as "turbulent and menacing,"[73] came across as threatening or far-fetched to most early eighteenth-century Londoners. More than one periodical referred to the arrival with disdain. The *Observator*, a paper that took a polemical stance against Jacobitism and High Church interests, had written in support of the "Protestant interest" in the Cévennes

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[71] Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 251-61.

[72] Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life* (London: Longman, 1972), 13, 33.

[73] Schwartz, *The French Prophets*, 54.

on multiple occasions.[74] However, in 1707, it greeted with opprobrium the Prophets' arrival in London, making fun of their "phrensical Notions of Religion."[75] The *Observator's* criticisms fell in plentiful company. According to Schwartz' calculations, some ninety books, pamphlets, and periodical articles were published against the French Prophets between 1707 and 1710.[76] This was a considerable number, especially considering that only a few hundred persons were affiliated with the French Prophets.[77] Criticism spilled over into the streets, as well. One account from Birmingham described how a mob attacked the French Prophets at their meeting there.[78]

Critics were responding to something new in the prophecy of the inspired.[79] The French Prophets' behavior was often troubling to audiences, who wondered, as Schwartz puts it, whether such prophecy was not symptomatic "of something abnormal in the soul-body alliance."[80] As one opponent declared, "their Bodies are strangely and amazingly Agitated, and the Organ of their Voice is Over-ruled and commanded, and used by this Spirit of the Lord, as a supernatural Agent." Richard Roach, writing after his falling out with the French Prophets, described the Prophets as "speaking in violent agitations of Body."[81]

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[74] For more on the *Observator* see Lee Sonsteng Horlsey, "The Trial of John Tutchin, Author of the 'Observator'," in *The Yearbook of English Studies* 3 (1973): 124-40. Tutchin, the *Observator's* editor, was sufficiently critical of the French Prophets that in 1707 he proposed the building of a religious Bedlam for the French Prophets and their ilk. See Hillel Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium*, 51-2.

[75] *Observator* 6, no. 20 (May 7-10, 1707).

[76] Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium,* 40.

[77] Hillel Schwartz has compiled a chronological profile of all French Prophets (1706-1746); he lists the number at 525, but this is for the entire forty-year period of his study. See Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 297-315.

[78] G. P., *The Shortest Way with the French Prophets* (London, 1708), 6.

[79] On the reception of the French Prophets see Susan Juster*, Doomsayers*; Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*; Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium.*

[80] Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium,* 31.

[81] O.E. *The shaking-prophets alarm'd, in beholding a lighted candle...* (Dublin, 1711), 1; Roach, *The Great Crisis,* 26.

Opponents labeled the prophets' behavior as exaggerated and *outré*, while the prophet's audience became “civil.” Like early Quakers who donned sackcloth and ashes or engaged in the practice of going naked as a sign, the French Prophets were often drawn to dramatic or signifying behavior. One French Prophetess “undress[ed] her self stark Naked at the Popish Chapel in Lincoln's Inn Fields” and preached before the congregation. She received sympathy from several of the men and women who believed her to be a “poor distracted person.” The author of the account remarked how “she refused their civility and would not be cover'd.”[82] Other criticisms emphasized the French Prophets’ foreign connections. One particularly patriotic critic wondered how the French Prophets could believe that God would send messengers to warn England; after all, these prophets were no longer under persecution but were living in a Protestant country where “we have all Toleration.”[83] Not surprisingly, some opponents went so far as to link the French Prophets to the stock villains of the early eighteenth century, the Jacobites and Jesuits.[84]

From their earliest days in London, the French Prophets had associations with theatricality. Starting in November 1706, François-Maximilien Misson, a Huguenot, recorded the experiences of the émigrés who had witnessed the prophecy and miracles in the Cévennes. This publication came to print in April 1707 under the title *Le théâtre sacré des Cévennes; ou, récit de diverses merveilles nouvellement opérées*. John Lacy

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82 *The French prophetess turn'd adamite being a true and comical account of a pretended French prophetess* (London, 1707), n. p.

83 Humfrey, *An Account of the French Prophets,* 15-*6.*

84 See, for example, Thomas D'Urfey, *The modern prophets: or, New wit for a husband. A comedy. As it is acted at the Theatre-Royal in Drury-Lane, by Her Majesty's servants* (London, 1709). See also Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium,* 30.

translated the work into English that same year.[85] Hillel Schwartz notes other theatrical elements of the French Prophets. For example, the three original French Prophets from the Cévennes—Daudé, Fage, and Marion—were sentenced to stand on the scaffold (a sort of stage) at Charing Cross after being convicted of blasphemy and sedition. They attracted a large crowd of spectators, who pelted them with various objects. While they were forced to stand on the stage, and thus not "actors" in the sense of those who chose to engage in prophetic performances, their response suggests a certain performativity—especially the delight they received in drawing tears from some spectators.[86] Even the cycle of many of the French Prophets' prophecies and miracles had a theatrical element. When French Prophets delivered warnings to the various cities they visited, they often traveled in a group like a theater troupe, performing their prophecy before large crowds and then leaving.[87]

As Susan Juster and Hillel Schwartz have both shown, opponents of the French Prophets used the idea of prophecy as a theatrical performance against the French Prophets. Many critics suggested that the French Prophets were posturing. For example,

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[85] Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 78-9. See also Georgia Cosmos, *Huguenot Prophecy and Clandestine Worship in the Eighteenth Century: 'The Sacred Theatre of the Cévennes'* (Burlington VT: Ashgate, 2005). The English translation is entitled *A Cry from the desart.*

[86] Schwartz, *The French Prophets* 110-12.

[87] See, for example, Mary Aspinal et. al., *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings of the Eternal Spirit*; Mary Beer, Mary Keimer, and Ann Watts, *A Collection of Prophetical Warnings Pronounc'd Under the Operation of the Holy Eternal Spirit, To the Inhabitants in and about the City of Bristol, etc*.; James Cuninghame, *Fifteen warnings of the Eternal Spirit, pronounc'd by the mouth of James Cuninghame, being mostly explications of scripture* (London, 1712); Thomas Dutton, *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the city of Edenburgh [sic], in Scotland; by the mouths of Thomas Dutton, Guy Nutt, and John Glover*; J.P., *Warnings of the eternal spirit, pronounc'd in and about London* (London, 1711); King, Anna Maria et. al., *Warnings of the eternal spirit, pronounced at Edinburgh, out of the mouths of 1. Anna Maria King. 2. John Moult. 3. Mary Turner. 4. Ann Topham* (Edinburgh, 1709); Margaret MacKenzie, *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the city of Edenburgh, pronounced by the mouths of Margaret MacKenzie, and James Cuninghame* (London, 1710); John Moult, *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the city of Dublin. Pronounc'd by the mouths of John Moult, Guy Nutt and John Parker* (Dublin, 1710); Jonathan Taylor, *Warnings of the eternal spirit, spoken at Birmingham in Warwickshire; by the mouths of Jonathan Taylor, and Hannah Wharton*; Turner, *Warnings of the eternal spirit, to the priest and people of Chichester; pronounc'd by Mary Turner, Ann Topham, and Anna Maria King*.

"pretended," a term that had been thrown at the Quakers and Philadelphians, became one of the most frequently used terms in published attacks on the French Prophets. The anonymous author of one pamphlet wrote how "those Pretended Prophets, acted by ill designing Persons, continued their Assemblies in Soho, utter'd their False Predictions with great Noise and Vociferation, to the great Scandal and Disturbance of the Sober Inhabitants of the Part of the Town."[88] Another pamphlet described the actions of a female prophet who was "inspired with a pretended Spirit."[89] A third included tests or rules to determine whether a prophet was "false."[90]

Accusations that the French Prophets were pretending often drew on theatrical language. Jonas Barish has noted that terms borrowed from the theater and used to describe others almost always had a negative connotation.[91] Such was the case with opponents of the French Prophets, who drew on theatrical expressions to suggest that the French Prophets were playing a role. This mode of observation about the French Prophets dated back to the Cévennes. As Jean Louvreleul noted of a nine year-old Camisard boy's performance at a Mass, "it appear'd that he had been taught to play the Enthusiast, and had learnt a short Speech."[92] One critical account of the French Prophets in London included an extended metaphor on their theatricality. The pamphlet noted how the French Prophets, "having been so unpolitick as to erect their Stage here in London, their Legerdemain was soon smell'd out." Yet, despite the sentencing of several Prophets for

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88 [Mr. Collett], *The Honest Quaker: Or, the Forgeries and Impostures of the Pretended French Prophets and their Abettors Expos'd* (London, 1707), "Advertisement."

89 *The French prophetess turn'd adamite being a true and comical account of a pretended French prophetess*.

90 See, for example, O. E., *The Shaking-Prophets Alarm'd,* 20.

91 Jonas Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 1.

92 Jean Louvreleul, *The history of the French prophets. Their pretended revelations, false prophecies and hypocritical behaviour, on that account; with the many bloody murders, ... committed by them, ... in the Sevennes, ... from the beginning of that rebellion, till the total suppression thereof* (London, 1709), 158.

blasphemy, the group still continued its theatrical behavior: "the Ring Leaders resolv'd to pursue the Plot, and to act themselves in the Farce…John L[ac]y…undertook the Topping and Shining Part."[93]

This notion that the French Prophets were "playing a part" had ramifications for their autonomy as prophets. Hence while Ann Bathurst and Jane Lead suggested that they—whether under inspiration or not—had been chosen as representatives of the apocalyptic female figure in Revelation 12, female French Prophets tended to imitate such figures when under inspiration.[94] Elizabeth Gray impersonated the Whore of Babylon, the female figure known as "Babylon the Great, the Mother of Prostitutes and Abominations of the Earth" whose apocalyptic downfall is prophesied in Revelation. Gray barricaded the door, took off her clothing, and put on a wig and hat that she found in the room.[95] Keimer remarked that he saw his sister, a "lusty young Woman, fling another Prophetess upon the Floor…stamping upon her with Violence. This was adjudg'd to be a Sign of the Fall of the Whore of Babylon."[96] Another account reveals a similar reenactment involving a French Prophet who, "in his Inspiration fell upon a Prophetess inspired too, with all Violence beating her on the Breast, striking, stamping on her, and kicking her, using some such Words, 'Thus shall it be done to the Whore of Babylon', and yet the Woman rose and felt no Pain."[97]

These women were engaged in a different behavior from their Philadelphian counterparts. They were not "ambassadresses" of Divine Wisdom; they were enacting a

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93 [Mr. Collett], *The Honest Quaker,* A3. The "farce" here refers to John Lacy's attempt at a miracle involving Elizabeth Gray.

94 See, for example, Keimer, *Brand Pluck'd from the Burning Exemplify'd Unparallel'd Case of Samuel Keimer*, 80.

95 Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 135.

96 Keimer, *A Brand Pluck'd*, 54; See also Keimer, *A Search After Religion,* 16.

97 Humfrey, *An Account of the French Prophets,* 16.

role while under prophetic inspiration. This role involved enactment of the apocalyptic events prophesied in the Bible, but it also required that the prophet operate within a group context. The prophet's words and actions only made sense in the context of another's (or others') prophecy. Here we see another point of contrast with Philadelphians such as Jane Lead. The French Prophets emphasized the judgment that would characterize the end times, and thus part of their focus was the apocalyptic events surrounding this judgment. But Lead, who emphasized universal restoration, directed her attention to the unsealing and revealing of new secrets in the last days. She believed that the second coming would involve a peaceful and smooth transition to the next world, one involving continuity rather than rupture.[98] She had a highly individualized role as a prophet, sharing esoteric spiritual insights and secrets that had been opened to her.

Moreover, the association with Divine Wisdom was empowering for female Philadelphian prophets. Richard Roach went so far as to frame Lead's prophetic activity and the eschatological role of Divine Wisdom in terms of female messianism.[99] While some female Prophets claimed to be the woman in Revelation 12, not all roles that female French Prophets took on in their prophecy were positive. The Whore of Babylon—one of the most negative constructions of the female—was a role that female French Prophets enacted. But it was not one that male Prophets took on, which once again points to the subjugation of female French Prophets' authority to larger group interests.

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[98] Hirst, *Jane Leade: Biography of a Seventeenth-Century Mystic,* 109, 114. Citing W. H. Oliver, Hirst aligns post-millennialists with discontinuity and a violent transition, while she links pre-millennialists with continuity and a peaceful transition. See Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1978). Catastrophic millenarianism, however, can be found in both pre- and post-millennial thought. See Wessinger, "Millennialism With and Without the Mayhem," 49.

[99] Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 195-96.

In one arena, however, the emphasis on the group over the individual helped female French Prophets. In general, female French Prophets were subject to the broader criticisms lobbied at the French Prophets, but they were not singled out for criticism to the extent that earlier female enthusiasts such as the Quakers had been.[100] Notwithstanding, a few women did attract considerable negative attention for their prophetic behavior. One of these women was Elizabeth (Betty) Gray, who faced opposition and criticism both from within the French Prophets' ranks and from outside the group. While the French Prophets never expelled Gray, she eventually lost her respected status as a prophet.[101] Her problems began as early as August 1707, when she proclaimed that John Lacy would heal her. The miracle never materialized (although Gray claimed that it merely had been deferred). Later that year, Lacy struck Gray dumb for disobeying divine orders; Richard Roach later restored her voice. Gray also attracted attention for her dramatic imitation of the Whore of Babylon in public. Then, in 1712, John Lacy left his wife to live with Gray, claiming that it was God's will.[102] Starting with the failed miracle, Gray began to alienate her fellow believers. Sarah Wiltshire, for example, wrote a letter to Roach in which she proclaimed how Gray's example served as a reminder to avoid self-exaltation: "for none of the prophetesses was so highly blessed being set as a figure of the Church and Spouse of Christ for a time and now who is less than she? She's now like an empty useless vessel."[103]

Self-exaltation conflicted with the idea of the prophet as a vessel through which the word of God flowed. But there was also something else at work here. Gray, as a

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[100] Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England,* 154.
[101] Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 145-46.
[102] Ibid., 99-100, 107-8; 135; Timothy C. F. Stunt, "John Lacy (bap. 1664, d. 1730)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.*
[103] Rawl. MSS D., 832/34-5.

French Prophet, prophesied as part of the entire group of French Prophets. By engaging in acts that conflicted with group interests and that drew attention to herself, she became "useless" not only as a prophetic vessel but also as a member of the group and its collective prophecy. This suggests that women in the French Prophet movement like Dorothy Harling and Elizabeth Gray, while accorded full status as prophets, were not accorded the authority that the "female ambassadresses" of the Philadelphian movement had.

Gray's controversial reputation extended well beyond the French Prophets. When Thomas D'Urfey decided to write a play deriding the French Prophets, he chose Elizabeth Gray as the model for his female protagonist. In his preface, he implied that Betty Gray was well known for being a pretended prophet, scandalous and abominable. She may also have been on the stage. His comment that her character was known by the "play-house, and half the town besides" may refer to Gray's having had an association with Drury Lane at one point.[104]

Religious enthusiasm had a longstanding connection to accusations of lewdness and lasciviousness, and women enthusiasts especially were often labeled as sexually immoral. Such a label was a variation of the construction of the "disorderly woman," who threatened social order through her sexuality and power. The French Prophets were not exempt from such associations. But Gray's opponents also linked her to the theater (or at least to theatricality), and the connection between theater, gender, sexuality, and social instability was particularly heated at the turn of the eighteenth century. It was during the Restoration that female actors first portrayed women on stage. Jean Marsden has argued

[104] Thomas D'Urfey, *The Modern Prophets: or, New Wit for a Husband* (London, 1709), Preface. Schwartz also comments on Gray's possible connection to Drury Lane. See Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 254.

that the representation of women could not be separated from the representation of their sexuality, leading to the stage becoming a source of cultural anxiety in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[105] Stage women became more than actresses; they stood before the public and represented the cultural view of proper social codes of behavior and propriety.[106] This understanding of the troubled connection between gender and theatricality at the beginning of the eighteenth century informs our understanding of the French Prophets (and especially Betty Gray) as theatrical beings. The public agitations of the female French Prophets were filtered through the same lens of social and cultural anxieties that shaped the early eighteenth-century London stage.

In the case of Thomas D'Urfey's satirical comedy, *The Modern Prophets: or, New Wit for a Husband*, the theater and the French Prophets' theatricality came together. D'Urfey's play, produced at Drury Lane in late 1708, lasted three performances. In his preface to the published edition (1709), D'Urfey pointed out the bad timing of the play's release, which included the death of Queen Anne's husband and the dispersion of the French Prophets. D'Urfey believed that, had the play been performed during the French Prophets' trial or after the failure of Lacy to resurrect Emes, it might have run for much longer.[107] Nonetheless, he did manage to get the play published the following year.

D'Urfey's play was one of several written in the first half of the eighteenth century that satirized religious enthusiasm's theatricality, the immorality or gullibility of its female devotees, and the corrupt power of its male leaders.[108] One such example was Luise Adelgunde Gottsched's 1736 comedy, entitled *Pietism in Petticoats* (*Die*

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[105] Jean Marsden, *Fatal Desire: Women, Sexuality, and the English Stage, 1660-1720* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 4.
[106] Ibid., 60, 79, 99, 137, 192-94.
[107] D'Urfey, *The Modern Prophets,* Preface.
[108] Other genres of literature also addressed religious satire. Jonathan Swift's well-known *A Tale of a Tub*, published in 1704 and written in the late 1690s, parodied dissenters.

Pietisterey im Fischbeinrocke). The play was partly her own and partly an adaptation of a satire on the Jansenists authored by Guillaume Hyacinthe Bougeant several years prior, called *La femme docteur, ou la théologie janséniste tombée en quenouille* (*The Female Scholar, or Jansenist Theology from the Distaff Side*).[109] Gottsched's play revealed both the gullibility and the naïveté of the female zealots under a Pietist minister's sway. She reworked the language of Pietist tracts, creating a parody out of the mystical language of Pietist theologians.[110]

A similar attack on religious enthusiasm appeared in the mid eighteenth-century plays that satirized the transatlantic revivalist George Whitefield. As Harry Stout has argued, Whitefield's dramatic preaching had clear parallels to theater, especially in London and Bristol, where theater was a familiar institution of eighteenth-century life. Critics such as Alexander Garden and the *Boston Evening Post* remarked on Whitefield's theatricality when he preached.[111] The comparison likely cut deep for Whitefield, who detested the theater and frequently preached against it. The war between Whitefield and theater culminated in the publication of two plays that satirized the evangelist, turning around the accusations of sexual immorality that Whitefield leveled at the theater. The first play, Charles Macklin's *A Will and No Will* (1746), included the character of an adulterous Methodist itinerant preacher. The second, Samuel Foote's *The Minor,* included the character of "Dr. Squintum" (a reference to Whitefield's strabismus). Squintum

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[109] Thomas Kerth and John R. Russell, "Introduction," in L. A. Gottsched, *Pietism in Petticoats and Other Comedies,* transl. by Thomas Kerth and John R. Russell (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1994), xvii.
[110] Ibid, xviii; Gottsched, *Pietism in Petticoats and Other Comedies,* 70.
[111] Harry Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eedrmans, 1991), 94, 112, 130.

associated with a procurer, Mrs. Cole, who encouraged a young girl to a life of Methodism and prostitution.[112]

Thirty years before “Dr. Squintum,” D'Urfey recognized that the theatricality of the French Prophets could be mimicked on stage. D'Urfey wrote an epistle dedicatory and a preface to the published version of his play, in which he explained his “satyrical endeavour to expose [the Prophets] as they deserved:”

> My intention in writing this Comedy was very serious and moral, and grounded on a resolution, encourag'd by some, both wise and learned Persons, which was to expose the ridiculous Attempt of some Impostors, to set up for true Prophets, undermine reveal'd Religion, and covertly allure the Mob to favour the late Invasion, and the Pretender's Interest.

D'Urfey connected the French Prophets to a number of cultural anxieties, including Jacobitism, a fear of all things French, and religious radicalism. Indeed, he took the moral cause of his play—to expose these prophets as false—so seriously that he reversed a common trope in the satire of religious enthusiasm: he wrote the plot “in a graver method than usual,” avoiding “loose intriguing, cuckold-making, etc. which generally stuff other plays.”[113]

D’Urfey made much of this decision, and he even included an epilogue from his lead actress that poked fun at him: “Of all the Maggots that infest the Brain,/Our Poet has the strangest, I'll maintain:/For that this Play should be design'd for taking,/Without Intrigue, or Smut, or Cuckold making.”[114] D’Urfey accomplished his task by reconstructing the female protagonist of the play. In an age where the actress was an emblem of female sexuality, this was a striking move. Elizabeth Gray became Betty

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[112] Ibid., 242-45.
[113] D'Urfey, *The Modern Prophets*, Preface. D’Urfey’s comments about the Pretender’s “interest” refer to James Francis Edward, the son of James II, who sailed to Scotland with French troops in March 1708.
[114] Ibid., Epilogue.

Plotwell, a clever schemer but hardly the “lewd” woman that D’Urfey claimed Gray to be. His excuse for this creative license was that he feared the “original nauseous character would shock the virtuous part of the female audience.” One scholar has suggested that D’Urfey may have been responding in part to pressures to cut down on the amount of female sexuality portrayed on stage.[115] But D’Urfey’s reworking of Gray into Plotwell not only spoke to increasingly squeamish audiences: it also went against the broader cultural reputation of female agitators—and, more specifically, the reputation of Elizabeth Gray herself. It portrayed the female enthusiast not as lascivious but as a schemer aiming for marriage.

More importantly, the less sensational character of Betty Plotwell also served to further D’Urfey’s goal of exposing false prophecy. Rather than focusing on intrigue and cuckolding, the play highlighted the falseness of the French Prophets. It underscored the theatrical nature of Betty Plotwell, thus destabilizing the French Prophets' authority. Betty stood out because she was so blatantly clever in constructing her false prophecies and her theatricality. A schemer (hence the name Plotwell), Betty had made a deal with her lover, Ned. She would join in the prophets' agitations in order to get close to Ned's uncle, Squire Whimsey, and win his estate for Ned. In return, Ned would agree to marry Betty. Betty spoke openly of her theatrical skills as a false prophet to Ned: “I'm a rare actress you must know, and perform my rants, and my groans, my flights, and my fancies with exact method: I manage my soap for a foaming, better than any eastern gypsy; and

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[115] Ibid., Preface; John McVeagh, *Thomas Durfey and Restoration Drama,* 2nd ed. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2000), 29. The eighteenth-century public had a complicated relationship with what they perceived to be the morality—or lack thereof—of the stage. They lamented the immorality of libertine dramas, while at the same time they welcomed revivals of Restoration plays. See Barish, *The Antitheatrical Prejudice,* 238.

have so pretty a trick to make my belly swell."[116] She was not the only "pretender." All of the French Prophets in the play (most of whom were based on actual Prophets) were "impostors" or "sham-prophets." Indeed, Betty commented to Magus, the leader, that "our Prophetical Design is only a Roguish Trick to disturb the Nation, and advance our own Profit."[117]

D'Urfey continued his attack on the French Prophets' authority throughout the play. In one scene, three tradesmen attempt to define prophecy. One asks what a prophet is, and a second struggles to come up with a definition: "a Prophet of the Old Times was a kind of a, sort of a, as one might say in a manner look ye, by the way upon Occasion, do ye mind me Neighbour, was one that by way of Learning or so, could a—a—." The third man tries to help him out by saying, "write and read, and cast accompts I warrant." D'Urfey contrasted this nebulous understanding of the ancient prophet with the "modern" French Prophets, who were easy to define: "a parcel of illiterable maggot heads, that go about groaning and snuffling, only to hatch roguery."[118] D'Urfey also made fun of the prophets' language, much like Gottsched later ridiculed that of her Pietist subjects. For example, when Betty tells Kate, the Prophets' hostess at Enfield, that Ned "is shortly to be one of the Chosen," Kate responds, "Chosen! Ay, amongst young Wenches he's one of the Chosen indeed."[119]

D'Urfey further solidified the link between the real French Prophets and the characters in his play by adapting several of the French Prophets' highly publicized events to his plot. Betty Plotwell impersonated the Whore of Babylon as her real-life

[116] D'Urfey, *The Modern Prophets*, 11.
[117] Ibid., 18.
[118] Ibid., 49.
[119] Ibid., 43.

model, Elizabeth Gray, had done. She also beat several other Prophets and struck Ned with a rod, in what was likely a reference to similar attacks instigated by female prophets such as Mary Keimer.[120] Act IV included a failed resurrection of a doctor, in what was clearly a reference to John Lacy's botched attempt to raise Dr. Emes from the dead. The end of the play rings true to D'Urfey's promise to produce a moral: the Prophets are carted off to prison to await their trial for blasphemy—yet another parallel to the real French Prophets, who were brought to trial for the same crime in 1707.[121]

Through all of these examples, D'Urfey ridiculed the prophetic authority of the French Prophets. By reworking Plotwell's character, D'Urfey created a character that gained attention for her prophetic posturing, rather than for her comedic intrigues. Moreover, D'Urfey's work demonstrates how religious enthusiasm and prophecy in early eighteenth-century London became conflated with other cultural tensions. By the end of the play, the Jacobite invasion plot that the Prophets had attempted to participate in had been foiled, but not before D'Urfey planted a strong association between these prophetic "pretenders" and "the Pretender." The French Prophets essentially used their prophecy as a pretext to hide "rebellious evil."[122] Thus, *The Modern Prophets* serves as an example of how critics used the theatricality of the French Prophets to undermine their prophetic authority. Through highly publicized miracles, prophecies, and trials, the French Prophets performed acts of prophecy that had some resonances with the theater. But such public,

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[120] Ibid., 56.

[121] See Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 84, 94. The French Prophets were also charged with sedition, a reminder of how threatening their group appeared to those concerned with social order. Blasphemy was a frequent accusation made against radical religionists. At one level, the construction of blasphemy signaled a form of toleration by distinguishing heresy (disputed beliefs) from blasphemy (which implied a certain maliciousness that threatened social order). Blasphemy laws in England, such as the Blasphemy Acts of 1650 and 1698, were aimed at addressing religious dissent. There were few prosecutions, however. See Leo Damrosch, *The Sorrows of the Quaker Jesus: James Nayler and the Puritan Crackdown on the Free Spirit* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 196.

[122] D'Urfey, *The Modern Prophets*, 26.

dramatic performances came at a price: their audience could turn the spectacle around and attack these "actors" who feigned their prophecy for corrupt ends.

Conclusion

As all three cases in this chapter have shown, it was impossible to separate prophecy from its critical reception, whether that reception came from within the group or from outside audiences. Like the other prophets in this study, the Philadelphians and the French Prophets debated doctrinal notions of election, judgment, and grace. But they also debated notions of election as it related to prophetic calling: how did one validate the origins of his or her prophecy? What did true prophecy look like? What was the relationship between prophet and audience? The parameters of these questions adapted over time as prophecy itself changed. Hence as prophets reconstructed the relationship between prophecy and gender, and as prophecy entered the public sphere in new ways, the Philadelphians and French Prophets encountered new challenges in communicating and negotiating their prophetic authority, as the above examples show.

While the three cases considered here speak to questions of gender, performance, and prophetic authority, they also share a time and place in common: early eighteenth-century London. Prophetic authority came into play any time a person—male or female—claimed to speak for God. But it became a particular issue after the arrival of the French Prophets, as the myriad publications against the Prophets indicate. What made late Stuart London an environment in which questions of prophetic authority proliferated? In answering this question, one cannot overlook the role played by religious and political crisis. Recent scholarship has begun to challenge historiography that frames

the mid seventeenth-century Civil Wars as revolutionary, while relegating the Glorious Revolution to a peaceful afterthought. Scholars such as Tim Harris, Tony Claydon, and Steven Pincus have shown that there was a substantial crisis over the nature of Protestantism and its relationship to the British state in the late Stuart and early Hanoverian periods.[123] Tim Harris, for example, has argued that a fundamental transformation to British polity took place between the 1680s and 1720s, one whose heritage dated to the Glorious Revolution rather than to the British Civil Wars. This transformation involved the solidification of Britain as Protestant and as safe from the threat of continental "popery."[124]

If we approach the late Stuart period as a time of crisis and transformation, then we gain new insight into why the French Prophets' prophetic authority became an issue. Their prophecy emerged out of a period of religious and political crisis, just as the Fifth Monarchists' or early Quakers' prophecy had. In 1706, the English were zealously Protestant yet at the same time closely linked to the European continent, which was majority Catholic. They spoke a language of national election, but at the same time they identified as part of an international Protestant community that included continental Europeans.[125] It was into this environment of paradox—a pull between British Protestantism as national and British Protestantism as part of a cosmopolitan Protestant community—that the French Prophets arrived. As Hillel Schwartz points out, this paradox informed all levels of society. The illiterate had sympathies for those whom the Catholics persecuted, yet they were suspicious of all French people. The literate were

[123] See Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England, 1660-1760* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Tim Harris*, Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (New York: Allen Lane, 2006); Steven Pincus, *1688: The First Modern Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009).
[124] See Harris, *Revolution.*
[125] Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England, 1660-1760*, 1-12.

aware of current controversies regarding revealed religion versus reason, yet they had not yet abandoned either.[126]

The French Prophets also arrived at a time when "Anglicanism" was a contested term between High Churchmen and Latitudinarians. Moreover, they arrived at a time when the perceived threat of Catholicism remained a present concern, and when Deists, scientists, and radical Protestants debated miracles and prophecy. Britons with varying interests thus approached the French Prophets as an opponent whom they could attack as they staked out broader claims about religious enthusiasm and its relationship to science, religion, politics, and the public sphere. [127] As "outsiders" who came to England in a time of crisis, the French Prophets drew considerable attention from all—including the Philadelphians who had hoped to find in these French Prophets a possibly ally.

Years after the French Prophets' movement died out, a cultural memory of the group continued. Susan Juster and Jon Butler have pointed out, for example, that later eighteenth-century Britons traced religious enthusiasm in their own day back to the French Prophets rather than to the Civil War sectarians. The French Prophets became the "antihero of the transatlantic revival."[128]

The association of the French Prophets with their later eighteenth-century legacy and the emphasis on the Civil Wars at the expense of the late Stuart crises are two factors which have led to the development of a historiographical narrative that creates a divide between seventeenth-century prophecy and eighteenth-century prophecy, and that tends to gloss over prophecy in the period between the Restoration and the arrival of the French

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[126] Schwartz, *Knaves, Fools, Madmen, and that Subtile Effluvium,* 30.
[127] For a consideration of the various critiques of French Prophets see Ibid., 31-70.
[128] Juster, *Doomsayers,* 24; Jon Butler, "'Enthusiasm Described and Decried': The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (1982): 323.

Prophets.[129] I would argue, however, that this division between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prophecy is artificial. Prophecy continued throughout the period, and the connections between its seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century representations were considerable. A more complete picture of early modern British Atlantic prophecy can be gained from considering prophecy as a series of manifestations that recurred throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. A number of factors defined these manifestations. One was the natural ebb and flow that occurred within various radical religious movements as they entered their second generation. Also at play were changes that cut across religious movements, such as the shift to a more gendered female prophecy in the late seventeenth century. Another factor was the intensity of outside social and political crises, such as those that arose out of the Civil Wars, the Restoration, or the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. And, as the final chapter of this dissertation will argue, transsectarian and transnational encounters among radical Protestants also determined the course of prophecy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lastly, there were the adjustments in how the prophet and her audience negotiated prophetic authority. But while prophecy and the factors that shaped prophecy changed over time, the need of the prophet to establish prophetic authority—to convince her fellow believers, her followers, and her broader audience that God had chosen her as a vessel of prophecy—remained constant.

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[129] The narrative owes much to the chronological parameters of the various studies in question. Ann Taves begins her study with the French Prophets (see Taves, *Fits, Trances, and Visions*)*;* Phyllis Mack essentially ends her study before the arrival of the French Prophets, although she does mention them briefly in passing (see Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women*); Schwartz pays little attention to the Civil War prophets and early Quakers, but he does consider late seventeenth-century prophets such as Jane Lead (see Schwartz, *The French Prophets*); Juster argues that the French Prophets were transitional figures between medieval/early modern prophets and eighteenth-century visionaries; Sarah Apetrei's recent book brings to light the connections between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century prophets, although it limits its study largely to England (see Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England*).

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"Peculiar People in all Parts and Denominations of Christendom:" Religious Encounters among Radical Protestants, c. 1660-1730

The encounters, interactions, and debates of a diverse selection of dissenting groups, including Quakers, Labadists, radical Pietists, Philadelphians, Bourignonians, and French Prophets extended throughout the British Isles, Europe, and colonial North America. These transsectarian[1] interactions point to the existence of a loose network of radical Protestants—including numerous women prophets—who influenced one another even as they reinforced and defined their own confessional boundaries. The interactions of dissenters owed much to the circulation of travelers, correspondence, and printed works throughout the Atlantic world. Through travel and the exchange of writings, dissenters participated in what amounted to a transatlantic religious sphere, in which they carried out conversations and critical debates about the nature of radical Protestantism in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Of particular concern in these debates were many of the same questions that we have seen throughout this dissertation: who was chosen by God and for what ends? What was the role of the prophet? Who had the authority to prophesy? What was the role of women within the Church? How would reforms be enacted in preparation for the end days, and how would the end days unfold? The idea of being chosen in these times of eschatological significance, whether at the individual or collective level, had fundamental resonances for defining religious community and for delineating who belonged and who

1 Where possible, I have limited my use of the terms "sectarian." The concept of sectarianism varied widely from place to place during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and took on multiple connotations, some of which are not relevant to this study. However, I do use the term "transsectarian" at times as a concise way to refer to the interactions between different minority religious groups. The term "transreligious" is too broad, and the term "transconfessional" can have political implications that become irrelevant in a transnational context.

did not. These were the questions that dissenters worked out through their interactions with one another.

This chapter begins with a consideration of the impulses and movements, such as the quest to find other millenarian reformers, that drove dissenters to seek out one another. It then considers transsectarian encounters as they emerged out of sites of sociability produced through travel, letter-writing, and print culture. Lastly, I place the encounters studied here in the broader context of historiography on religious communication networks and the public sphere in the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century British Atlantic.

Millenarianism, Reform, and the Search for other "Peculiar People"

In the past decade, some historians have begun to recognize that dissenters often identified themselves as belonging to larger transsectarian and even transnational communities. Hartmut Lehmann and Lucinda Martin, for example, have argued that Pietism operated as a set of movements throughout the Northern Atlantic characterized by members' common interest in religious revitalization. Similarly, Rosalind Beiler has shown how Quakers, Pietists, and Mennonites participated in a transatlantic communication network that facilitated aid distribution and European migration. Beiler points out that communication networks among these groups initially arose as a way for

dissenters to seek out and have conversations with perceived like-minded or persecuted groups.[2]

The ability of dissenters to reach past their local communities and identify themselves as part of larger transnational religious communities was due in large part to the literacy and mobility that characterized many of their lives. Dissenters were introduced to other religious groups at unprecedented rates, both through the written word and through travel. Literacy rates were higher than average among dissenters. Most French Prophets in London were literate. Quakers had a much higher rate of literacy than the general population. The Philadelphians also expressed a particular interest in education and literacy.[3] Antoinette Bourignon and many of her followers were highly educated; we even find among her followers scholars such as the Dutch biologist Jan Swammerdam. As for Johannes Kelpius, he and his religious community of radical Pietists brought along a small library when relocating to Pennsylvania in 1694. They also laid out plans to establish a residential school for children.[4] Overall, literacy was the norm rather than the exception among most of the dissenters considered in this chapter.

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2 Hartmut Lehmann, "Pietism in the World of Transatlantic Religious Revivals," in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820,* eds. Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horn Melton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 13-21*;* Lucinda Martin*,* "Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn,*" Monatshefte* 95 (Spring 2003): 33-58; Rosalind J. Beiler, "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and European Migration, 1660-1710," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents,* eds. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 210-236.

3 Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England: A Social History of a Millenarian Group in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 225; On Quakers and literacy see Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English 1655-1725* (New York: Clarendon Press, 2000), 114-22. The *Theosophical Transactions,* a Philadelphian periodical, contained a translated work about Francke's schooling project. See *Theosophical Transactions by the Philadelphian Society*,. no. 4 (London, 1697), 218. The *Theosophical Transactions* also advertised Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies,* which advocated for the education of women. See Ibid*.,* no. 1, 59.

4 Swammerdam renounced his scientific career to follow Bourignon. See Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres de Mlle Antoinette Bourignon*, vol. 3, pt. 2 (Amsterdam, 1686), 18; Ibid., vol. 19, 234. On Kelpius see Levente Juhász, "Johannes Kelpius (1673–1708): Mystic on the Wissahickon," in M. Caricchio, G. Tarantino, eds., *Cromohs Virtual Seminars. Recent Historiographical Trends of the British Studies (17th-18th Centuries)*, 2006-2007: 1-9, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/juhasz_kelpius.html>.

In many cases, dissenters were motivated to meet one another by millenarian beliefs that a remnant of reformers would transcend national and religious boundaries to usher in a new age. There were numerous varieties of millenarianism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The groups here were not revolutionary millenarians; they did not propose to "turn the world upside down" like their Civil-War predecessors. They did, however, embrace (to varying degrees) a millenarian ethos that sought reform on earth in preparation for the age to come. For some, such as the Philadelphians, this reform anticipated a period of reform and restoration culminating in the return of Christ. Others, such as the French Prophets, believed that a time of great judgment would soon be at hand. Still others, such as the Quakers, focused on the inward Second Coming of Christ in their own hearts, a process that enacted on a microcosmic level that which would one day occur on a much grander scale. Groups were eager to define not only how the end of the world would unfold but also what their chosen role as prophets and millenarian reformers entailed. As we saw in the previous chapter, for example, the Philadelphian "female ambassadresses" had a more irenic role in promoting reform than the fiery French Prophets who believed they were messengers called to bring others to repentance before the day of judgment.

Many dissenters shared an expectation in radically new forms of religious community, such as the coming of a New Jerusalem or the establishment of a true

Church.[5] In 1697, the English Philadelphians issued a published statement that "God is stirring up some persons in several countries, to wait in faith and prayer for these ends, and with these qualifications, till such a pure church may arise." They listed Germany, Holland, Switzerland, France, Scotland, and England as countries where individuals were waiting to usher in this true Church.[6] The Philadelphians were not the only ones to make such a proclamation. Another millenarian group, the French Prophets, emigrated to London from southern France in the first decade of the eighteenth century. As the French Prophets expanded and attracted an English following, they proposed the idea that London was a New Jerusalem where Quakers, Independents, Presbyterians, Baptists, Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Huguenots would ultimately join together as one.[7] Even second-generation Quakers, who spoke of New Jerusalem in a spiritual sense rather than a literal one, continued to seek out other dissenters in the hope that they might unite with them.

Those who anticipated the impending arrival of a new age tended to profess a profound dislike for sectarianism. The Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, who attracted a number of English and Scottish followers, believed that she had been chosen by God to rally true Christians, and she lamented the existence of so many denominations

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5 Hillel Schwartz argues that post-Civil-War millenarianism has been under-represented in scholarship. Due to its focus on social history, however, Schwartz' work somewhat obscures the theological underpinnings that divided various millenarian groups in England (and elsewhere). Theological differences among pre-millenarians, post-millenarians, Calvinist millenarians, and non-millenarian apocalyptics—among others—had considerable influence on transsectarian interactions. For a social history of post Civil-War millenarianism see Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets: The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 96. For a study of the origins of Protestant millenarianism see Howard Hotson, *Paradise Postponed: Johann Heinrich Alsted and the Birth of Calvinist Millenarianism* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 2000).

6 [Philadelphian Society], *Propositions Extracted From the Reasons for the Foundation and Promotion of a Philadelphian Society* (London, 1697), 6.

7 Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England,* 102, 151.

and sects.[8] The English Philadelphians stated in a 1697 publication that they were "utterly averse to all sectarianism." The Quaker Elizabeth Webb emphasized that she did not see God "through particular forms, sects, party-impressions, or any such thing."[9]

Some radical Protestants interpreted the transcendence of sectarian or confessional boundaries in apocalyptic or millenarian terms, Johannes Kelpius' group, the Chapter of Perfection, was known as the "Society of the Woman in the Wilderness" by outsiders. This name referred to the group's specific interest in the woman of Revelation 12 who spent 1,260 days in the desert (wilderness) after giving birth to a messianic figure. Kelpius took over leadership of the Chapter of Perfection after the death of its original leader, Johann Jakob Zimmerman. Zimmerman had predicted that the advent of millennium would arrive in 1694, and he organized a group of followers comprised mostly of Lutheran Pietists. After Zimmerman's death, the group traveled to London for six months. Kelpius spent time there with the Philadelphians, who shared his interest in Behmenism.[10] He also met with London Quakers, who provided the Chapter of Perfection with the money necessary to emigrate to Pennsylvania.[11] Both experiences in London introduced Kelpius to reformers who shared his ecumenical and millenarian beliefs. He regarded these dissenters as different manifestations of the same reform movement. He

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8 Mirjam de Baar, "Prophetess of God and Prolific Writer: Antoinette Bourignon and the reception of her writings," in *"I have heard about you:" Foreign women's writing crossing the Dutch border,* eds. Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Jane van der Meulen, Pim van Oostrum, trans. Jo Nesbitt (Hilversum, Netherlands: Verloren, 2004), 140; Antoinette Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres, vol. 4* (Amsterdam, 1686), 51.

9 [Philadelphian Society], *The State of the Philadelphian Society* (London, 1697), 7; Elizabeth Webb, *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm, with his Answer* (Pennsylvania, 1781), 4.

10 Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Communication Networks as One Aspect of Pietist Definition: The Example of Radical Pietist Connections between Colonial North America and Europe," in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820,* eds. Jonathan Strom, Hartmut Lehmann, and James Van Horn Melton (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 37; Elizabeth Fisher, "'Prophesies and Revelations': German Cabbalists in Early Pennsylvania," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (July 1985): 299-300, 320; Juhász, "Johannes Kelpius (1673–1708): Mystic on the Wissahickon."

11 Juhász, "Johannes Kelpius (1673–1708): Mystic on the Wissahickon."

wrote of a "revolution" of reformers—Quaker, Pietist, Chiliast, Philadelphian—whose movement served as a sign of the approaching millennium.[12]

Granted, dissenters had other reasons for wishing to disassociate themselves from sectarianism. In post-Civil War England, the idea of being a dissenter had a negative connotation that some dissenters wished to avoid. Criticism could come from orthodox scholars and theologians, but often the greater threat of attack came from persons who, while having little knowledge of these groups, lumped them under the broad categories of heterodoxy and enthusiasm. Paula McDowell notes, for example, that the Philadelphians were linked with the Quakers, the Deists, and the Family of Love.[13] Public perception could also contribute to the formation of a group's identity and name. The Quakers (the Society of Friends) and the Society of the Woman in the Wilderness (The Chapter of Perfection) both received their names from outsiders.

In an effort to establish themselves as good Christians rather than "dangerous" sectarians, some dissenters worked hard to stress that they were not enthusiasts or heterodox sectarians. As stated in Chapter Three, the Philadelphians went so far as to encourage participation in the Church of England. They proclaimed that their meetings were meant to supplement rather than replace Anglican services; Richard Roach even served as an Anglican clergyman.[14] Similarly, Antoinette Bourignon, who was attacked by critics for attempting to establish a sect, denied that she was a trying to start a new religious group. In an apology for Bourignon, Scottish follower George Garden echoed these claims. He remarked that Bourignon's enemies "accused her that she designed to

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12 Fisher, "'Prophesies and Revelations': German Cabbalists in Early Pennsylvania," 321.

13 Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2002), 524.

14 See Chapter 3, pp. 138, of this dissertation; McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," 523.

form a new sect and party, and so to encrease the divisions and schisms in Christendom; whereas no body did more deplore the divisions of Christians than she."[15] Millenarians such as Bourignon thus had social as well as theological reasons for voicing their dislike of sectarian or religious divisions.

The attempt to reach past sectarian and confessional boundaries also characterized broader reform movements taking place in England and continental Europe. Many religious individuals and groups—even non-minority ones—believed that the Reformation had not yet reached its full potential, and they were eager to join with others in order to carry out further reforms.[16] In a recent essay, Hartmut Lehmann proposed a new historical and typological approach that recognizes Pietism as part of a larger series of religious revivals in Europe and the Atlantic world. Pietism, according to Lehmann, was "part of an open field of religious revivals, initiatives to create fellowship, and religious experiences recorded and shared in letters, books, and tracts—in short, of attempts to build God's Kingdom."[17] Lucinda Martin has also argued that seventeenth-

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15 Antoinette Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres, vol. 19* (Amsterdam, 1717), pt. 1, 72-3; George Garden, A*n Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon in Four Parts* (London, 1699), 153.

16 As Daniel Brunner emphasizes, the strongest Anglo-German religious connections of the early eighteenth century were between lay voluntary Anglicanism (namely the SPCK) and Halle. These connections were largely personal rather than ecclesial in nature, and they came out of the efforts of reform-minded individuals. Jeremy Black has pointed out that there was an overall increase in continental and English interactions in the eighteenth-century, in part due to the arrival of Calvinist and Lutheran monarchs (William III and George I), as well as the Dutch and Germans who followed in them to England. During these same decades, persecuted French Protestants, Palatines, and Moravians also arrived in England. As Black argues, the international republic of letters facilitated the encounters of reformed Christians in Europe, many of whom made contact with English politicians and clerics. In this chapter, however, I have omitted considerations of interactions that involved Anglicans or groups such as the SPCK. Because such groups were supported or recognized by the state, issues came into play in their interactions with continental Europeans that are outside the scope of this chapter. See Daniel Brunner, *Halle Pietists in England: Anthony William Boehm and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1993), 221; Jeremy Black, "Confessional state or elect nation? Religion and identity in eighteenth-century England," in *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland, c. 1650-1850*, eds. Claydon and McBride (Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 67-8.

17 Hartmut Lehmann, "Pietism in the World of Transatlantic Religious Revivals," in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820*, 18.

century Pietist reformers took part in a religious reform movement that stretched from the continent to the American colonies. This movement involved various Pietist groups as well as a number of English dissenters.[18]

As for the Philadelphians, their reforming impulse came in part from their participation in broader conversations about the moral reform of the nation that emerged after the 1691 establishment of the Society for the Reformation of Manners. This censorious group formed in London out of concerns over the moral direction of the nation. It soon grew into a number of voluntary associations and brought together such groups as Anglicans, Presbyterians, Quakers, and Unitarians.[19] As Margaret Hunt notes, these societies set a precedent for cooperation across confessional and political boundaries.[20] The decision of the Philadelphians to call themselves "The Religious Society for the Reformation of Manners, for the Advancement of a Heroical Christian Piety, and Universal Love and Peace Towards All" places them within these larger conversations of moral and theological reform. Historians have yet to give full consideration to the connection between the millenarian reform movement of the Philadelphians and the more temporal focus of other Societies for the Reformation of Manners, but it is clear from the Philadelphians' self-designation that they saw themselves as at least somewhat connected to this broader movement. The Philadelphians, like other societies supporting the Reformation of Manners, published

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18 Lucinda Martin, "Female Reformers as the Gate Keepers of Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn" *Monatshefte* 95, no. 1 (2003): 33. Martin also makes this argument in her dissertation,"Women's Religious Speech and Activism in German Pietism" (Ph.D. diss., University of Texas, 2002), 3-4.

19 Sarah Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 208.

20 Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 122.

large numbers of reform and religious tracts.[21] Where they differed was in the intensity of their millenarian impulse. They were more concerned with ushering in the true Church than they were with policing public behavior.[22]

Women were at the center of calls for moral and theological reforms among minority religious groups of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Enlightenment society widely embraced the concept that women were "civilizing agents" who tempered male behavior.[23] However, among some Behmenist-inspired groups such as the Philadelphians and some radical Pietists, the idea of the female reformer took on a particular form: that of women as heralders of the end times. This belief came to its fullest manifestation in the writings of Richard Roach, who believed in a "female embassy" that would usher in the last days.[24] Richard Roach explained this theory in several of his writings, stating that "it has pleased God, in this last age, to visit many persons of both sexes, but more especially the female, with his extraordinary powers; who have been, as Mary Magdalen was in her time, ambassadresses of the resurrection of Christ."[25] Specifically, he linked this female embassy to Divine Wisdom. These figures were not just heralders of the end times, but they were designated as counterparts to their

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21 See Ibid., 103, for more on reform societies. The Societies for the Reformation of Manners should not be confused with the Religious Societies, which placed more emphasis on the piety and devotion of members than on the regulation of public behavior. The Philadelphians incorporated elements of both types of societies.

22 The Philadelphians' complicated participation in the Reformation of Manners supports Sarah Apetrei's contention that the Reformation of Manners was broader and more diverse in nature than "a prudish reaction against prostitution or gaming." Radical social protest and popular movements for devotional renewal were also a part of the movement. See Apetrei, *Women, Feminism and Religion in Early Enlightenment England,* 158.

23 Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe,* 202-03.

24 Brian J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and Its Development in England* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 143-62; Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England,* 210-11.

25 Richard Roach, *The Imperial Standard of Messiah Triumphant* (London, 1727), 48.

male followers. As imitators of Divine Wisdom, they were to restore man to his original state:

> The female was first in the transgression, and drew the male into the Fall with her. But this disgrace has been more than retriev'd, and the injury repair'd, in a far greater blessing deriv'd to all mankind for the restoring of all, thro' the womb of the blessed Virgin. And in yet farther Reparation, the Female Sex, as here Commission'd and Instructed by their Mother Wisdom, will act the Reverse to their Former Temptation, and now Tempt and draw the Male Upwards, in Order to the Recovery of Paradise again, even on Earth; and that in a far more glorious State than that from whence they fell.

Roach cited specific examples, such as Antoinette Bourignon, Madame Guyon, and Jane Lead.[26]

Furthermore, Roach's correspondence indicates that he sought out and communicated with a number of women throughout Europe. He tried to establish an alliance with the French Prophets, and he became a follower of both Jane Lead and Sarah Wiltshire. He also corresponded with Rosamunde von Asseburg, a radical Pietist who attracted a number of followers in Germany.[27] His search for female reformers led him to establish connections with other groups on both sides of the English Channel who also took an interest in the religious role of women.

The Philadelphians were not the only ones to seek out female prophets. The Saalhof Pietist Johann Wilhelm Petersen and his wife, Johanna Eleonora Merlau Petersen, developed an association with Rosamunde von Asseburg. They were also in

26 Richard Roach, *The Great Crisis: Or, The Mystery of the Times and Seasons Unfolded* (London, 1725*), 97. **The Great Crisis* was not officially issued until 1727. Roach's idea of the female as reformer or restorer had close parallels with the Enlightenment understanding of women as civilizing agents.

27 Rosamunde von Asseburg, "Letter to Richard Roach," n.d., Rawl. MSS D., 832/46, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

contact with the English Philadelphians, the Labadists, and the Quaker William Penn.[28] The Petersens, like the English Philadelphians, were influenced by Behmenist theology. Johann Petersen did not espouse the idea of a female embassy to the extent that Roach did, but he did believe that women prophets were a sign of the end times. In a defense of Asseburg, which the Philadelphian Francis Lee translated and printed under the title of a *Letter to Some Divines*, Petersen asked:

> Whether God, who hath always chosen that which is weak before the world, I Cor. 1.27, may not also in these days bestow his revelations, even upon the weaker sex? And whether all that comes from a woman, should on that account be rejected? Since that God reveal'd himself to Hannah, Mary, the daughters of Philip, and many other; and since that he hath also by Joel, expressly promis'd the particular gifts of the Spirit, to the handmaidens, and to the daughters; which prophecy has not hitherto in its full extreme been accomplish'd.[29]

It was in large part this understanding of women's roles in the end times that prompted the Petersens, Richard Roach, Francis Lee, Pierre Poiret, and others to seek out various religious groups who also believed that female prophets were chosen heralders of the end times.

While others in this chapter, namely the Quakers, did not assign women this eschatological role, they did welcome women as participants in various aspects of public religious life. Women had different roles depending on which group they affiliated with,

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28 As Lucinda Martin points out, William Penn (and other outsiders who wished to break into religious circles in Germany) reached out to a number of well-connected Pietist women such as Schurman and Johanna Eleonora Merlau Petersen. See Martin, "Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn," 36.

29 Johann Wilhelm Petersen, *A Letter to Some Divines*, transl. Francis Lee (London, 1695), 117-118. Aside from his devotion to Lead, Lee assigned women a more conservative role in the last days than did Roach, whose beliefs leaned an embrace of female messianism. Lee's perception of women was the same as that of many of his contemporaries: "weak in body, weak in mind." See Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought,* 173. Lee's comment should thus not be read as a strategy to concede women's weak status in order to deflect criticism of female prophetic agency. Rather, he truly saw women in this light. Other Philadelphians in this study however, including Richard Roach, believed women were becoming more powerful: "the Time of this their Servile Subjection thro[ugh] the Curse now wearing off upon the Approach of the Kingdom." See Roach, "Mr. Roach, a Philadelphian. His Answer to Some Queries," Lambeth Palace MSS 942.141, p. 11, Lambeth Palace Library, London.

but these groups tended to accept and even encourage the participation of women as prophets, correspondents, writers, and missionaries. The transatlantic religious sphere that produced the exchanges and debates considered in this chapter was one shaped by women as well as men.

Religious Encounters and Travel

As dissenters moved throughout the Atlantic, new arenas of sociability developed in the houses, meetinghouses, streets, prisons, and ships where individuals and groups met with one another. These places, like the *salons* and coffeehouses that fostered an Enlightenment public sphere, functioned as spaces that encouraged discourse and debate. This section focuses on the physical encounters of dissenters who traveled throughout the Atlantic. It shows how dissenters of differing affiliations conversed, debated, and even joined together in worship services in sites such as meetinghouses and domiciles. It also considers the pattern of these transsectarian encounters, which often began out of a spirit of curiosity but usually failed due to the inability of dissenters to overcome doctrinal or other key differences.

Those who wanted to reach past their own sectarian boundaries did not have to go far to meet other minority religious groups in the century after the Civil Wars. In late Stuart London, one in five persons belonged to a dissenting religious group.[30] During this same period, some of the British American colonies were becoming a place of considerable religious diversity. Over a dozen minority Protestant groups co-existed in

30 Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England*, 71.

Pennsylvania by the mid-eighteenth century.[31] Importantly, not all of this diversity came from permanent settlers. A number of groups or individuals came to the colonies either to travel as missionaries or to establish temporary settlements. Many interactions of dissenters thus developed out of the necessities of travel. Quaker travelers, for example, carried with them the names of potential Baptist contacts in colonial North America.[32] They also found hospitality from other dissenters. In 1702, the Quaker missionary Samuel Bownas and his guide ate supper with some Labadists, a group of Calvinist Pietists who left Friesland to establish a settlement in Maryland. Three years later, the Quaker Esther Palmer visited Maryland, where she held a meeting (or Quaker worship service) at Isaac Watson's house before spending the night at Luke Watson's. She remarked that neither Isaac nor Luke was a Quaker, but both were very kind to her.[33]

One notable characteristic of meetings between different religious groups was an initial period of curiosity that drove the two parties to learn more about one another. Curiosity about one's religious "other" stemmed in large part from the desire to seek out other like-minded believers, but there was also a broader cultural factor at work. As Paul Hazard and others have shown, the seventeenth century gave rise to an interest in travel and travel literature.[34] Those who wrote travel accounts conveyed an interest and curiosity in the novelty of the places, peoples, and customs they encountered. What is

31 By 1756, for example, Pennsylvania was home to about a dozen Protestant groups. See Durnbaugh, "Communication Networks as One Aspect of Pietist Definition," 44.

32 Rosemary Moore, The *Light in their Consciences: Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), 124. For more on Quaker travelers, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

33 Esther Palmer et al., "The Journals of Esther Palmer," MS Box X1/10, f. 5, Society of Friends Library, London.

34 See Paul Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715,* trans. J. Lewis May (Cleveland, OH: Meridian, 1969), 3-28.

unique about some dissenters' accounts, though, is the extent to which a curiosity about others' religious practices often dominated their writing.

For example, Samuel Bownas, the Quaker missionary who ate supper at the Labadist colony in Maryland, stressed that he was "civilly entertained" in the Labadists' way but intrigued and perplexed by customs that were unfamiliar to him. First, there were no women at the table. Second, the Labadists engaged in a pre-supper ritual in which each man, one at a time, pulled off his hat and sat in silent prayer for fifteen minutes before beginning to eat. Bownas was sufficiently curious that he asked his guide to explain these customs. He even looked for the Labadists later in his travels but found that the group had dispersed.[35] In another example, the Quaker missionary Thomas Chalkley described meeting a French Protestant in 1719. Chalkley's ship came across a French ship while passing near the Azores. The two ships exchanged some provisions, and Chalkley met the captain, a French Protestant. According to Chalkley, "The Frenchman seeming desirous to know what religion I was of, I told him, by an interpreter, that I was one called a Quaker, or Trembler."[36] Chalkley told the captain a little about the Quakers and noted that, "when they went away and took leave of us, they desired me to pray for them, the which I remembered with tenderness of spirit."[37]

The same sense of curiosity and inquisitiveness that initiated meetings among dissenters in locations such as houses and ships also drove individuals to attend the worship services or meetings of other minority groups. Some of these individuals who visited other meetings or services were "seekers," persons who conducted their spiritual

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35 Samuel Bownas, *An Account of the Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences in the Work of the Ministry of Samuel Bownas* (London, 1756), 58-9.
36 "Trembler" (Fr. "trembleur") was a French epithet for Quaker.
37 Thomas Chalkley, *A Journal or, Historical Account of the Life, Travels and Christian Experiences, of That Antient, Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, Thomas Chalkley* (London, 1751), 101-02.

lives in a series of different religious settings. The diverse religious climate of the British Atlantic facilitated such religious seeking. Samuel Keimer, a printer who later moved to Philadelphia and apprenticed Benjamin Franklin, had brief affiliations with Baptists, French Prophets, Catholics, and Quakers.[38] Keimer first attended a meeting of the French Prophets during his own apprenticeship in London. Like many young apprentices in the city, he took advantage of a half-day off work to explore a new group, attending the French Prophet's meeting in Southwark.[39]

Other attendees at religious meetings were there not as seekers but rather as representatives of another religious affiliation. We find examples of this among the meetings held by Quaker missionaries in the Netherlands and Germany. For example, in 1709, a number of Mennonites visited a Quaker meeting held by Thomas Chalkley, who was visiting Harlem as a missionary. Chalkley described the Mennonites, who stayed for the entire meeting, as sober, attentive, and complimentary.[40] William Penn also encountered a similar experience in Harlem, where “many sober Baptists and Professors” attended his meeting.[41] At another meeting during the same trip, Penn's First Day Meeting was attended by “a mighty Concourse of People from several places of this

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38 Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England,* 217.

39 Keimer, *A Brand Pluck'd from the Burning Exemplify'd Unparallel'd Case of Samuel Keimer* (London, 1718), 5-6. Keimer wrote, “And I being inform'd that a Meeting was intended to be kept in Southwark, by the Invitation of several sober well-meaning People on that side of the Water, who had not yet made Trial of the Spirit operating upon them, got leave of my Master, for half a Day, to go abroad.” As Paul Griffiths has shown for the period just before the French Prophets' movement (1560-1640), there was a “youth culture” in early modern England that allowed for servants and apprentices, both male and female, to experience a more ambiguous and flexible life than the structured, hierarchical world of their elders. For more on youth culture in early modern England see Paul Griffiths, *Youth and Authority: Formative Experiences in England, 1560-1640* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1996.

40 Chalkley, *A Journal or, Historical Account of the Life, Travels and Christian Experiences, of That Antient, Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, Thomas Chalkley*, 65.

41 William Penn, *An Account of William Penn's Travels in Holland and Germany, Anno MDCLXXVII, for the Service of the Gospel of Christ: By Way of Journal, 3rd ed.* (London, 1714), 5.

Country, and that of several Persuasions, Baptists, Presbyterians, Socinians, Seekers, etc."[42]

Jasper Danckaerts, a Calvinist Labadist, journeyed to the North American colonies in 1679-80 in search of suitable land for a Labadist colony. He attended multiple religious services as he traveled through the colonies, including Anglican, Independent, Dutch Reformed, and Quaker.[43] Unlike the Mennonites who visited Chalkley's meeting, Danckaerts was less than complimentary of his hosts. He criticized these services in his journal, drawing attention to what he perceived to be their peculiarities—such as the Quakers' lengthy silent meetings:

> We had been last Sunday to hear the Quakers, but the greater portion of them were on Long Island, so that nothing was done. My comrade had a mind to go again to-day, but I remained at home. After waiting two hours, he went to hear the Episcopalians and then returned to the Quakers, who had remained all this time sitting silent and gazing. He then took a walk out for a considerable time, and went back again and found them still in the same position. Being tired out, he would wait no longer, and came home.[44]

In at least one instance, Danckaerts proselytized to a religious leader after the meeting ended. However, Danckaerts did not state that he ever openly interrupted a meeting or service in the manner that the early Quakers had done. Despite his searing criticisms of other religious groups, he stressed that he behaved civilly when attending religious services or interacting with other groups. As he wrote about one couple he met, "we did not fail to converse kindly with him and his wife in relation to those matters in which we believed they were sinning."[45] Danckaerts' "kindness" surely irritated some, however.[46]

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42 Ibid., 27.
43 Jasper Danckaerts, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680,* eds. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson, transl. Henry C. Murphy (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), passim.
44 Ibid., 85-6.
45 Ibid., 62-3.
46 Indeed, Danckaerts noted at one point that "the ministers caused us to be suspected." Ibid., 250.

In the New World, a curiosity or desire to learn more about one's religious "other" was also apparent among dissenters who encountered non-Europeans. In a letter to the Pietist chaplain Anton Wilhelm Boehm, Quaker missionary Elizabeth Webb related her first encounter with African slaves:

> [A]bout the middle of the 12th month, 1697, through the good providence of the Almighty, we arrived in Virginia, and as I travelled along the country from one meeting to another, I observed great numbers of black people, that were in slavery, and they were a strange people to me, and I wanted to know whether the visitation of God was to their souls or not.

Webb observed their conversation, "to see if I could discern any good in them." About four weeks later, she had a dream that led her to conclude that "the call of the Lord was unto the black people as well as the white."[47]

The Quaker Samuel Bownas spent a year in a New York prison in 1702 for unlawful preaching. During this year, he received "sundry visits." He drew particular attention to two of these visits. The first was from the Seventh-Day Baptist leader John Rogers, who arrived from New London and spent six days debating with Bownas. The second visit was from "an Indian King" and three of his attendants. Bownas devoted several pages of his travel journal to recording their conversation. He included details of what both parties discussed, recording their discussion in the form of a dialogue. They covered such topics as God, the afterlife, good, and evil.[48] The discussion, in which both parties demonstrated an informative rather than a polemical tone, ended "in great friendship and love, after a stay of one night and almost two days."[49]

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47 Webb, *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm*, 37-8.

48 The questions that Bownas answered also allowed him to criticize indirectly his religious adversaries, such as those who had put him in prison. For example, the Indians' questions about religious practices such as the Eucharist, which gave Bownas the opportunity to point out what he saw as the uselessness of sacramental religion.

49 Bownas, "An Account of the Life, Travels, and Christian Experiences in the Work of the Ministry of Samuel Bownas," 95-102.

The experiences of Elizabeth Webb and Samuel Bownas differed considerably. Webb's interactions with the slaves she encountered were much more limited; she stressed that she was an observer. In contrast, Bownas engaged in two days of lengthy conversation with the Indians who came to visit him. But what we see in both the accounts of Webb and Bownas is a curiosity about their *religious* “other.” When encountering people of different backgrounds and ethnicities, Bownas and Webb were interested in the religion of these individuals more so than in their other cultural, social, or economic practices. This focus serves to remind us, as post-modern readers, of the centrality of religion to seventeenth-century radical religionists; it also reaffirms the presence of a sphere of discourse in which debates and conversations centered on religion.

Dissenters were curious about others, but they also tended to exhibit respect when first meeting people of other affiliations. As several of the above examples have already suggested, there was a certain formality and courtesy exchanged when religious minorities met one another in arenas such as the meetinghouse. In particular, some held an expectation that both parties would have an opportunity to speak and present themselves. This is evident in an example from the travel journal of the Quaker William Penn. In 1671, Penn undertook a missionary trip to the Netherlands and Germany. While in Germany, Penn visited Jean de Labadie and his community of followers. Penn had requested the meeting time of the Labadists, so that he might arrive in time to deliver a message during their service. But Labadie, not wanting to expose his followers to false

doctrine, decided to hold the meeting an hour earlier than the time he gave Penn. Moreover, when Penn arrived, only Labadie and two other men met with him.[50]

Penn resented the lukewarm reception he received, especially given how many miles out of his way he had traveled. He wrote a letter that same month condemning the Labadists' behavior and interpreting their response as one of jealousy and suspicion toward the Quakers. He noted that he would have been willing to remain passive about the poor reception, but it had been followed by Labadie's criticism of the Quakers in a published writing. Penn was offended by this public condemnation:

> Not that there should be so great difference between us; for that I could have told any, before. But that, whilst you should speak so many good things of us to our faces as that we were the people of God; holy and good men; the best practical Christians in the world...that yet you should tell the World, that we speak irreverently of the will of God: that you cannot comprehend, how we could be entered into the living knowledge of God: that in some things we should be one with the Jesuits, and Manichees etc. shows so much manifest Contradiction.

Penn, who believed Labadie to be the central problem behind this failed meeting, accused Labadie of raising himself to a level of undue authority and dominance.[51]

Given Penn's singling out of Labadie, it is perhaps not surprising that he chose to pay another visit to the Labadists after Labadie's death. The visit took place in 1677 at the Labadists' residence in Wieuwerd (Friesland), where the group had relocated after the death of Labadie in 1674. Penn indicated that "it is upon me to visit de Labadie's people, that they might know him in themselves, in whom their salvation standeth; for these simple people are to be pitied."[52] This statement was likely a direct reference to Penn's

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50 Trevor Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem: Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610-1744* (Dordecht and Boston: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 208.

51 William Penn, "To John de Labadie's Company," in *The Papers of William Penn,* vol. 1*,* eds. Mary Maples Dunn and Richard S. Dunn (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), 215-16.; Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem,* 209-10.

52 Penn, "An Account of My Journey into Holland and Germany," in *The Papers of William Penn, vol. 1,* 472.

belief that Labadie's conceit had led to the stumbling of his followers. Upon arrival, Penn asked to see Pierre Yvon and Anna Maria van Schurman, who were leaders in the group.[53] When the Labadists were hesitant to let Penn speak with the frail Schurman, Penn reminded them of his poor reception at Herwerden six years prior. The next day, he had the opportunity to meet with Schurman, whom he described as "an ancient maid, above sixty years of age; of great note and fame for learning, in languages and philosophy, and hath obtained a considerable place among the most learned men of this age." In addition to Schurman, Penn met with two pastors, a doctor of physick, and three members of the Sommerdyck family (at whose house the Labadists now resided).[54]

In his second meeting with the Labadists, Penn softened his questions with the caveat that he "came not to cavil, but in a Christian spirit to be informed." Each Labadist offered his or her religious experiences, of which Penn concluded that "certainly the Lord hath been amongst them." After a period of silence, Penn responded with his own story, emphasizing once again that he came not to judge but to visit and asking them to listen to him with "Christian patience and tenderness."[55] Like the Labadists, he focused on his personal story, but he also censured the Labadists "in an indirect manner...by declaring and commending the contrary practices among Friends." He followed with an exhortation and blessing to the community. Penn wrote of this meeting that the Labadists were respectful beyond his expectation. With the exception of Schurman, they all accompanied

53 Joyce Irwin, "Anna Maria van Schurman and Antoinette Bourignon: Contrasting Examples of Seventeenth-Century Pietism," *Church History* 60, no. 3 (September 1991): 302.
54 Penn, *An Account of William Penn's Travels in Holland and Germany, 3rd ed*., 142-43.
55 Ibid., 148-49.

Penn and his traveling companion to the outer door, "giving us their hands, in a friendly manner, expressing their great satisfaction in our visit."[56]

Penn's two visits with the Labadists offer insights that apply to many transsectarian meetings. He had some expectation of how his visit should go; there was a latent protocol (in his opinion) as to how a religious community should conduct itself during such a visit. The discourse should be civil, two-sided, and informative. Penn invoked a language of civility when recording his religious encounter, and he was not the only dissenter to do so.[57] Indeed, this language may help us understand how toleration was negotiated at the local level among dissenters. As Lawrence Klein has argued, politeness and civility were concepts that became important during this period not only to the elite—to those most likely to be labeled as "the polite"—but to many individuals as they navigated their way through social interactions. Penn framed his interactions with his religious "other" in a language not of religious toleration but of civility—a language that transcended the religious sphere and that facilitated interactions in many areas of social life.[58]

Perhaps what stands out most in Penn's account, though, is the same tension that ran through many encounters between minority religious groups during this period: a desire to seek out other groups, contrasted with an inability to acknowledge or accept other practices or doctrines. Penn searched for similarities between the Quakers and the Labadists: "They are a serious, plain people and are come nearer to Friends; as in silence

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56 Ibid., 155-56. Schurman had been the first woman to study at a Dutch university before becoming Labadie's disciple. She authored a treatise on the education of women. See Anna Maria Van Schurman, *Whether a Christian Woman Should Be Educated and Other Writings from Her Intellectual Circle*, trans. and ed. Joyce Irwin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

57 See, for example, Roger Williams, *George Fox digg'd out of his burrowes* (Boston, 1676).

58 Lawrence Klein, "Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century," *The Historical Journa*l 45, no. 4 (2002): 898.

in meetings, women-speaking, preaching by the Spirit, plainness in garb, and furniture in their houses." At the same time, though, he tried to "censure their weaknesses" (albeit "indirectly") and enlighten them about the Quaker faith.[59] Penn did not specify these faults, but he had cautioned the group previously to avoid being too much led by a "formal spirit" like that found in the Articles of Reformed Faith.[60] Thus, while Penn expressed an openness to conversation and debate, he also indicated a desire to persuade the Labadists of their errors.

This tension was present in transsectarian encounters involving a spectrum of religious groups. Allegiance to particular doctrines or practices often kept dissenters from reaching past their differences. The same theological differences that drove dissenters to depart from accepted orthodoxies and state religions also came into play when they encountered other dissenters' beliefs. One extreme example comes from the 1706 merger of the English Philadelphians and the French Prophets considered in the previous chapter. In 1710, the Philadelphians Richard Roach and Sarah Wiltshire attended a French Prophets' meeting, where the two spoke against the emphasis on God's judgment supported by the French Prophets. At one point, the disagreement turned physical, as one of the French Prophets hit Wiltshire repeatedly with his head.[61]

The doctrine of Calvinist election also led to disagreements. Beliefs about election were key in defining the interactions of the Labadist Jasper Danckaerts. As a separatist Calvinist, Danckaerts believed that the Church was a community of elect individuals who should keep themselves from the world. Like many dissenters, he ate and slept at the

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59 Penn, *An Account of William Penn's Travels in Holland and Germany,* 144, 152.
60 Penn, "To John de Labadie's Company," 217.
61 Schwartz, *The French Prophets,* 142-43; John Lacy, "Polemica Sacro-Prophetica Anti-Roachiana-Wiltshireiana," Rawlinson MSS D., 1318/63, Bodleian Library, Oxford

houses of other radical Protestants. He was quick to assess whether those he met belonged to the elect. Early in his trip, Danckaerts wrote: "We conversed this evening with the old woman in whose house we slept, and this poor woman seemed to have great enjoyment and fruition, as did also her sons and others with whom we occasionally conversed. It appeared, indeed, as if the Lord might have there the seed of the elect."[62]

Danckaerts' reaction to the anti-Calvinist Quakers he met was less generous. Danckaerts encountered several Quakers during his trip to the colonies. Despite the hospitality that they extended him, he labeled them as a covetous, worldly people. At the house of his host in Tinicum, Danckaerts witnessed the prophetic performance of a Quaker "prophetess, who travels through the whole country in order to quake." Danckaerts could not endure her behavior and went outside. Two days later, Danckaerts ate dinner with the same woman. He described the experience as follows:

> The dinner being ready, I was placed at the table next to the beforenamed prophetess, who while they all sat at the table, began to groan and quake gradually until at length the whole bench shook. Then rising up she began to pray, shrieking so that she could be heard as far as the river. This done, she was quickly in the dish, and her mouth began immediately to prate worldly and common talk in which she was not the least ready.

Despite Danckaerts' appreciation of his Quaker host, Robert Wade, as "the best Quaker we have seen," he clearly did not see the Quakers in the same light that he judged the "elect" woman and her sons with whom he stayed earlier in his journey.[63] Unlike Samuel Bownas, who was intrigued by the unfamiliar practices of the Labadists, Danckaerts expressed disdain or even disgust for the practices of the Quakers.

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62 Jasper Danckaerts, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts, 1679-1680,* eds. Bartlett Burleigh James and J. Franklin Jameson (New York: Scribner, 1913), 86.
63 Ibid., 104-07.

Even more censorious than Danckaerts was the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, who claimed to disparage religious divisions. She received visits from a number of groups, including Dutch Calvinists, Lutherans, Anabaptists, Socinians, Arminians, Jews, Mennonites, Labadists, Quakers, and Cartesians. While Bourignon initially welcomed these visitors, she eventually rejected them. Some of this rejection was due to personality conflicts: her extensive correspondence reveals that she did not get along easily with others, including her own followers.[64] But doctrinal differences contributed decisively to the failed encounters. Bourignon often offered scathing commentary on other religious groups she corresponded with or met. She described Jean de Labadie, the eponymous leader of the Labadists, as so preoccupied with predestination that he stated he was ready to die for this belief. She told him that he would be a martyr for the Devil. She also commented that the Quakers sought an inner light, and they were mistaken in thinking that she would join them because she also looked for it. At one point, Bourignon concluded, "Here is the belief that I hold about all the religions that I have discovered here...I have seen enough by these small samplings, that all the pieces cannot be good."[65] Like many radical Protestants, the longer Bourignon spent with other groups, the less she found in common with them.

Some of those who met with Bourignon were equally adamant in their rejection of her. According to Bourignon's biographer and supporter Pierre Poiret, the Dutch millenarian Peter Serrarius, an associate of Spinoza, initially wanted to promote Bourignon as a living evangelist who would enlighten the world. But when he realized that she did not plan to start a Levitic cult, he declared himself against her. Similarly, a

64 Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres,* vol. 5, pt. 2, 5-9; For an example of Bourignon's attitude toward other religionists see Ibid., vol. 18, pt. 1, 177.
65 Ibid., vol. 19, 21; Ibid., vol. 5, pt. 2, 8-9

group of Mennonites was drawn to visit Bourignon, but after learning more about her beliefs they left.[66] Bourignon's theology was unique, and such groups likely had trouble overlooking some of her beliefs that contradicted central tenets of Protestantism—such as her inability to embrace the doctrine of justification by faith.[67]

In sum, transsectarian meetings often did not succeed because dissenters disputed how to accomplish the very issues of reform that brought them together. They failed to agree on key definitions of religious community and authority—ideas that were central to the establishment of a successful alliance. What, for example, was the true Church? While Bourignon envisioned true believers in a framework that rejected sects and denominations, the Labadists spoke in terms of an exclusive church. What would the end times look like and who would usher them in? Kelpius believed that only an elect few would be present for Christ's (literal) Second Coming, whereas the Quakers interpreted the events of the Second Coming—revelation, judgment, purging, restoration—as spiritual and inward events that would eventually be re-enacted throughout all creation. Who had the authority to participate in public religious life? While Quakers continued to issue travel certificates to women missionaries, Jasper Danckaerts implied that the Quaker prophetess he met lacked the spiritual power she ascribed to herself. And Bourignon's claim to authority as the one chosen to rally true Christians contributed to her rejection of other prophets as false.[68]

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66 Ibid., vol. 2, 286-87.

67 Alexander MacEwen, *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist,* (Hodder & Stoughton: London, 1910), 66.

68 Catherine M. Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism: Handmaidens of the Lord* (Lewiston, NY: Edward Mellen Press, 1995), 96; Danckaerts, *Journal of Jasper Danckaerts,*104-107; Mirjam de Baar, "Prophetess of God and Prolific Writer: Antoinette Bourignon and the Reception of Her Writings, in *"I have heard about you:" Foreign women's writing crossing the Dutch border,* eds. Suzan van Dijk, Petra Broomans, Jane van der Meulen, Pim van Oostrum (Hilversum, Netherlands: Verloren, 2004), 140.

The principle of transsectarian cooperation—and the expectations of dialogue and civility that emerged out of new sites of sociability in the Atlantic world—often could not override the devotion of dissenters to particular doctrines or practices. While many meetings arrived at an impasse, they nonetheless served to engender discourse among dissenters. Many documented their religious encounters in printed works or correspondence. By recording their conversations and meetings, dissenters not only commented on and assessed their religious "other," but they also reinforced and promoted their own beliefs in manuscript and printed writing.

Religious Encounters and Correspondence

Letters were central to the interactions of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century dissenters. The letter was the dominant form of writing during the eighteenth century, and dissenters took full advantage of the medium of correspondence in order to connect and debate with one another. Letters of dissenters during this period were in some ways similar to epistles of the Enlightenment public sphere. They communicated news, but they also served as a substitute for conversation. They were a way to communicate important information across long distances. Letters, like the diaries and journals that many dissenters kept, were (at least in their original manuscript form) a private medium.[69] Nonetheless, they also allowed for the communication and circulation of ideas and beliefs, especially when circulated among religious communities or a broader audience.

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69 Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters: A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 137, 143; Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe,* 149.

A number of religious groups were prolific at correspondence. The English Philadelphians, for example, claimed that they had “an establish'd correspondency in most parts of Europe, relating to the affairs of religion.” The Philadelphian Richard Roach corresponded with French Prophets and Pietists. Quakers also continued to correspond with those they met during their travels. Antoinette Bourignon's published works included over 800 letters.[70]

Letters varied in purpose and format. Some dissenters wrote letters to follow up on previous conversations begun in person. After Johanna Eleonora Petersen met William Penn in Frankfurt in 1677, the two became friends and continued to correspond.[71] In 1712, the Quaker Elizabeth Webb exchanged letters with Anton Wilhelm Boehm, a German Pietist who came to England as a chaplain. Webb and Boehm had recently met in London. In his letter to Webb, Boehm remarked “how welcome it is...whenever I meet with a fellow pilgrim, traveling to the city which is adorned with twelve pearls to receive all such who have made up the family of God in this wicked generation, and have been presented for his peculiar people in all parts and denominations of Christendom.”[72] His reference to a city adorned with twelve pearls referred to New Jerusalem.

Letters addressed a range of topics, from theological debate to more personal subjects. In one undated letter, for example, the Pietist Rosamunde von Asseburg thanked the Philadelphians for their concern over her sister's recent illness. The letter offered hearty exhortations to the community of Philadelphians, and we gain a sense from it of

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70 *Theosophical Transactions,* no. 1, 1; See “Letters of Francis Lee, c. 1704,” Lambeth Palace MSS 1559, Lambeth Palace Library, London; “Papers of the Revd. Mr. Richard Roach,” Rawlinson MSS D., 832-33, Bodleian Library, Oxford; Mirjam de Baar, “Prophetess of God and Prolific Writer: Antoinette Bourignon and the Reception of Her Writings,” 137.

71 Martin, “Female Reformers as the Gate Keepers of Pietism: The Example of Johanna Eleonora Merlau and William Penn,” 42.

72 Anton Wilhelm Boehm, in *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm,* 44.

how these groups not only spent time in theological discourse but also in the establishment of interpersonal connections.[73]

Not all letters focused exclusively on expressions of mutual understanding and affection, though. Letters also served as a means to carry out debates. As with personal encounters, there existed a tension between presenting one's own beliefs and connecting with those who might also be among God's chosen. Johannes Kelpius' millenarianism and attempts at ecumenism are reflected in the correspondence he exchanged with dissenters of Philadelphian, Seventh-Day Baptist, Swedish Lutheran, Swiss Anabaptist, and Quaker persuasion.[74] In May 1706, Kelpius sent a lengthy letter to the Quaker Esther Palmer in response to her request to see "a few lines from [Kelpius'] hand." The two likely had met during Palmer's missionary travels through Pennsylvania the previous year. Kelpius described "a double wall" between them, and his long and didactic letter focused on what he called the "threefold wilderness state." According to Kelpius, each state led closer to spiritual holiness. He believed that the third state of wilderness was open only to an elect few. While Kelpius did not make explicit what, exactly, was the double wall that separated his beliefs from Palmer's, he interpreted the disagreement as a sign that the millennium had not yet arrived. Nonetheless, he desired "that we may behold our Beloved always, standing behind our wall."[75]

Kelpius' letter points to the centrality of correspondence as a discursive medium. Kelpius actively sought out other dissenters, and after meeting Palmer he chose to correspond with her in order to continue their theological debate. His attempt to reach out

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73 Rosamunde Von Asseburg, "Letter to Richard Roach," n.d, Rawlinson MSS D., 832/46, Bodleian Library, Oxford.

74 See Johannes Kelpius, *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius,* trans. and ed. Julius Sachse (Lancaster, PA: Press of the New Era Printing Company, 1917).

75 Ibid., 86, 95.

to Palmer, however, was stymied by loyalty to his beliefs, which included the belief that only an elect few would build the New Jerusalem.

Kelpius' correspondence also points to how letters allowed for the exchange of ideas and beliefs across great distances. In May 1699, Kelpius wrote a letter to the secretary of the Philadelphians, Heinrich Deichmann. The letter expressed great love for the Philadelphian community, but it also indicated worry over some of their recent practices. Kelpius encouraged Deichmann to come to Pennsylvania to join his community. The letter also reveals how epistolary culture allowed for the exchange of ideas across long distances. Kelpius asked Deichmann not to "omit corresponding very frequently with us, because herein I perceive the special hand of God, therefore I have also procured for you a good address...Send us the acts with diligence, in that our friends crave for them and, if possible, something of Por[d]age who is entirely unknown to us."[76] John Pordage was the original English leader of the Philadelphian movement. Through a courier, Kelpius intended to receive (and read) Pordage's writings.

Correspondence was especially important to the Netherlandish prophet Antoinette Bourignon, whose hundreds of letters shed light on the ongoing theological conversations she had with various dissenters throughout Europe. As early as 1669, the Quaker Stephen Crisp wrote Bourignon with the hope that he might attract her followers to Quakerism. This plan backfired, and a competition developed between the two groups; Bourignon even took in some Quaker converts.[77] Bourignon wrote Jean de Labadie and Anna Maria Schurman, disagreeing vehemently with their Calvinist beliefs. She also exchanged

76 Ibid., 40. Levente Juhász suggests that Jane Lead's works were likely among the documents sent in Deichmann's earlier packets to Kelpius. While it is somewhat surprising that Kelpius would not have been introduced to Pordage's writings while spending time in London with the Philadelphians, the broader point here is that letters allowed for the transatlantic exchange of information. See Juhász, "Johannes Kelpius (1673–1708): Mystic on the Wissahickon," 5.

77 Martin, "Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism," 36.

letters with a number of individuals who wrote out of a curiosity to learn more about her. In a letter to one man, for example, she responded to his inquiries about what she thought of Jean de Labadie and Jacob Boehme.[78]

Bourignon used correspondence as a way to continue conversations begun in person. For Bourignon—who did not travel much—this practice was particularly useful, but it was also common among other dissenters.[79] After Johanna Eleonora Petersen met William Penn in Frankfurt in 1677, the two became friends and continued to correspond.[80] At some point around 1712, the Quaker Elizabeth Webb met Anton Wilhelm Boehm, a German Pietist who came to England as a chaplain. They also continued their discourse via correspondence.[81]

Even in a religious sphere that generally accepted female participation, women such as Antoinette Bourignon and Elizabeth Webb acknowledged the problems that their gender posed. When Webb wrote Anton Wilhelm Boehm, for example, she noted that "I have no learned method to deliver my religious experience, either by word or writing, but plainly and simply as the Spirit of Truth directs, and I, being the weaker vessel, too, have the more need to beg to be excused."[82] Language of concession was not uncommon among women who wrote during this period, and in its own way such language could serve to empower the author: by acknowledging the restrictions that societal

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78 Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres,* vol. 5, pt. 2, 16, 18; Ibid., vol. 19, 49-50.

79 We cannot deduce from Bourignon's prolific use of correspondence that women, who had more restrictions than men when traveling, turned to writing letters as recourse to make up for such restrictions or limitations. Rather, Bourignon's example fits in with the pattern of dissenters in general, whether male or female. Quakers, Philadelphians, and Pietists all found letter-writing to be useful whether they traveled or not.

80 Martin, "Female Reformers as the Gatekeepers of Pietism," 42-47.

81 In his letter to Webb, Boehm referenced New Jerusalem, remarking "how welcome it is...whenever I meet with a fellow pilgrim, traveling to the city which is adorned with twelve pearls to receive all such who have made up the family of God in this wicked generation, and have been presented for his peculiar people in all parts and denominations of Christendom." See Anton Wilhelm Boehm, in *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm, with his Answer*, 44.

82 Webb, *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm, with his Answer*, 3.

constructions of gender placed upon her, the female writer could deflect some criticisms. But in the case of Elizabeth Webb, such language of concession could be read two ways: it is unclear whether the plainness of her writing is a defect, or a sign of God's spirit working through her.

Epistles offered a distinct advantage to female writers because letters were—at least in principle—a private medium. Despite this advantage, epistolary writing did not develop into the recourse that it became for women in the Enlightenment public sphere, who had fewer opportunities for public expression.[83] While female dissenters sometimes made excuses for participating in public religious discourse, they continued to find—and take advantage of—a variety of opportunities to do so.

As stated, letters were a private medium, in principle. Through circulation, however, they had the potential to reach a much larger readership. For dissenters, this meant that epistolary writing served as a way to spread ideas and beliefs while still preserving the intimacy of a conversation. Bourignon, for example, assigned great importance to letter writing, asking one correspondent to copy her letters because they could serve to the advantage of other persons besides the intended recipient: "I have often seen by experience, that those who read the letters by chance profit more from their content than the one to whom I have written them." Similarly, Kelpius assumed that his letter to Deichmann would be read aloud or circulated among the broader Philadelphian community: "What we [Kelpius and Seelig] as brethren have written, you may communicate at the same time (because the one explaineth the other) without fear and reserve." Anton Wilhelm Boehm wrote Elizabeth Webb that he no longer had her recent

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83 For a consideration of the Enlightenment public sphere, women writers, and questions of agency and exclusion, see *Going Public: Women and Publishing in Early Modern France,* eds. Elizabeth C. Goldsmith and Dena Goodman (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995).

letter in his possession: "[Y]our letter has been read with great satisfaction by myself and many of my friends. But I have not been able to recover it yet out of their hands. Some have even desired to transcribe it for their edification."[84]

In order to expand the circulation and reach of their correspondence, religious groups sometimes published copies of the letters they exchanged with others. William Penn, for example, interspersed some of his correspondence with Johanna Eleonora Petersen and Princess Elisabeth of the Palatinate in his published travel journal.[85] The intended readership of a letter could thus be much greater in number and scope than the named recipient. The manner in which one letter from a dissenter could reach a large community suggests that letters of dissenters served a similar function to the letters of later eighteenth-century *philosophes*, who used epistolary writing to bridge the divide between private and public.

<u>Religious Encounters and Print Culture</u>

It was the printed word, however, that allowed for the mass circulation of ideas, beliefs, and opinions. The circulation of printed works facilitated the common readership of such theologians as Jacob Boehme, Antoinette Bourignon, Jane Lead, and Madame Guyon. For example, Boehme's printed works helped his ideas become influential to the theology and theosophy of a number of late seventeenth-century and early eighteenth-century millenarian groups, including the Philadelphians, some radical Pietists,

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84 Bourignon, vol. 19, *225*; Kelpius, *The Diarium of Magister Johannes Kelpius,* 40; Boehm, in *A Letter from Elizabeth Webb to Anthony William Boehm, with his Answer*, 43.
85 Penn, *An Account of William Penn's Travels in Holland and Germany*.

Antoinette Bourignon, and the French Prophets.[86] Print culture enabled dissenters to read one another's work, both informatively and critically, and it shaped their interactions with one another.

We can point to several key events in the history of early modern print culture as it related to dissenters. In the British context, religious writings greatly increased during the Civil Wars due to political upheaval, religious radicalism, and the collapse of press controls. The Licensing or Printing Act of 1662 restored some censorship to the English press, but not to the degree of pre-1640 controls. Dissenters continued to publish their writings. Then, in 1695, the Licensing Act lapsed, officially marking the end of government restrictions and pre-publication censorship. While there were still mechanisms for controlling the press, such as libel and copyright law, the publications of dissenters proliferated. At least one third of the total number of published items in early eighteenth-century England were religious works. On the continent, printed works also grew rapidly during this period. Printed debates between Pietists and orthodox Lutherans, for example, led to the publication of over 2,000 works between 1670 and 1720.[87] Also contributing to these high publication numbers in the Northern Atlantic was the fact that religious writers in Britain and the Netherlands faced milder regimes of censorship compared to some of their neighbors, such as France. And in the early modern German

86 For more on Boehme see and Behmenism Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians: A Contribution to the Study of English Mysticism in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Uppsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1948).

87 Paula McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998, 4, 122; James Van Horn Melton, “Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany,” in *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. James Bradley and Dale Van Kley (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 315.

states, the practice of censorship had localized nuances, of which Pietists were able to take advantage.[88]

Writers, printers, patrons, editors, and translators all played a part in the print culture of dissenters. Translators, in particular, held an important role in facilitating the circulation of printed ideas among dissenters—especially between Britain and continental Europe. Translators included followers of a particular prophet or religious figure, as well as outsiders who took an interest in attempts at ecumenism. The motivation to translate other dissenters' works points to the sense of commonality that many dissenters shared; there was a desire to cross confessional boundaries and learn more about one's religious "other." Dissenters also translated their own works for publication. In 1711, several French Prophets undertook a missionary trip to Holland and Germany. The transcription, translation into French and Dutch, and publication of their spoken warnings and prophecies were important items on their agenda before they ended the mission.[89]

Some dissenting women writers not only published in their native language but also had their works translated. Here we see a departure from the Enlightenment public sphere, in which women tended to participate as translators rather than as translated authors, in part due to the gendering of translation as passive and feminine.[90] Religious writers (and their translators) had a different conception of their writing, one that saw their work as divinely inspired or ordained—thus obviating some of the issues that their

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88 For an overview of censorship during the eighteenth century see Mogens Laerke, "Introduction," in *The Uses of Censorship in the Enlightenment,* ed. Mogens Laerke (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1-24. Laerke shows that censorship was a fraught process of negotiation between the laws of censorship and the implementation of these laws. See also Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism,* trans. Gerald T. MacDonald (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 5, 29.

89 "A Short Historical Account of the Message of the Spirit of the Lord to his People in Germany in the Year 1711," reprinted in "The French Prophets of 1711," ed. T. S. Penny, *Baptist Quarterly* 2 (1924): 179.

90 On the gendering of translation see Lori Chamberlain, "Gender and the Metaphorics of Translation," *Signs* 13 (Spring, 1988): 454-472.

gender raised. Most of Jane Lead's works were translated and then published in German and Dutch. Baron Dodo von Knyphausen funded many of these publications. Von Knyphausen, a Prussian nobleman who had once supported Antoinette Bourignon, began to correspond with Lead after reading her *Heavenly Cloud Now Breaking*. He soon became her benefactor. About the year 1694, he offered to publish Lead's tracts in both German and English. Two of her translated works were issued in German in 1694 and 1695, respectively.[91] Antoinette Bourignon's works received similar treatment to Lead's. Between 1668 and 1685, no fewer than 47 of her works were published in their original language, French. Many of these works were also translated into Dutch and German. Three were translated into Latin. Her works were translated into English beginning as early as 1671. Overall, Bourignon's publications for the above-mentioned period numbered 120; her translated works thus outnumbered those in their original language.[92]

Bourignon expressed mixed feelings about the translation of her works. In a letter to a Lutheran pastor, she wrote that she did not think it would be advisable that her writings be translated into German. Her reason for this decision was that she did not know German and thus could not tell whether the writings had been translated according to her intentions. Moreover, she pointed out the subtlety of the French language, in which one letter could change the entire meaning. Bourignon also stated that the first part of *La Lumière née en ténèbres* had been translated by Christian Hoburg, but that she had not dared have the work printed due to her worry that the translation might have lost the

91 Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms and the Spectacular Failure of the Philadelphian Society," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35, no. 4 (Summer 2002), 517. Richard Roach claimed that Lead "wrote many deep and useful Tracts, chiefly relating to the Kingdom of Christ; which have all been Coveted, and translated into the High German Tongue; and have had great Effect in several Countries; tho' disregarded in her Own" (Roach, *The Great Crisis,* 99); Nils Thune, *The Behmenists and the Philadelphians,* 81.

92 De Baar, "Prophetess of God and Prolific Writer: Antoinette Bourignon and the Reception of Her Writings," 137; MacEwen, *Antoinette Bourignon, Quietist*, 5.

original meaning. She often found faults that needed to be corrected when her friends translated her work into Dutch because they did not always understand her meaning, unless she told them.[93] In a 1675 letter, Bourignon criticized a proposal to translate *La Parole de Dieu* into German, noting that only a few Germans knew about her writings, and most of them understood Dutch. Bourignon clearly had concerns over the translation of her writings in so far as it could pose a risk to the integrity of her message. However, these worries did not ultimately impede the translation, publication, and circulation of her works in multiple languages.[94]

Whether dissenters published their writings in translation or in their native language, the target readership was often a transnational one. As Willi Temme has noted, translated works allowed for a circular exchange of ideas. The example of Behmenism highlights this point. Starting in the mid-seventeenth century, Boehme's works were translated into English by theosophical circles in England. English Behmenists developed Boehme's ideas further and then in turn influenced continental Pietists, who read translated works of the English Behmenists.[95] The Philadelphians themselves noted in their publication, *The State of the Philadelphian Society* (1697), that "the English are a Branch from the German root, so some have observ'd a Circulation as it were from the Root to the Branch, and from the Branch to the Root again."[96]

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93 Bourignon, *Toutes les oeuvres,* vol. 18, pt. 1, 173-74. Bourignon used the word "flamen" but she likely meant "Dutch." The modern French spelling, "flamand," refers specifically to Flemish. However, "néerlandais" and "hollandais," the modern equivalents of Dutch, do not appear in seventeenth-century French texts. "Flamen" could refer either to Dutch or Flemish, depending on the context.

94 Ibid., vol. 19, 231. Many of Bourignon's works were published posthumously. She gained her greatest popularity in Scotland, for example, in the early eighteenth century.

95 Willi Temme, "From Jakob Böhme via Jane Leade to Eva von Buttlar—Transmigrations and Transformations of Religious Ideas," in *Pietism in Germany and North America, 1680-1820,* 101-106.

96 [Philadelphian Society], *The State of the Philadelphian Society*, 12.

The role of print culture in creating an international discursive space for dissenters is highlighted in the example of the Philadelphians. In 1695, the year in which the Licensing Act lapsed, Lead and the Philadelphians began a "mission" to proclaim and publicize their cause to the world. Backed by sponsors such as the Baron von Knyphausen, the Philadelphians began to print a number of keynote publications. In 1697, they opened their meetings to the public. The public campaign continued until 1703, when the Philadelphians declared that they had been misunderstood.[97]

The extent to which Philadelphian publications were both a transnational and a transconfessional effort has been under-emphasized in scholarship. As I have pointed out, the millenarian belief in an New Jerusalem encouraged many dissenters to seek out others who had also been chosen to usher in the new age. This was the impetus behind the Philadelphians' publishing campaign. The Philadelphians did not believe that they were the only members of the true Church. Indeed, they suggested that members existed in both Protestant and Roman Catholic countries.[98] The title of one 1696 publication, for example, was *A Message to the Philadelphian Society, Whithersoever dispersed over the whole Earth.*[99] In what could be considered their keynote publication, *The State of the Philadelphian Society* (1697), the Philadelphians explained their movement, what it stood for, and how it differed from other movements such as Quakerism. The publication

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97 The initial swarm of outsiders to Philadelphian meetings was connected to the Toleration Act, which required dissenters to keep their doors unlocked during meetings. Roach notes that they "were necessitated by the law of the land to be public, in that we could not shut out any that intruded upon us." See *Theosophical Transactions,* no. 4, 224. So many people came to the Philadelphian meetings at Baldwins Gardens that that they had to take a larger place. See Richard Roach, "An Account of the Rise and Progress of the Philadelphian Society," Rawlinson MSS D., 833/65-6, Bodleian Library, Oxford. On the Philadelphians' public campaign see McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms," 516.

98 [Philadelphian Society], *The State of the Philadelphian Society,* 12-3.

99 [Philadelphian Society], *A Message to the Philadelphian Society, Whithersoever dispersed over the whole Earth. Together with a Call to the Several Gathered Churches among Protestants in this Nation of England* (London, 1696).

stressed that the Philadelphians were a society interested in reform, rather than a denomination or sect:

> For this Society doth not properly consist of those who meet together for religious worship at such certain times, and in such a peculiar manner. No, it is not confin'd to these: but it doth consist of as many as are fellow waiters for the same glorious prize of the first resurrection, and the high immunities of the New Jerusalem-state.

The belief that there were other “fellow waiters for the same glorious prize” spurred the Philadelphians to seek out these individuals. *The State of the Philadelphian Society* claimed:

> [W]e dare not say that we are alone, or that our Society is made up of such a little handful. For I do not despair but that there may be seven thousand Undefil'd Names found in this nation, that shall be numbered with the Philadelphian Society, when a publick and declarative inquisition shall be made by the searcher of all hearts. The numbers of this society in other countries may be more considerable, then is at first easie to be believ'd. The first motion or eruption of it may be said to have been in Germany, where it has spread it self chiefly through the indefatigable zeal of some of the clergy; under the Name of Pietism.[100]

The Philadelphians saw themselves as part of an international movement for reform that involved other members, such as continental Pietists. It was in this spirit that the Philadelphians issued their serial publication, *Theosophical Transactions by the Philadelphian Society, Consisting of Memoirs, Conferences, Letters, Dissertations, Inquiries, etc. for the Advancement of Piety and Divine Philosophy.*

The *Theosophical Transactions* was a product of the late seventeenth century, a formative period in the development of the monthly or quarterly journal. The most famous of these journals was the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, first established in 1665. Like other quarterly or monthly journals of its era, the *Theosophical Transactions* was a collectively-authored periodical that drew on international

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100 [Philadelphian Society], *The State of the Philadelphian Society,* 11.

collaboration and input.[101] The Philadelphians published their periodical over the course of several months, with the first issue dated March 1697 and the last dated September to November 1697. The volumes varied in length from fewer than thirty pages to nearly one hundred; they included music, poetry, and obscure alchemic or kabbalistic writings. The Philadelphians stated that one goal in issuing this periodical was to "make peace between contending brethren, and to put an end (as far as is possible) to the controversies among the religionaries, either one with another, or else with themselves."[102] Accordingly, among the entries were correspondences, translations, and commentaries from dissenters on both sides of the English Channel.

Many entries dealt with wonders and miracles throughout Europe and Britain. A letter from Hereford, dated 12 October 1695 and published in Volume Two, relates the October 1690 story of a divine who saw the apparitions of three persons.[103] Volume One also included "A Relation out of France, concerning a Black Bituminous Vapour, that arose out of the Earth, and did considerable Mischief."[104] Such stories of the strange or miraculous proved popular among seventeenth-century readers, but the Philadelphians likely took interest in them for another reason than that of merely attracting readers.

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101 Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke, "*The Spectator*, or the Metamorphoses of the Periodical: A Study in Cultural Translation," in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, eds. Peter Burke and R. Po-chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University, Press, 2007), 146; Paula McDowell, "Enlightenment Enthusiasms," 520.

102 *Theosophical Transactions,* no. 1, 5.

103 [Philadelphian Society], *Theosophical Transactions by the Philadelphian Society Consisting of Memoirs, Letters, Dissertations, Inquiries, etc., vol. 2* (London, April 1697), 95-6.

104 Ibid*., vol. 1,* 45.

Many millenarians would have interpreted such events—especially given their widespread geographical occurrence—as signs that the end of the world was near.[105]

The close connections between English Philadelphians and radical continental Pietists are reflected in the entries by Dutch or German contributors. Volume Two listed an extract of a letter from “a member of this society in Niederndodeleben,” which was home to the Petersens from 1692 to 1708. The third volume included an extract of Johanna Eleonora Petersen's 1696 book on the revelation of Christ.[106] By listing extracts and announcements for publications of religious writings from persons such as Petersen, the Philadelphians promoted the idea that they shared a religious culture with like-minded persons on the continent. Their focus on wonders, miracles, and a search for signs of the end times drew on correspondences and contacts from Europe as well as Britain.

The Philadelphians abandoned the *Theosophical Transactions* after just five issues. Their publishing campaign, however, continued for several more years.[107] For a small group, their publishing power was remarkable. The writings of Jane Lead, especially, became known across Europe. In the weeks after Lead's death in 1704,

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105 The early Enlightenment in England invited considerable debate over the nature of miracles. As Jane Shaw has shown, this debate was not merely a dichotomous struggle between beliefs in revelation and reason. A revival of interest in miracles, begun in the seventeenth century, generated a broader discussion that created three main streams of thought about the miraculous in Protestant England. First, there was the belief in the cessation of miracles after biblical times. Second, there was the radical Protestant belief in miracles and healing that emerged during the Civil War and Interregnum period among groups such as the Quakers. Third, there was the belief that miracles were plausible, but only with great evidentiary support. This became the orthodox position of many Anglicans. See Jane Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 2-4, 7.

106 *Theosophical Transactions,* no. 2, 83 (see also Ibid., no. 1, 46); Ibid., no. 3, 142-51. See also Barbara Becker-Cantarino, “Introduction,” in *The Life of Lady Johanna Eleonora Petersen, Written by Herself,* trans. and ed. Barbara Becker-Cantarino (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 14-5.

107 About the time that the Philadelphians' public campaign ended, they began another campaign to create a fixed alliance with certain Pietists. They sent a representative, Johann Dittmar, to Germany. While he was received warmly, he failed to accomplish his mission. No one he met was comfortable with the idea of forming a union that would require allegiance to a formal creed. See Hans Schneider, *German Radical Pietism,* transl. Gerald McDonald (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press), 67-8.

Francis Lee, Lead's son in-law and disciple, wrote and received various letters addressing Lead, her death, and her legacy. Among the collection we find an account written by a woman who saw a vision of Lead. This woman, Hannah of Utrecht, had connections to other dissenters who knew about Lead. In her account, she wrote that she was staying with a friend who had two books. One was the “mystic treatise of a popish doctor,” which her friend gave to her to read: “But because I had already read it, I took hold of the other, which was the *Heavenly Cloud and Revelation of Revelations* of Madam Lead, the which I had never before seen: and this I beg'd her to lend me.”[108] Books were a precious commodity in the early eighteenth century. That Lead's book numbered among Hannah's host's small library is a salient example of Lead's presence in the published world. Groups such as the Philadelphians took full advantage of the printed word as they attempted to reach past their own boundaries and seek out other like-minded believers.

Scholars sometimes write about the printed word in a way that elevates its cultural importance above other modes of early modern communication. This attention is well deserved because the rise of print culture was indeed revolutionary.[109] But it is important to note that Hannah encountered Lead's published work while visiting another's house, and she shared her experience in manuscript form. As her example reminds us, then, print culture operated in tandem with other methods of communication among dissenters, such oral and manuscript exchanges.

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108 Lambeth Palace MSS 1559/1-2, Lambeth Palace Library, London. See also Rawl. MSS D., 833/89, Bodleian Library, Oxford. Both Lee and Roach transcribed Hannah's account. Others in Hannah's circle of acquaintances knew Lead; however, her hosts—a mother and daughter—were likely not followers of Lead. The daughter questioned why Hannah wished to read Lead's “old English wives' dreams.” The mother asked her daughter, “Do you give away that book then? We might yet perhaps read in it.”

109 For an overview of the printing revolution see Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

Religious Encounters and the Public Sphere

The debates and interactions that engaged dissenters throughout Europe and the British Atlantic would not have been possible without travel, correspondence, and the printed word working together to allow for the rapid and widespread exchange of ideas. Epistolary networks and the transatlantic exchange of religious writings (both manuscript and print) certainly predated the activities of the groups considered here. Seventeenth-century Quakers, Puritans, and Pietists all established transatlantic communities that relied on communication networks. And in the second half of the seventeenth century, Pietists, Quakers, and Mennonites began to create transatlantic communication networks that crossed sectarian lines.[110]

By the mid eighteenth century, evangelicals began to use the mechanisms of the public sphere—the same mechanisms considered in this chapter—sites of sociability, letters, and printed writings—to participate in the debates of the transatlantic revivals. Some early Americanists, including T. H. Breen and Frank Lambert, have argued for the presence of a religious public sphere in the second half of the eighteenth century, one which functioned as an intellectual space in which writers attempted to reach the public and influence public opinion. Susan O'Brien, who also embraces the idea of a mid eighteenth-century religious public sphere, has probed the role of an evangelical network in facilitating the revivals. She emphasizes the transatlantic nature of this network,

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110 See Alison Searle, "Though I am a Stranger to You by Face, yet in Neere Bonds by Faith": A Transatlantic Puritan Republic of Letters," *Early American Literature* 43, no. 2 (2008): 277-308; Frederick Tolles, *Quakers and the Atlantic Culture* (New York: MacMillan, 1960). Durnbaugh, "Communication Networks as One Aspect of Pietist Definition: The Example of Radical Pietist Connections between Colonial North America and Europe;" Melton, "Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany," 294-333; Beiler, "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and European Migration, 1660-1710."

arguing that it marked a departure from its earlier counterparts—such as the epistolary network of Puritans—by a greater focus on conversion and evangelism.[111]

The exchanges and debates of the Labadists, Quakers, Philadelphians, radical Pietists, French Prophets, and Bourignonians represent an important transitional period between the seventeenth-century communication networks like those of the Puritans or early Quakers and the later eighteenth-century religious public sphere of the transatlantic revivalists. The intended audience of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century dissenters was narrower in scope than that of their later eighteenth-century evangelical counterparts. Motivated in large part by millenarian beliefs, they operated as persons seeking out other builders of New Jerusalem, other chosen individuals in an expanding world. Those who participated in the First Great Awakening, by contrast, attempted to communicate persuasively to an "imagined public" in order to influence popular religion.[112]

However, unlike the Puritans or other seventeenth-century groups who established intra-confessional communication networks, the groups considered here actively sought to transcend confessional and sectarian divisions. Like later public-sphere participants who created a space apart from the state, dissenters created a space outside of the official ecclesiastical space, one that was conducive to meetings and debates among dissenters. Moreover, dissenters used the mechanisms and structures of the public sphere—

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111 T. H. Breen, "Retrieving Common Sense: Rights, Liberties, and the Religious Public Sphere in Late Eighteenth Century America," in *To Secure the Blessings of Liberty: Rights in American History* ed. Josephine Pacheco (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1993), 55-65; Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Susan O'Brien, "A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755," *American Historical Review* 91 (October 1986): 811-32. See also Jennifer Snead, "Print, Predestination, and the Public Sphere: Transatlantic Evangelical Periodicals, 1740–1745," *Early American Literature* 45, no. 1 (2010): 93-118.

112 Breen, "Retrieving Common Sense," 61.

particularly the mechanisms that arose out of a revolution in communication, such as new sites of sociability, epistolary networks, and the printed word—to engage in religious conversations and debates in a transnational setting.[113] They also invoked codes of civility, toleration, and expected behavior at the sites of sociability in which they interacted.

This chapter steers away from making a direct connection between the religious groups considered here and the Habermasian[114] public sphere; the context of dissenters'' exchanges and debates with one another was a religious realm, not a political.[115] These groups were interested in revelation rather than reason, and in their role as chosen reformers in the last days. They appealed to an informed readership, but one that was informed on issues related to radical religion.

However, there was more to the public sphere than the liberal bourgeois model described by Habermas. Recent historians have brought to the forefront the idea of multiple publics. Paula McDowell, for example, has shown how a community of female

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113 The framework of this chapter's relationship to the public sphere is indebted to points made about the public sphere and Pietism in Melton, "Pietism, Politics, and the Public Sphere in Germany."

114 Jürgen Habermas' *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1962) proposed that a bourgeois public sphere arose in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, propelled by a communication revolution characterized by the rise of print culture and new arenas of debate and sociability. Habermas' model, which he tied to the development of capitalism, left less room for consideration of how factors such as gender and religion entered into the public sphere. More recently, scholars have revised and expanded Habermas' model to accommodate such structures. For considerations of Habermas' model and its limitations see James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10-15; David Zaret, "Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 221.

115 Certainly, dissenters participated in some of the debates of the Enlightenment public sphere. In the early Enlightenment England, a key debate arose over the role of enthusiasm in religion. Jane Shaw (*Miracles in Enlightenment England)* has shown how accounts of miracles became more "scientific" in their presentation of evidence and witnesses. And the Philadelphians were clearly responding to—or at least imitating—the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* when they chose to name their own periodical the *Theosophical Transactions by the Philadelphian Society* (1697). However, this chapter's concerns are the interactions and debates between and among religious *minorities*. These debates dealt with separate issues than did those involving state-supported groups such as lay Anglican voluntary societies, the SPCK, and Latitudinarians.

printworkers and propagandists in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century London became involved in producing and circulating political ideas through print. According to McDowell, the political activity of middling and lower-class women during this period points to the presence of competing publics. The masculine, liberal bourgeois public sphere that Habermas described arose as a "reconstruction of something that existed earlier; a remodelling of competing publics into a new idealized 'community' to contend with fears of another Civil War in England."[116] David Zaret has also argued that there were multiple publics. He contends that the liberal bourgeois public sphere in England developed as a response to a pre-existing, Puritan-controlled religious public sphere. He calls for the recognition that there were several public spheres in which the exchange of ideas occurred, both in learned and popular cultures.[117]

If one entertains the idea that there were other "publics" beyond the liberal bourgeois public of which Habermas writes, we can place the dissenting networks considered here in the context of the history of the public sphere. The religious sphere here differed in two important ways from later eighteenth-century iterations, such as the public sphere of the transatlantic revivals and the Enlightenment public sphere. First, it encouraged the active participation of women as well as men. The same female prophets who found recognition for their public speech within their respective religious groups also found a voice in their interaction with other dissenting groups.

Also unlike participants in later eighteenth public spheres, including that of the transatlantic revivals, seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century dissenters did not try to

116 McDowell, *The Women of Grub Street: Press, Politics, and Gender in the London Literary Marketplace 1678-1730*, 11, 9.

117 Zaret, "Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth-Century England," 224, 230.

identify and reach a public, imagined or real, in order to sway public opinion.[118] Rather, they sought out an audience of one another, of other potentially chosen reformers. In their conversations and debates with other dissenters they appealed to and invoked a shared language that drew on concepts of individual and communal chosenness and on notions of prophetic and spiritual authority. As William Penn told the Labadists, “for those who are come to any measure of a Divine Sense, they are as Looking-glasses to each other, seeing themselves in each other, as Face answereth Face in a Glass.”[119]

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118 See Breen, “Retrieving Common Sense: Rights, Liberties, and the Religious Public Sphere in Late Eighteenth Century America,” 61.

119 Penn, *An Account of William Penn's Travels in Holland and Germany,* 150.

Conclusion

By 1715, female prophecy as manifested in the groups considered here had begun to change. The Quakers, well into the third generation of their existence, still accepted women as prophets and missionaries in their movement. But the millenarian context in which Quakerism developed had waned. Deborah Bell, a young Yorkshire Quaker, managed to attract crowds at the meetings in her hometown when she spoke. However, they came mainly out of curiosity to see the young woman preach. Indeed, Bell's lengthy 1711 defense of female prophecy and preaching—perhaps the most substantial defense since Margaret Fell Fox's 1667 treatise on the subject—used the terms "preaching" and "prophesying" interchangeably. According to Bell, preaching, prophesying, and praying publicly were all acts of religious expression, and they were all open to women as well as men.[1] For Bell, prophesying had less to do with the warnings of the early Quakers who believed themselves to be living in the last days, and more to do with a focus on the conduct of her fellow Quakers.[2]

By the end of the Stuart era, other groups that had emerged out of the Civil Wars—such as the General Baptists, Particular Baptists, Independents, Fifth Monarchists, and Seventh-Day Baptists—had either died out or abandoned their intense chiliasm.[3] In 1715, Labadists still existed in on both sides of the Atlantic but the nuclei of their

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1 Deborah Bell, *A short journal of the labours and travels in the work of the ministry, of that faithful servant of Christ, Deborah Bell* (London, 1762); see also Margaret Fell Fox, *Women's Speaking Justified* (London, 1667).

2 John Kelsall notes, for example, that Bell's message at the meeting in Dolobran centered on exhorting parents to bring up their children in the fear of God and on following the "narrow way." See Kelsall, "An Account of Friends Who Visited Dolobran, 1701-1712," MS Vol. S 193/4, pp. 176-79, Society of Friends Library, London.

3 See Mark R. Bell, *Apocalypse How?: Baptist Movements During the English Revolution* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2000).

communities had disintegrated.[4] For the French Prophets, the years after 1715 brought death, dispersion, and a decline in prophecy.[5] Many of the most prolific female prophets among radical Pietist groups—Rosamunde von Asseburg, Johanna Petersen, Anna Maria Schuchart, Eva von Buttlar—also flourished before 1715.[6]

While these groups and their female prophets declined, however, campaigns for religious reform and spiritual renewal continued into the mid-eighteenth century with the rise of Methodism and the transatlantic revivals.[7] This dissertation has considered how a transnational religious sphere, propelled by the mechanisms and structures of an emerging public sphere, emerged in the generation before revivalists turned to similar mechanisms to create their own religious public sphere. I have argued that a transnational religious sphere of seventeenth-century dissenters informed the transatlantic awakenings in a way that challenges the construct of *the* Great Awakening. Scholars such as Jon Butler, Frank Lambert, and Joseph Conforti have questioned the idea of a single, cohesive awakening. Rather, they propose that there were a series of small-scale revivals that were neither uniquely Calvinist nor uniquely American. The prophets in this study certainly support this argument. They made their own transnational attempts at spiritual renewal a full generation before the revivalists, and they did so through the creation of a

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[4] See Trevor Saxby, *The Quest for the New Jerusalem, Jean de Labadie and the Labadists, 1610-1730* (Boston: M. Nijhoff Publishers, 1987), 313-336; Bartlett Burleigh James, *The Labadist Colony in Maryland* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1899), 40.

[5] Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England: A Social History of a Millenarian Group in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1980), 285.

[6] With the exception of Buttlar (d. 1721), whose group started around 1700, most of these women flourished as prophets in the late seventeenth century. See Judd Stitziel, "God, the Devil, Medicine, and the Word: A Controversy over Ecstatic Women in Protestant Middle Germany 1691-1693," *Central European History* 29, no. 3 (1996): 309-337.

[7] As Jon Butler proposes, the transatlantic revivals were "part of a long-term pattern of erratic movements for spiritual renewal and revival that had long characterized Western Christianity and Protestantism since its birth two centuries earlier." See Butler, "Enthusiasm Described and Decried: The Great Awakening as Interpretative Fiction," *The Journal of American History* 69, no. 2 (1982): 323.

religious sphere that anticipated the more fully developed religious public sphere of the revivalists.

Unlike the religious public sphere of the awakenings, however, the networks of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century dissenters and prophets differed in two important ways. First, the religious sphere considered here was open to women, while participation in the public sphere of the transatlantic revivalists was for the most part restricted to men.[8] Second, the claim to authority of those considered in this dissertation was a spiritual or prophetic authority that often drew on a language of election. By the time of the transatlantic awakenings, participants in the public sphere of religion were appealing to reason, the same currency that drove the Enlightenment public sphere.[9] The purpose of this dissertation has been to explore how these two factors—election rhetoric and female participation in public religion—came together in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

The project has highlighted the importance of election to dissenters and, more specifically, to female prophets of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Female prophets throughout the British Atlantic devoted considerable effort to negotiating and defining election. Some focused on election in a Calvinist doctrinal sense. We see this, for example, in the example of the Labadists, who engaged in debates over doctrinal election with Antoinette Bourignon. Calvinism was a defining point around which many dissenting groups established their doctrinal positions on salvation: they identified either as Calvinist or anti-Calvinist. Even among some groups who did not

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8 See Ibid.,323-24.

9 On religion and the public sphere during the Great Awakening see T. H. Breen, "Retrieving Common Sense: Rights, Liberties, and the Religious Public Sphere in Late Eighteenth Century America," in *To Secure the Blessings of Liberty: Rights in American History,* ed. Josephine Pacheco (Fairfax, VA: George Mason University Press, 1993), 60; Frank Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 171.

espouse the Calvinist doctrine of election, the working out of questions of doctrinal grace and election remained central. The Philadelphians, for example, came to espouse *apocatastasis,* the belief in an eventual universal restoration of all souls. But this belief did not preclude them from embracing other ideas of election and limited grace in the present—such as a belief that they were a chosen Society, or even a belief in the 144,000 elect.[10] What we see with the Philadelphians, as well as with the other groups in this study, is the idea of election as a highly adaptable concept, both doctrinally and metaphorically.

Indeed, many female prophets removed election entirely from its Calvinist doctrinal context. For them, election had the meaning of "chosenness" but not in a strictly salvific sense. For example, dissenters ranging from Mary Cary to the Quakers and those associated with Johannes Kelpius believed in various iterations of the belief that God had chosen a "remnant" of true believers. The Philadelphians saw their society—wherever members existed throughout the world—as "called and elected of God to be of the first fruits" of the new Church.[11] Kelpius believed the group he led to the wilderness of Pennsylvania would await the Second Coming as a remnant of the elect who would usher in the new age. The early Quakers compared themselves to the biblical remnant of Israel.

The relationship between the nation and election also stood out as important to female prophets. During the mid seventeenth-century, a tension developed between the construction of England as an elect nation and the construction of select groups—such as the Quakers—as an elect remnant among a corrupt nation. By the late seventeenth century, especially after William III's arrival, new challenges awaited prophets who

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[10] On the Philadelphians and election, see Chapter Four of this dissertation.

[11] [Philadelphian Society], *Theosophical Transactions by the Philadelphian Society Consisting of Memoirs, Letters, Dissertations, Inquiries, etc., vol. 1* (London, July and August 1697), 53.

sought to define the relationship between election and the nation. The French Prophets and their detractors, for example, both faced the same paradox: how did one reconcile England's national Protestant identity with the pull of cosmopolitan Protestantism?[12] As dissenters traveled throughout the Atlantic, prophets' encounters with those of other nationalities challenged and shaped their own national identity. On the one hand, national identities remained strong. Two years after the Act of Union, Deborah Bell, a native of Yorkshire, traveled with a fellow Quaker only a couple of hundred miles northward to Glasgow. When her companion spoke, the gathered crowd threw objects and broke windows. In chiding the audience, Bell chose to highlight their difference of nationality: "We are come from another Nation in the Love of Christ to visit you, and at our Return it is likely they will enquire of us, concerning the People of Scotland; and what shall we say…You are a reproach to your Nation."[13] At the same time, however, millenarian groups such as the Philadelphians, Quakers, and Labadists were eager to seek out other "elect" in other parts of the world. They formed supranational imagined and real communities with other would-be reformers. The nation, like election, was thus a fluid concept during this era—but one that female prophetic discourse sought to address.

Throughout this period, we have also seen how prophets used the idea of their elect or chosen status, whether as prophets or as members of elect communities, to convey authority. The female prophets in this study believed that they were chosen vessels who had the obligation and (in many cases) the compulsion to speak for God. Election and chosenness, like prophecy, became concepts that prophets negotiated

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[12] See Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ibid., *Europe and the Making of England, 1660-1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

[13] Bell, *A short journal*, 19.

continually as they staked out claims to authority as prophets, religious leaders, and members of non-tolerated religious communities. Election—whether soteriological, millenarian, or non-doctrinal in its implications, and whether individual or collective in its construction—occupied the prophets considered in this study. The adaptability of a language of election to the various situations in which prophets found themselves suggests that election had rhetorical weight in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The language of election was a significant force in shaping the direction of radical religion and its relationship to various religious and civic communities.

The second way in which the transnational religious sphere of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries differed from its later eighteenth-century counterpart was that women were accorded participation as prophets, writers, missionaries, and in some cases leaders of religious communities. For these women, who broke societal gender norms as public speakers and writers, constructions of gender influenced the religious context in which their prophecy emerged.[14] In other words, gender functioned as a category of religious prophecy.

Dissenters frequently defended female prophecy using scriptural references. For example, some dissenters quoted the passage in Galatians 3:28 that there was neither male nor female in Christ. Roach mentioned this passage in his defense of female prophecy, as did the Quaker Deborah Bell in hers.[15] But while female prophets often turned to scripture to defend their right to prophesy, there were significant variations in

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[14] For radical religionists such as the prophets considered here, religious beliefs dictated social lives to the point that they were a determining factor in how radical Protestants performed gender.

[15] Richard Roach, "Mr. Roach, a Philadelphian. His Answer to some queries," Lambeth Palace MSS 942/141, p. 10, Lambeth Palace Library, London; Bell, *A short journal,* 36.

how women prophesied and in the position and status of women within their respective religious communities. We can define roughly three categories of female prophets.[16]

First, we can group together the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century prophets influenced by Jacob Boehme. Behmenism contributed to the development of a prophetic discourse that was gendered, and prophets such as Ann Bathurst and Antoinette Bourignon invoked a feminized language. Ann Bathurst, for example, repeatedly drew on bridal and maternal language in constructing her identity as a visionary and prophet. Richard Roach stressed that women such as Jane Lead and Sarah Wiltshire were "female ambassadresses" of Divine Wisdom. These women saw themselves as having highly defined and highly individualized roles as both women and millenarian reformers.

Among groups influenced by Boehme, individual women tended to rise to positions of prominence or leadership, and they often attracted a following. Ann Bathurst, Jane Lead, Sarah Wiltshire, Rosamunde von Asseburg, Eva von Buttlar, and Antoinette Bourignon all stand as examples of this. The Philadelphians recognized prophetic women as the representatives or "female ambassadresses" of Divine Wisdom, while some of Antoinette Bourignon's followers in Germany believed her to be the woman described in Revelation 12. These women and their followers, while differing in their beliefs about

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[16] A few prophets in this study fall outside of this categorization. For the most part these were prophets who flourished at the beginning or end of the chronological parameters of this study. For example, Sarah Jessey, who prophesied in the 1640s, combined elements of the Civil War prophets with characteristics of female medieval mystics. See Chapter 1 of this dissertation.

how exactly the millennium would unfold,[17] all believed that there would be a period of reform in which they, as chosen women, would serve as key reformers.

The early Quakers and many of the Civil War prophets belonged to a second category. These prophets assigned eschatological meaning to prophecy, believing that they were living in the last days. Some, such as the early Quakers, were nebulous about how (or, in some cases, if) the millennium would unfold, although they tended to express the idea that they were living in a time that pointed either to the physical or spiritual coming of Christ.[18] The Fifth Monarchists, by contrast, expressed a concrete pre-millennarianist belief they were living in the last days before Christ's arrival to preside over his physical kingdom of elect saints on earth. Within this range of beliefs, however, all shared an understanding that they were living in the last days, and they sought to figure out who comprised the elect. The relationship of the nation to election was important to many of these prophets, who engaged in discourse that created a tension between the idea of England as an elect nation and the idea of a remnant of true believers living in a corrupt England.

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[17] For the most part, these groups embraced a more mystical eschatological framework than their mid seventeenth-century counterparts. For example, mystical elements were a central part of the millenarian beliefs of Eva von Buttlar, Kelpius' Chapter of Perfection, Bourignon, and the Philadelphians. The Philadelphians went so far as to embrace a unitive mysticism, both in their nuptial imagery and in their imagery surrounding the belief in a universal restoration. Kelpius' group traveled to Pennsylvania to prepare for the millennium (which they believed would arrive in 1694), and they were influenced by the mysticism and esotericism of both Behmenism and Rosicrucianism. On the mysticisim of the Philadelphians see Chapter Three of this dissertation. On Kelpius see Elizabeth W. Fisher, "'Prophesies and Revelations': German Cabbalists in Early Pennsylvania, *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 109, no. 3 (1985): 299-333.

[18] Quakerism was not as specific about how the millennium would unfold as were some other sects that came out of the Civil Wars (i.e. the Fifth Monarchists who believed there would be an earthly rule of the elect). Early Quakers tended to focus on the present and the imminent future, which led them to develop the understanding that their age was one of great eschatological fulfillment. By the second generation, however, this intense focus had dissipated and Quakers began to see the Second Coming in a spiritual and inward light. They interpreted the events that eventually would unfold throughout all Creation—revelation, judgment, purging and restoration—as first being enacted on the personal level among believers. See Catherine Wilcox, *Theology and Women's Ministry in Seventeenth-Century English Quakerism* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1995).

Dissenters in this second category interpreted both Joel 2:28-9 ("your sons and your daughters shall prophesy…and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit," cf. Acts 2:17-8) and Galatians 3:28 in the context of an eradication of social distinction—one that included gender. These groups thus recognized women as prophets, but women tended not have specifically gendered religious roles within their religious communities. Among the Quakers, for example, women had full participation in public religious life. They spoke in meetings when led by the Spirit, and they traveled as missionaries. But they—and their Quaker audiences—recognized women as prophets due to the belief that there was neither male nor female in Christ and that they were living in a time of heightened eschatological significance, rather than the belief that prophetic women had special millenarian roles based on their gender.

Prophets who followed this second model tended to have less of an individualized prophetic identity than their Behmenist counterparts.[19] Quaker women, for example, prophesied as individuals in the sense that they spoke and wrote as the Spirit led them. However, they prophesied as part of a group in the sense that they represented broader Quaker principles and ideas in their prophecy. Unlike Rosamunde von Asseburg or Jane Lead, Quaker women did not attract a following; nor did they form their own communities like Antoinette Bourignon.

The French Prophets represent a third category of prophecy. Like some of the prophets of the Civil Wars, they spread a message that called for repentance and for the

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[19] While some Quakers were familiar with Boehme, they tended to express disagreement with his theosophy. See B. J. Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought: Behmenism and its Development in England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 127-28.

recognition that judgment and the Kingdom were impending.[20] But they often did so in a collective setting, traveling in a group to prophesy to various cities. Moreover, their prophetic performances utilized multiple prophets. The Spirit "jumped" from prophet to prophet, as we saw in the examples of Mary Keimer and Ann Topham. More than one female prophet imitated or performed the roles of figures from Revelation, such as the Whore of Babylon or the woman in Revelation 12, in a theatrical manner. In these prophetic performances, they participated in the larger narratives of eschatological warning that marked French Prophets' prophetic performances, and they thus filled an important role in the prophetic life of the French Prophets. But female French Prophets occupied an unstable position within the broader community. When they imitated the Whore of Babylon, for example, they walked a fine line between contributing to the prophetic performances of the French Prophets and overstepping their bounds within the group. Among the French Prophets, transgression from the group or the attempt to assert too much individuality could result in ostracization. Female prophets such as Dorothy Harling or Elizabeth Gray, who engaged in behavior that went against the broader program of the French Prophets, found themselves censured or even shunned.[21]

The study of female prophecy from a transconfessional standpoint offers us a better understanding of how prophecy evolved. Female prophecy, however categorized, operated cyclically: it was characterized by continual manifestations rather than by a "rise and decline" model. The feminization of religious discourse in the late seventeenth century, for example, did not indicate a decline in either the intensity or the radicality of

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[20] See Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England: A Social History of a Millenarian Group in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1980), 119.

[21] Ibid. Another factor in the excommunication of female prophets was the common belief that women were easily controlled by emotions and thus less able to distinguish between good and bad or the true and false spirits of prophecy. See Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England,* 143.

female prophecy.[22] Within individual groups, such as the Quakers, the changes that accompanied the second generation of a group's existence did point to decline in female prophecy—especially in its more radical forms. But female prophecy as part of a transconfessional religious sphere of dissenters continued in various manifestations throughout the mid seventeenth- to early eighteenth-century British Atlantic.

While prophecy continued throughout the period, though, it was not static. As we have seen, prophecy adapted and responded to a number of outside factors, including social and political crisis, developments in religious thought, the emergence of networks that allowed for the exchange of ideas across national and confessional boundaries, and changes to the relationship between prophet and audience. As dissenters gained toleration or societal acceptance, and as the religious or political crises that contextualized their prophecy declined, so too did their prophecy. Prophecy cannot be distilled into mere recourse; it came out of a religious framework that had implications greater than that of human agency. However, prophecy always remained most useful to those on the fringe of society because it allowed them to make the claim that their message should be heard because it came from God. This was especially true of female prophecy, which gave women the opportunity to travel, speak publicly, and publish writings in a time when entrance into the public sphere was difficult for women.

Because female prophecy involved public speech or writing, it has interested scholars as a way to address questions of agency and authority. Women prophets claimed that they were chosen by God in order to establish their authority as prophets. They

[22] As Sarah Apetrei has pointed out, for example, a number of late seventeenth-century women and their fellow believers began to regard the female sex as defenders of faith, rationality and morality. See Apetrei, *Women, Feminism, and Religion in Early Enlightenment England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 17.

believed that their chosenness gave them an immediate claim to authority both within their religious communities and as they addressed their audiences and readerships. At the same time, we cannot understand female prophecy without moving past the debates over agency that have guided studies on women and prophecy.[23] Female prophecy involved more than just questions of individual agency: women prophets also participated as actors in various overlapping religious networks.[24] One of these networks centered on the transmission and reception of prophecy; it involved (at various times) prophets, followers, promoters, sponsors, audiences, publishers, and critics. Women prophets also participated in the transconfessional networks that came together to form a religious sphere of dissenters in late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Europe and the British Atlantic. Female prophets illustrate how communities and networks of dissenting Protestants functioned in this period, and these women became a key element in the growth and expansion of these communities throughout the Atlantic world.

The goal of much scholarship on female prophecy has been to locate the legacy of individual sectarian groups within the larger context of eighteenth- to twentieth-century religious history. Hence the female Quaker prophetic tradition influenced female abolitionists and suffragettes, while the French Prophets shaped American Shakers and Ann Lee.[25] But the challenge for us here has been to assess the legacy not of an individual group but, rather, of the entire transconfessional, transnational phenomenon of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century female prophecy.

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[23] For an overview of the historiography on female prophecy and its engagement with the question of agency see the introduction to this dissertation.

[24] On the perspective of networks see David Hancock, *Oceans of Wine: Madeira and the Emergence of American Taste* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), xx-xxi.

[25] Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 1992), 349; Schwartz, *The French Prophets in England,* 211.

This task has demanded our recognition of election as an important discursive and rhetorical tool that reached past its Calvinist soteriological implications. Prophets assigned election millenarian, individual, and collective nuances. Election informed how prophets inscribed boundaries around confessional and national communities. Prophecy and its language of election thus gave female dissenters the opportunity to respond to and re-envision the various religious and civic communities with which they engaged. This task has also demanded a reconsideration of the place of female prophets in the religious networks that predated the transatlantic revivals. Scholars are just now beginning to recognize the extent to which networks facilitated the development of the early modern Atlantic world as an arena made up of composite nations, religions, and social and economic systems.[26] Female prophets played a significant role as agents in the radical religious networks that emerged throughout Europe and the Atlantic world in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. As women and religious radicals, female prophets remained on the margins of society; their contributions to the development of the early modern Atlantic world and the religious and civic communities that composed it, however, were far from peripheral.

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[26] On networks and the Atlantic world see Rosalind J. Beiler, "Dissenting Religious Communication Networks and European Migration, 1660-1710," in *Soundings in Atlantic History: Latent Structures and Intellectual Currents,* eds. Bernard Bailyn and Patricia L. Denault (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 210-236; Alison Games, "Atlantic Constraints and Global Opportunities," *History Compass* 1, no. 1 (2003): 1-4; Hancock, *Oceans of Wine*; Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic, 1675-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

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