

***Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England.*** Edited by Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page, and Joel Halcomb. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2019. 240 pp. \$98 hardcover.

A fruit of the Dissenting Experience project (<http://dissent.hypotheses.org>), the essays in this useful volume collectively treat the “experience” of seventeenth-century English Dissent with an eye to both socio-political context and the dynamic involvement of “the unknown Dissenters”—those men and women who populated the multiplying Baptist, Congregational, and Presbyterian churches after 1640 (10). The authors examine this experience not through the narrow lens of the lives of certain key actors (traditionally, pastors), but rather through an investigation of the intersecting themes of personal responsibility, communal participation, and internecine tension that inhered in “gathered church life” amid the tumult of seventeenth-century England (6). A common thread that runs through these contributions is the various shades of “enquiry” that Dissenting pastors and church members “faced, posed, debated, and pursued when shaping, negotiating, and delivering a church life defined by” scriptural fidelity and contrasted with “their ecclesial rivals” (7).

Joel Halcomb’s essay on Congregational church order opens this volume with a study of the “politics” of church life in Congregational churches in the 1640s and 1650s, employing a little-used archival cache, “church books,” to shift scholarly attention from Christopher Hill’s concern “with personalities and with radical ideas and experiences” in the period, to the “more mundane strictures and structures of ‘church life’” (27). Chapters two through five, by Elliot Vernon, Kathleen Lynch, Chad Van Dixhoorn, and Polly Ha, respectively, are where this volume really finds its legs. Broadly, these essays investigate the formation and perpetuation of Dissenting “church life” in the unstable religio-political climate of the mid-century, before the Restoration. As an appropriate coda to this section, and a thematic *precis* for the volume, Ha’s look at the shape and limits of “freedom of association” during an especially volatile span of social, religious, and political instability captures well the significance of the subject of English Dissent for the field of early modern English history (102).

Specialists, graduate students, and precocious undergraduates are well-served by this needed engagement with the complicated factors that comprised and informed the “experience” of Dissent in seventeenth-century England.

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***A Dream of the Judgment Day: American Millennialism and Apocalypticism, 1620–1890.*** By John Howard Smith. New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. viii + 396 pp. \$74.95 hardcover.

Histories of apocalypticism in America typically focus on the “greatest hits”: the Millerites, the Adventists, and, in the twentieth century, the rise of fundamentalist

premillennial dispensationalism. As a result, apocalyptic and millennial thinking appear to be central to a few enthusiastic movements but peripheral to wider world of American religions. In *A Dream of the Judgment Day*, the first in an anticipated two-volume survey of American religious apocalypticism and millennialism, the historian David Howard Smith asserts that “a fixation upon millennialism and apocalypticism is not a quirky feature of American Christianity’s fringes, as it often has been dismissed as being, but is in fact a core defining element of Christianity in the United States” (11). Smith’s wide-ranging analysis traces American apocalyptic and millennial movements from the colonial era to the Gilded Age, and from the Puritans to indigenous revitalization movements.

Smith begins his analysis with a review of the origins and growth of Christian millennial traditions in order to show how “certain concepts and tropes developed by European apocalypticists” became “fixed ideas that shaped American eschatological thinking” (46). On the one hand was the postmillennial notion that God had foreordained New England (and in later thinking, the United States) to lead the world into a glorious new era. On the other was the premillennial belief that Anglo-America was doomed to decline spiritually until a fiery divine reckoning. Smith examines how these threads of postmillennial optimism and premillennial pessimism suffused and were refined by key events in American Christianity, including the Salem Witch Trials, the French and Indian War, the Revolutionary Era, the First and Second Great Awakenings, and the development of new religious movements such as the Latter-Day Saints and the Millerites. Importantly, Smith dedicates two chapters to Native American apocalyptic movements, where prophets such as Neolin, Tenskwatawa, and Wovoka urged their followers to abandon European cultural elements and return to traditional lifeways in order to prevent the destruction of their peoples. African American millennialism is also discussed, but does not receive a dedicated chapter.

This is an ambitious survey. Smith synthesizes a wide array of scholarly secondary sources, ranging from histories of early and medieval Christianity to anthropological accounts of Native religious beliefs. Smith also utilizes a variety of published primary documents and materials from select archival collections, mostly concerning the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries. Although topics like the Salem Witch Trials and the First and Second Great awakenings will be familiar to historians of American Christianity, Smith sheds new light on these events by demonstrating how apocalyptic and millennial frameworks suffused them.

Smith’s broad chronological focus allows him to make several important contributions to scholarship on American apocalypticism. First, Smith demonstrates that although postmillennial thought dominated American Christianity before the Civil War, premillennial interpretations of Christian history existed throughout early America. Nor were these premillennial strains relegated to small sects like the Millerites; figures as central to American theology as Cotton Mather and Timothy Dwight invoked premillennial themes in their work. Second, Smith recovers the importance of apocalyptic thought to the Revolutionary Era by asserting that although American elites may have embraced Enlightenment rationalism, other Americans viewed the years up to and after the Revolution “through the lenses of Christian belief and prophecy interpretation” and relied on millenarian rhetoric to “generate and maintain support for the Revolution” (80).

The survey approach does lead to oversights, however. Take, for instance, Smith’s discussion of prophetic figures whose gender identities transcended social norms, such as the Revolutionary-Era Quaker leader the Publick Universal Friend. The

Friend, born a woman named Jemima Wilkinson, became reborn as the genderless being the Public Universal Friend after a near-death experience. Despite the existence of extensive documentation of the Friend's proclaimed new name and genderless identity, Smith refers to the Friend as female and utilizes the Friend's pre-transformation name throughout his discussion. Scholars including Scott Larson have persuasively argued that recognizing the Friend's genderless identity is key to understanding the Friend's theological claims, and certainly, the Friend's genderless identity and celibacy provide important windows into the millennial utopia the Friend envisioned (see Scott Larson, "Indescribable Being: Theological Performances of Genderlessness in the Society of the Public Universal Friend, 1776–1819," *Early American Studies* 12, no. 3 [Fall 2014]: 576–600). Engaging with scholars of religion and gender would have enabled Smith to more fully depict gender-transcending figures like the Friend and the Kutenai prophet Káuxuma Núpika.

A second area in which scholarly voices are missing is in the discussion of Native apocalypticisms. Smith rightly notes that that settler violence, land theft, disease, and starvation created apocalyptic conditions in Indian country, where Native peoples faced, "in a very real sense, the end of a world" (271). However, the decision to end the first volume with the Wounded Knee Massacre and the death of Black Elk's "beautiful dream" echoes the debunked refrain of the "vanishing Indian." Here, Smith could have taken cues from Louis Warren's recent monograph, *God's Red Son: The Ghost Dance and the Making of Modern America* (Basic, 2017), which challenges the depiction of the Ghost Dance as the last gasp of a dying people and argues that the Ghost Dance helped indigenous people survive within and adapt to a modernizing era. Similarly, incorporating more indigenous voices, such as that of Choctaw historian Donna Akers, would complicate Smith's assertion that indigenous revival movements' "stark apocalypticism" derived from "cherry-picked apocalyptic and millenarian Christian elements" (128).

These caveats aside, this is an approachable and wide-ranging overview of apocalyptic traditions in America. This book will be of interest to historians of Christianity, American religions, and early America and, with supplementation, would be suitable for graduate or advanced undergraduate courses in American religions and eschatology.

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***Joseph Smith for President: The Prophet, the Assassins, and the Fight for American Religious Freedom.* By Spencer W. McBride.**  
 Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xii + 269 pages. \$29.95  
 hardcover.

As its subtitle indicates, *Joseph Smith for President* analyzes three enduring forces in American socio-political life: religious vitality, anti-religious mob violence, and Constitutional principle designed to mediate between them. The book joins scholarly critique of the Nation's failure to protect its non-Protestant citizens, constitutional