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The Jezreelites and their World 1875-1922

Ruth Clayton Windscheffel

The New and Latter House of Israel or “Jezreelites” as they were popularly known, emerged in the Medway area of Kent, England, in 1875 as a distinct evolution in the heterodox prophetic tradition inaugurated by Joanna Southcott. James Rowland White, or someone going by this name, joined a group of Chatham Christian Israelites - followers of John Wroe - in October 1875.¹ White’s origins and age were kept deliberately obscure but we know that, three months earlier, on 27 July 1875, he had enlisted in the army under that name at Westminster in London before joining the 2nd Battalion of the 16th Regiment of Foot, then stationed in Chatham.² By Christmas 1875, White had not only claimed to be the next in line to Wroe as a Messenger of the Lord – taking the name “James Jershom Jezreel” - but had succeeded in splitting the Chatham body, taking the majority of its membership with him to found his New and Latter House, when expelled by its original leaders. Jezreel’s group remained active and well supported until 1888, declining fairly rapidly and irrevocably thereafter.

Historical interest in the Jezreelites began in the 1950s and, until the publication of an important survey chapter by Gordon Allan in 2006,³ was largely limited to the productions of the 50s and 60s, when several narrative studies based heavily on printed sources, were published. G. R. Balleine, the author of *Past Finding Out: the tragic story of Joanna Southcott and her successors* (1956), devoted a chapter to Jezreel, and succinct monographs by R. A. Baldwin (1962) and P. G. Rogers (1963) followed. The discovery in early 2008 of an important new archive, now lodged at the Medway Archive and Local Studies Centre in Strood, alongside Medway’s original collection, as well as unprecedented levels of access to archives of later groups with a shared Southcottian and Jezreelite heritage, notably the Panacea Society of Bedford, the opportunity now exists to revisit the history of the Jezreelites through the interrogation of a wealth of private sources previously either undiscovered or unavailable to researchers.

‘The first part of my mission was this’, recalled Jezreel in October 1883: ‘in 1875 I was commanded to go all around this globe in search of all Chr[istian]. Israelites of [the] 2nd watch & deliver unto them my message commencing at Ashton with the No. 4.’⁴ According to his own account, Jezreel had presented himself (and his early writings) to the four trustees of the Christian Israelite Church in Ashton-under-Lyne at the close of 1875 in order to convince them of his authenticity as the direct successor to Wroe.⁵ When they rebuffed him, Jezreel established his new Church on the Medway as a conscious, simultaneous incorporation of and move forwards from

Christian Israelism (as its formal name the New and Latter House of Israel suggests). Frustrating as Ashton's rejection of him undoubtedly was, it served to vindicate Jezreel's targeting of existing and former Christian Israelites as potential recruits and justified the extension of his sphere of operations beyond traditional Christian Israelite families and communities. In 1883 he stated: 'if they would not hear me when I went within reach of them ... then I was free from their Blood' and able to operate independently of their jurisdiction.⁶ Thus the second part of Jezreel's mission ostensibly formed an appeal to the 'Gentiles' (or Christians), calling on members of the hidden tribes of Israel scattered among them (an idea originally promulgated by Richard Brothers) to come forth and rejoin their true people.⁷

Early in 1876, Jezreel was posted to India with his regiment.⁸ This turn of events might have imperilled his project but for his own determination and that of the young woman who would later become his wife. Clarissa Rogers, who was a member of the leading Christian Israelite family won over by Jezreel, was sixteen when he was posted to India. She and her younger sister Elizabeth had been singled out by Jezreel during his few months' residence on the Medway and they clearly maintained their relationship by letter. Elizabeth, who had initially been favoured above her sister, being associated in Jezreel's mind with the Southcottian prophecy about the second Eve who would redeem humankind and given the title "Queen Esther",⁹ had died prematurely sometime between 1878 and 1881.¹⁰ Clarissa assumed Elizabeth's mantle and, under Jezreel's instruction, undertook a solo missionary tour of the United States of America in 1881 aged 20.¹¹ During this time she evangelized and established centres for the new Church in New York, Michigan and Illinois. Following Jezreel's method, her missionary activity was first directed towards Christian Israelites. Thus Clarissa discussed likely converts with her co-religionists and attempted to acquire the names and addresses of 'old house' members who might be persuaded to join the 'new house'.¹² For his part, Jezreel continued to expound his religious ideas whilst in India. His fellow soldiers, amongst whom he seems to have done little to distinguish or endear himself, expressed little interest but Jezreel sent back sermons, based on his vision of a "Flying Roll",¹³ to his adherents in Kent who duly began to publish them from 1879 under the title *Extracts from the Flying Roll* by James J. Jezreel.¹⁴

The term "Flying Roll" was not entirely new to the Southcottian Visitation. The Revd C. M. Davies, whilst conducting research 'among the "Joannas"' for his book *Unorthodox London* 2nd edn (1876), came across a Southcottian petition referred to as 'the flying roll of Zechariah' and was introduced to a man who 'confided in me that his conversion had been brought about somehow or other by a dream of the "flying roll"'.¹⁵ Jezreel had clearly expected his reference to and interpretations of the flying roll vision to resonate with the Ashton Christian Israelites. Following their trustees' rejection of him, an act which apparently involved the ritual burning of Jezreel's initial interpretations of the roll, he was able to elaborate his prophetic persona by referring not only the flying roll of Zechariah but also to the 'fiery roll' of *Jeremiah*.¹⁶ His

choice of name, James Jershom Jezreel, further situated his claim to be the next Messenger by amalgamating his original Christian name with two obscure Old Testament signifiers (there is some evidence that he had at least a basic knowledge of, or at the very least interest in, Hebrew)¹⁷: firstly, an adaptation of the name ‘Gershom’, meaning ‘stranger’, given to Moses’s son born in exile,¹⁸ and, secondly, the name ‘Jezreel’, the name of a town and valley, but also the son of Hosea who was appointed by God to bring judgement to a bankrupt and disobedient house of Israel. ‘Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land: for great *shall* be the day of Jezreel’.¹⁹

Jezreel, habitually referred to as “the Messenger” or “the Stranger” by his followers, also associated himself - appropriately enough considering his military experience - with the Old Testament martial figures Joshua and Gideon.²⁰ The former was particularly important in terms of establishing his connection with and superiority to John Wroe. In a letter of 1881, Jezreel described himself as ‘Joshua after the removal of J.W.’ and later, in October 1884, he again used Wroe’s self-identification as Moses against him, recalling God’s refusal to allow the latter to enter the promised land and styled himself as Joshua, God’s chosen one to take the Israelites into their temporal (and spiritual) inheritance.²¹ He used his other favourite martial figure – Gideon – for a similar purpose: those who stood with him were the 300 men chosen by God to accompany Gideon, those who stayed with Southcott and Wroe represented the ‘cowards’ who were sent home.²²

Jezreel’s prophetic writings took the form of his interpretations of the “flying roll”, extracts of which mystical text he mediated to his followers as interspersed quotations but never as a whole, supported by a significant number of communications and teachings which were circulated by letter. Whilst his Visitation predecessors had written and had printed books of visions, communications, and scriptural exegesis, the rapid advance in printing technology, represented most notably by the invention of the steam press, offered Jezreel the opportunity to be even more ambitious in terms of publication and circulation targets. The Jezreelites quickly established their own printing operations in England and subsequently in the United States and some adherents were tasked with selling the *Extracts* door to door practically full time. Although Jezreel never transcribed and published the flying roll itself, in the way Joseph Smith had translated and published *the Book of Mormon* in 1830,²³ Jezreel clearly intended that his writings should attain the status of inviolable scriptural authority when complete: ‘when the twelve sermons of the flying roll shall be printed,’ he wrote in 1883 (in the event, he produced only three of the planned twelve), ‘no one is to alter them’ as ‘no more laws shall be given after’ that time.²⁴ Whilst there seems no doubt that the *Extracts* were intended to surpass any writing produced by earlier prophets and messengers, to the extent they were designed to be the final word of God to humankind, they were not designed to supersede the Bible. On the contrary, the two

authorities were designed to validate each other and to be read in tandem by believers. Individuals were encouraged to ‘search the scriptures ... and see whether the things which we utter are according to the standard weight and measure’.²⁵

In their use of the Bible, Jezreelites moved freely between its canonical and apocryphal books.²⁶ Moreover, they made a conscious effort to mimic the practices of the Early Church by scrupulously recording their every meeting and activity, resulting in a body of literature as mixed in form as that in the Bible. This is evident in the way that letters and communications were endlessly copied and circulated between bodies - the term frequently used for local congregations - in both Britain and the United States, like the epistles of Paul. In content too, Jezreelite writings consciously echoed Biblical passages. A good example of this is the detailed description of the sashes to be made and worn by the leaders, officers, and members of the Church inscribed by Clarissa Rogers in the United States in May 1881, which is more than reminiscent of the description of the making of Aaron’s vestments, first articulated in *Exodus* 28.²⁷ In addition to the Bible, regular recourse and allusion was made to earlier Visitation literature: John Wroe’s ‘Public Word’ and ‘Private Word’ – better known as the *Divine Communications* and *Private Communications*, respectively - made regular appearances on the president’s table at services and Jezreel himself regularly read from them during services.²⁸

Joanna Southcott’s writings were rather less regularly used although they were clearly revered. In December 1885, Renew Benedict, an American adherent, wrote to ask the Gillingham Jezreelites to send her ‘all the books of Johanna Southcott [sic] ... to read, as they seem to be so exclusively for Israel – I have seen some of them, and like them very much’.²⁹ And, in March 1886, George Sutton of Port Huron wrote asking if his body could buy ‘John Wroe’s Private W[or]d or Johannah Southcott’s writings [sic]’ to be held by a Church officer and made available to ‘members of Good Standing’.³⁰ When received, Sutton rejoiced ‘they are something grand’.³¹ There is also evidence that the Jezreelites continued the practice of sealed writings in the Southcottian tradition. For instance, in 1884, it was projected that some such would be opened at a jubilee planned for 1886.³²

A similar jubilee had been planned to mark Jezreel’s return to England in December 1881, with Clarissa - or “Esther” as she had now become - summoned back from the United States to prepare for it.³³ Jezreel was discharged from the army on 10 December 1881 and married Esther by special licence seven days later at Chatham Registry Office. The following year, Jezreel and his wife made a follow-up trip to America to secure the ties established in 1881, before setting about establishing the headquarters of the New and Latter House in Gillingham, one of the Medway towns.³⁴ It was not long, however, before cracks appeared in their professional and personal relationship.

At the end of May 1883, Jezreel prepared to set out in John Wroe’s footsteps for Australia. Unlike the America visit, this time he was travelling alone.

Correspondence between Jezreel and his lieutenants in England reveal some background to the falling out: his wife had ‘railed on God[']s Messenger and ... attributed his words and works as from the Spirit of Satan’. As a result he reported: ‘She is not only cut off, but the Sceptre of Israel is removed from Her, and the name She once held (Esther) now taken away from her.’³⁵ Key members of her family were also relieved of duty (and power) and Jezreel was apparently already searching for a new “Esther”.

Jezreel’s solo trip to Australia was not to compare with his success in the United States. He made some impact amongst the Christian Israelite bodies established there by Wroe but there was no wholehearted or widespread acceptance. This was not simply because the majority held fast to Wroe’s prophecy that there would be no more prophets after him, but also because of Jezreel’s dealings – even though ultimately condemnatory - with a notorious apostate, J. C. M. Fisher, who, whilst purporting to follow Christian Israelism, had abandoned the long hair and beard demanded by the observance of the Nazarite vow insisted on by Wroe, rejected circumcision, and practised polygamy.³⁶ Despite the frustrations which accompanied his mission to Australia, Jezreel remained undeterred. He was busy converting followers on the return trip: one Fred Lester was admitted as a member in May 1885 after apparently first ‘receiving the message of Life from James the servant of God, on his way from Australia’.³⁷ Jezreel was also full of grand schemes for the construction of a permanent place of worship for his Church and the establishment of a school, all of which would require significant fund-raising to be undertaken. He had also become reconciled with his wife, who was restored, apparently without question, to her favoured position as “Esther”.

Between 1883 and 1885 the Jezreels worked hard establishing their Medway headquarters. By October 1883, the group’s first permanent place of worship was established: a corrugated-iron mission church. Jezreelite worship consisted of two regular meetings for members during the week. The first kept the Sabbath ‘hour’ on a Friday night between 8 and 9 pm. The second took place on Sunday mornings, beginning at 10 am. Hymn singing – usually accompanied by a small band of instrumentalists, including harpists and piccolo players – was a significant part of worship, and hymns were a major vehicle for the rehearsal of Jezreelite beliefs. The use of music in Jezreelite worship was taken very seriously with at least three regular practices scheduled each week for both players and singers,³⁸ and drew on a number of sources. Although they developed and added to their own hymn books, the Jezreelites continued to use Christian Israelite song books such as *Songs of the Temple*. The importance of music as an appropriate way to worship Shiloh (now a figure referred to by Jezreelites as both an immanent divine presence and an expected incarnation) had been identified by the earlier Visitation prophet George Turner and this connection was actively made by some Jezreelites, like preacher George Moore who placed the following quotation from Turner in his 1885 book of sermon notes:

And there must be in attendance seventy thousand men that play upon musical instruments, and seventy thousand singing women, to sing my praise, the Lord, and heavenly songs shall be given to them, brought forth by my Spirit.³⁹

There was also the development of a public afternoon service in Kent at which stirring hymns with instrumental accompaniment were a key feature.

A carefully regulated stream of adherents - those both able and willing to contribute significant liquidized assets to the work of the Church - joined the core community from other parts of the United Kingdom (particularly from Scotland's central belt) and the USA during these years. A significant proportion of them seem to have been Christian Israelites. There were those, like Patrick and Frances Mihan, who clearly came from a distinctly Southcottian background. Yet there were also converts from a range of 'mainstream' Christian denominations, including Baptists, Scottish and American Episcopal churches and the Salvation Army. The Jezreelites were an international body: there were large numbers of North American followers; Scots and English; those of Irish descent; and even continental Europeans. For instance, Sister and Brother Parquet were expected from France in December 1884.⁴⁰ Unfortunately 'Isaiah Parquet died on [the] English shore, just as he landed' but Madame Parquet was quickly given the job of translating the Roll into French, a translation of the first sermon into German having just been finished.⁴¹ The American bodies drew on immigrant communities - particularly German speaking. This occasionally caused problems, for example, a Sister Schmeig found the practice of written confession presented her with a 'great difficulty': she could not write English and was anxious to know whether a confession written in German would be acceptable to 'Headquarters' in Kent.⁴² There was a good mix between men and women. Families did join together, although there were plenty of examples of one member of a family or couple joining the Church and enduring the opposition of their partners or children.

The Jezreelites' key belief remained the Christian Israelite hope of seeking after immortality of the body (in addition to that of the spirit or soul).⁴³ This was to be prepared for by striving to overcome sin and attempting to perfect oneself. The Jezreelites, like Wroe's followers, believed that immortal bodies would be without blood as this, for them, was the element which harboured the sin introduced into humankind at the Fall. Most believers appear to have thought this transformation would be a mystical one enacted in the last days by the power of the Immortal Spirit, although there were a few - like S. P. Graham of Ontario - who felt: 'Eating pills for the cleansing of the blood' was a good, practical way to prepare.⁴⁴

In previous assessments, much emphasis has been placed on the Jezreelites' lack of response to the deaths of their members.⁴⁵ Belief in the possibility of immortality, it has been argued, meant Jezreelites were ill-prepared to face death and without any spiritual or practical resources to either mark or 'celebrate' death.

However, this position leaves us with the obvious question – how, in this case, were they able to continue in their beliefs when their members and leaders died? The absence of a Jezreelite funeral service is perhaps no surprise, although it seems that their written liturgy was fairly limited in any case. In terms of emotional and spiritual attitudes to death, the archival materials show a less extreme picture. Several letters sent during the final illness (and after the death) of Jezreelite preacher George Moore in October 1885 make several things clear. Although Moore himself seems to have believed (based on 1 *Thessalonians* 4:17) that in the end times ‘we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds’,⁴⁶ Jezreelites did not expect that they would all live forever. Thus Edward Rogers, Esther’s father, wrote to the Moores – stranded in Kilmarnock in the middle of a missionary tour when illness struck – ‘we know not who will be taken or who will remain’.⁴⁷ Another member of Esther’s family, John Rogers, wrote on 13 October to encourage the couple in the face of George’s likely death, telling Mrs Moore to

remember there is reserved for him, like as the Apostle Paul said An house not made with hands eternal in the heavens, wherefore we cannot [be] sorry, neither canst Thou [be] as one without hope, for this would be only the weakness of the flesh. For we do know that all that have to depart and lay down this earthly house having fought the good fight and gained the prize of that incorruptible crown which fadeth not away. I say ... therefore if it should be thy lot to be left and George to be taken, cast thy burden upon thy God ... for whether we live or wether [*sic*] we die, are we not the Lords, and it is but a few moments when we shall all meet, meet again either in immortal or celestial bodies.⁴⁸

When George did die, Edward Rogers and his second wife Frances paid positive tribute to his ‘obedience ... to the command and will of God’ and his sacrifice ‘on the battle field of Immortality’, and were still firm in their ‘great hope’.⁴⁹ Other Jezreelites do not appear to have been shaken in their faith by the death of loved ones or other members. S. P. Graham told ‘Quene Esther’ [*sic*] in July 1886 that his mother’s death ‘don’t weaken up my faith one bit but i doo hope the time will soon arrive when i can be granted favours of coming under the Law of Christ as i beleve it will enabel me to intirley seas [cease] from sin of any kind’ [*sic*].⁵⁰ One of the advantages of Jezreel’s hierarchy of salvation – in which those who died before the second coming would receive incorruptible bodies like those of angels – was that bodily immortality, whilst remaining the ideal, was not the be all and end all.⁵¹

Adherence to Old Testament Law was maintained by Jezreel.⁵² In the existing secondary literature there is some confusion about whether circumcision was practised or not. From the archival material it is clear that there was a continuation of circumcision although it was not practised by some and questioned by others. Jezreel

had criticised Fisher for ‘doing away with circumcision’.⁵³ George Moore reflected on this question at some length in an 1885 book of homilies and sermon notes. He recalled *Galatians* 5.6 that ‘neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision availeith, but repentance’, but then gave what appears to be an orthodox Christian Israelite rejoinder to the effect that ‘he that is uncircumcised in the flesh has not made [a] covenant of life’. To Moore as a Jezreelite, circumcision remained important as representative of ‘the cutting off of Satan[’]s kingdom’.⁵⁴ However, there was a certain degree of latitude expected and apparently allowed. George Sutton reported in December 1885 that several of his body’s members continued to cut their hair and shave. A Brother McKay, for example, ‘thinks ... he is not under the obligation untill [*sic*] he is circumcised’ and Sutton did not condemn this approach arguing instead: ‘God does not expect us to do it all at once, for we are but mortals’.⁵⁵

The question of whether the Jezreelites should be apart from or of the world in which they lived was not entirely straightforward. A spiritual communication given to Jezreel in November 1882 had ordered him to ‘provide a small House *closed up from the World*’,⁵⁶ but he was nonetheless notable for integrating the New and Latter House into the local Medway economy by virtue of a network of successful local businesses all promoting the “Jezreel” brand. In some ways, of course, this was far from unique. Wroe had established a number of businesses in Ashton and there are near-contemporary examples of such practice outside the Visitation tradition, notably the Society of Dependents, or “Cokelers”, who were establishing their extensive business community in Sussex in the 1870s and 80s.⁵⁷ Jezreel’s businesses were designed to serve the local community as well as Church members who lived in communal houses. Goods were distributed to households on a weekly basis. Housekeepers were appointed to community houses and were (according to the records for 1884) encouraged to bring in their list of necessaries to service every Friday evening.⁵⁸ Groceries were then delivered on Mondays, with meat delivered on Saturdays and Wednesdays.⁵⁹ If disagreements occurred or complaints were received about housekeepers, then individuals were moved around between establishments in an attempt to restore order and members were encouraged to report ‘all irregularities’.⁶⁰ Domestic tasks were largely the responsibility of individual families: a notice given out on 7 December 1884 ordered that: ‘All the different families must do their own washing’,⁶¹ although domestic work for the group’s school, and one-off projects seem to have been done on a communal basis.⁶² Children and young people were expected to engage in domestic tasks as well as going to school. On being received back into the Church following a brief suspension, Hannah Moore was instructed ‘to work 4 hrs a day with the ironing’,⁶³ whilst young Lizzie Rogers was told to ‘assist with Housework from 6 to 9’ before going from ‘thence to School’.⁶⁴

Membership of the Church asked a lot of individual members and families in terms of commitment – both spiritual and practical. It can be seen, particularly from the records of the American Bodies, how difficult this proved for female adherents.

This was not only where they faced opposition to their membership from husbands or other family members. Sister Ettie Rankins was described, for example, by George Sutton as having a 'hard husband' who 'is much opposed to her seeking the truth, he drinks & is quite ugly at times' and who refused her money for Church work.⁶⁵ Domestic responsibilities often clashed with religious duties with stressful results. Sutton's own wife, Emma, who was also a member, nevertheless became 'quite vexed' with him after he repeatedly stayed late at meetings leaving her to keep the house. A further cause for disquiet was the fact that she was being left to clear up after meetings held at their house and was getting no thanks for the extra labour.⁶⁶ Single, working women also faced problems. Lusetta Sutton, George's sister, who was in her early twenties, had been in the habit of working as a cook on sailing vessels each summer for a number of years. She could earn \$1 or \$1,50 a day doing this work compared with the \$1,80 or \$2 a week offered by housekeeping. Despite the good wages, Lusetta had always risked her reputation by doing this work (family and friends had routinely been told she spent her summers dressmaking in Cleveland) but, as she became more involved with the Church, her choice of employment began to look increasingly problematic, both practically and morally. As her brother George explained,

girls who sail bear bad names as a general rule, and she has joined the House of Israel and come to the inner court, and if she is away this summer sailing I am afraid it will not do, because now is the time to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, and in sailing you know the language &c &c is generally low, so if she goes away from home in such circles, the influence of the church cannot protect her as well as though she were home where she could attend the meetings ... I ... feel it my duty to prevent her going sailing this summer ... to get ready for Christ Coming, but [she] does not seem to realize the shortness of the time.⁶⁷

Despite being warned in front of the whole congregation, Lusetta defied her brother and prepared to go, leaving him to implore his fellow Church officers for advice.⁶⁸ It would not be fair to say, however, that only women found the twin demands of work and religious devotion difficult to balance. Men who canvassed the *Extracts*, particularly before it was able to be printed, were expected to work round the clock copying and distributing the work. Thus Hannah Rogers wrote from her lodgings in Brentford in April 1881 and noted that neither she nor her husband had been able to go to any local meetings 'as John has to spend all the time he can copying the Roll'.⁶⁹

The profits from sales of the *Extracts* and other literature, together with tithed and free-will donations from adherents, and monies from Jezreel's businesses helped build up the Church's funds. Looking at tithing registers for Chatham 1884-5, weekly tithing income for that body normally ranged between £1 and £2 although totals sometimes rose and fell above and below these amounts when free-will offerings were

also made and listed. No tithing was required of half members (although free-will offerings were more than acceptable).⁷⁰ Payments for rent, clothing, and school fees, plus the purchase of the *Extracts* (either in parts or in bound volumes) also appear as members' contributions to the Church's coffers.⁷¹

In May 1884, the Jezreels moved from a relatively modest villa near the centre of Gillingham to an altogether grander address – “The Woodlands” – on the town's outskirts and paid for by a Mrs Emma Cave, a wealthy member. At the same time the Jezreels established “Israel's International College” in New Brompton [Gillingham], a school for the children of members. Children were accorded a very high place in the life and worship of the New and Latter House. Jezreel's aim in the establishment of Israel's College was, in his words, ‘principally to make good musicians of all our children & to make them all preachers. I want to train all our children to become co-workers with Shiloh to gather Israel’. Jezreel was keen to train up his preachers ‘when young’ and encouraged each body to ‘consecrate’ a number of children to this purpose. Childless couples were asked to sponsor children of poor parents who otherwise could not afford to attend.⁷² Scholars attending Israel's College, even though they might be only half-members, were still permitted to attend private meetings officially for full members only. Child preachers, drawn from amongst the scholars, were the central attraction of the Jezreelites' public services held on Sunday afternoons. They also took significant roles in private services. For example, young Georgina Watson performed a ‘sacred’ dialogue with Esther at a private meeting held on Sunday 22 November 1885.⁷³

The reasons for this privileging of children seem to have been various. Jezreel drew a direct parallel with Jesus, who ‘at 12 confounded the Doctors ... so now must His Bride [meaning the Church] now at 12 confound the Gentiles Rabbis. This will overthrow the Riders of Christendom’.⁷⁴ The saviour figure, Shiloh, was conceptualized as a little child and this found clear resonance with some followers. One Canadian adherent, roll canvasser, and father of an Israel's College Student, writing to Esther in March 1886 stressed that his main spiritual objective was ‘to stand up and fight with the Little Child that shall stand up’ and he was prepared to stand with Esther ‘untill [*sic*] I know more about the Little Child’.⁷⁵ There is evidence to suggest that, on his return from Australia, Jezreel had envisaged the imminent advent of Shiloh, perhaps even in the form of his own and Esther's offspring:

O Israel, the sceptre shall rise out of Israel wielded in a hand of a child – a babe in Israel to day whose power will be felt and all Israel shall be led by this child. Thus my son Shiloh shall be seen “In the tribe of Joseph” ... The No. 4 at Ashton have beaten us by human aid & we humbly bow our heads to their worldly powers that be in humble submission but now they will be beaten by a child for whom they have looked.⁷⁶

The impact of seeing juveniles engaged in sacred music-making and even more in preaching would have been considerable and this was something on which Jezreel and the other Church leaders counted. Discussing a visit he and Esther planned to make ‘with our Juvenile Band of Harpists, violinists[,] Picalo [*sic*] &c ... to Peckham, London to preach in a large Public Hall there’, Jezreel spoke with anticipation of what a ‘grand & ... terrible blow to Christendom’ this would cause.⁷⁷ There must also have been a connection with discipline. Members were sometimes encouraged to be as obedient as children. For instance, in one of the Church’s hymns, members (and potential recruits) were encouraged to ‘Throw all *your* boasted learning by, / Like little children now become, / On God’s almighty Word rely.’⁷⁸

In July 1884 a preaching pavilion was opened in a field opposite “The Woodlands”, providing a venue for the Sunday afternoon services led by the children. However, it was the scheme to establish a permanent and grandiose headquarters that dominated Jezreel’s thinking in his last years. Jezreel returned from Australia full of plans for a tower – his diary-notebook from the trip contains various pages devoted to quotations concerning the dimensions of the temple in Jerusalem – and he claimed John Wroe had written about the building in his *Private Communications*.⁷⁹ Land was bought on Chatham Hill – the highest point on the Medway – with the intention of erecting a building for worship and the accommodation of a steam press, together with a number of outbuildings for other community purposes. The Jezreelites were very keen on harnessing new technology – in particular steam and electricity – to forward their work.⁸⁰ Jezreel’s vision of the new building was an extraordinary and somewhat fanciful one. He described it thus to the American bodies:

The building alone will cost £5000. It will be three storeys [and] 144 feet square. Its subterranean passages will extend for miles. The holy of holies will form the topmost graft into the building lit up by a revolving electric light. It is to be the grandest building in the whole of these parts. The lower storey will contain twelve presses, the whole worked by a large steam engine. Bookbinding, folding, packing [are] all to be done on the lower storey. The second and middle storey will be in the great hall seating many thousands. The upper storey will be divided into dining, sleeping and sitting rooms, kitchen, etc. for an inhabitation for members who work in the grounds. The whole House of Israel is now shortly to be brought in, work will be found for all; and we shall be one fold, one cup, one body, whose head is Christ.⁸¹

Jezreel’s chosen architects tried to make him see reason and reduce the size of the planned building, which he did, perhaps in recognition of the fact that the large amount of American money he foresaw was not forthcoming.⁸² A building contract was drawn up for the outer buildings – including a new school – with a local firm, Messrs Honey

& Nye, which was also given the contract to construct the tower. Jezreel exhorted the whole congregation to economize at the beginning of January 1885 in a last-ditch attempt to make the project viable.⁸³

As well as the lukewarm American support, Jezreel's declining health – undoubtedly aggravated by persistent and excessive drinking - jeopardized the whole tower enterprise. He suffered a burst blood vessel at the end of 1884 and, despite a period of rest and recuperation in London, he suffered a second and this time fatal attack in January 1885.⁸⁴ Between then and his death's public announcement in March, Jezreel's followers – including Esther – seem to have been incapable of action. The sudden nature of his removal left a leadership vacuum that none had anticipated. There is no doubt that Esther sought, when public announcement of Jezreel's death was made, to take control of the situation. However, it is certainly not the case – as stated by Balleine – that the whole community accepted her.⁸⁵

Straight after Jezreel's death had been announced, Esther was 'exhorting all to stand firm & shun lukewarmness', and was clearly worried that talk in the ranks was jeopardizing her succession to her husband: 'Look not to one & the other for advice,' she stressed, 'but Keep your eye firmly fixed on the God of the Living'.⁸⁶ During the following month, she set about removing those she regarded as threats, prefacing early expulsions by reading selections from the Book of Esther, particularly those where King Ahasuerus's Queen brings about the downfall of his genocidal vizier Haman.⁸⁷

In her bid to take and hold onto leadership of the Church, Esther was variously presented as an instrument of God being used 'to fill up the time of the 6th instrument',⁸⁸ or as the 7th messenger but 'sounding in the 6th',⁸⁹ or as 'a female general in Israel'⁹⁰ all of which titles suggested her authority came via her marital relationship to Jezreel rather than being independently given by God. However, by presenting herself as the 'chosen handmaid of the Lord to finish his work' (in other words the redeeming woman) she was laying claim to an earlier and feminized pattern of prophetic agency and mission, that established by Joanna Southcott. As George Sutton put it:

that Branch [Shiloh] which was born of her [Southcott] in 1814 has now returned with the woman, and the writings commence again. He commenced the work by a Woman, & will finish by the hand of a woman. Jerusalem the Woman above, resting upon the woman-Jerusalem below.⁹¹

It is clear that many of those who opposed Esther's leadership did so because they remembered Jezreel's expulsion of her in 1883 and could not rationalize her restoration let alone direct succession. It was also the case that others objected to her attempts to reinforce certain elements of Jezreelite belief and practice which had become lax.

From the beginnings of the New and Latter House, leadership had been authoritarian. Tight discipline was imposed and obedience was vaunted as ‘the 10th virtue which is to be found in Israel’.⁹² Both Jezreel and Esther adopted the signs of office that John Wroe had used before them – including the prophet’s metal rod - whilst pronouncements made *ex cathedra* were deemed close to infallible. As George Sutton pointed out to Mary Conklin of Fowlerville, Michigan, Esther’s right to sit in the seat ‘gives her the power to dictate to the whole Church while she is there, and ... we are under bounds to obey her as our superior officer’.⁹³ Lateness at meetings was not tolerated,⁹⁴ and there was little room for any charismatic activity amongst ordinary Church members. For instance, during two consecutive services late in 1884, both led by Ann Rogers (Esther’s aunt), a member of the congregation, Sister Mann, persisted in announcing extra hymns, claiming she ‘was moved upon’ by the Immortal Spirit. She was ejected for her pains, cut off the following week, readmitted and warned ‘remember that Order is Heaven’s first Law’ before being irrevocably cut off for repeating the offence.⁹⁵ Although as we can see in this case, and not least in that of Esther herself, being suspended or entirely cut off did not mean there was no way back into the Church. Nonetheless, continuing members were sternly warned not to have any dealings with those who had been excluded. This was ostensibly to preserve the secrets of the Church but it was also clearly to lessen the possibility of revolts coalescing around disgruntled ex-members.

On taking office, Esther tried to re-impose vegetarianism on the community.⁹⁶ There are also indications that she sought to enforce celibacy amongst the congregation.⁹⁷ Most controversially, however, she sought to increase the regularity of open confession amongst the bodies from November 1885, demanding that individual confessions were not only read before their own congregation but also disclosed to Church headquarters in Kent. This alone was deemed to be unreasonable by some, however, such objections were particularly vociferous because of Esther’s additional requirement that nothing – not even sexual activity between couples - was to be omitted in future disclosures.

The regularizing and intensification of open confession fulfilled important practical purposes for Esther. Firstly, it created an inner circle or ‘court’ (those who formally agreed to the new rules) on whose loyalty she could rely and whom she could invite to private meetings. Secondly, her insistence that she should be sent written copies of everyone’s monthly confession, which she then kept, meant that Esther not only had an ongoing picture of what her followers were thinking and feeling but she also had a useful record – should it ever be needed - of their worst sins and peccadilloes.⁹⁸

Thanks to some carefully preserved and particularly loquacious correspondences we can see the upset and divisions caused by Esther and her innovations. A number of fault lines opened up. We know from the records of Esther’s own body that she faced the problem that some members were ‘going back to Joanna

and John Wroe'.⁹⁹ Others were perturbed by injunctions being issued by a woman. Even though Esther made every effort to present both her teaching and direct spiritual communications as issuing from Shiloh, some recipients could not discount her gender in framing their responses to them. In January 1886, by which time communications were being transmitted via Esther, one American Jezreelite official loyal to her reported some were suspicious because 'Communications' now came with introductory letters which 'appear as the language of man, or Woman'.¹⁰⁰

The uncertainty and unhappiness generated by Esther's teachings about confession and chastity led to a series of revolts in Britain and America. James Cumming, a leading figure in the Church who had been dispatched to undertake missionary work in the States took advantage of his considerable standing there to foment opposition.¹⁰¹ Some who were unhappy with Esther recognized him as an obvious alternative leader figure.¹⁰² His bid to take the leadership from Esther on her own ground (he returned briefly to Kent) failed but his divisive legacy amongst the American bodies was to be long-lasting.

Esther did suffer desertions from amongst her Kentish bodies. Some of these, such as that of Noah Drew, a Michigan farmer and one of Esther's first converts on her solo American trip, were particularly problematic because of the group's practice of pooling resources into a common fund. Cut off a few months after Jezreel's death in June 1885, Drew was obliged to continue to live within the Jezreelite community on iron rations and in basic accommodation having no other means of support. After a couple of years of this treatment, he sought to recover his monies via the courts. He failed despite attracting a degree of popular local sympathy and inspiring significant press coverage. He remained on the Medway until his death in March 1890.¹⁰³

Ultimately Esther survived largely thanks to her willingness to harness and subvert the patriarchal status quo as well as insuring herself through the careful preservation of members' confessions. In June 1886 Esther was taking the additional precaution of getting everyone to submit written answers to two questions of belief: did they believe in the Visitation set forth in the Flying Roll, and did they accept 'Esther as the Leader and the Seventh Trumpet'?¹⁰⁴ In addition, she sought to press ahead with Jezreel's mission to build his grand tower.

On Saturday 19 September 1885, the corner stone of what she described as 'the Assembly Rooms and the Lord's Sanctuary' was laid on Chatham Hill, accompanied by a high profile and lengthy ceremony.¹⁰⁵ The Church kept a full record of the proceedings – accompanied by musicians (singers, harpists, violinists and piccolo players).¹⁰⁶ There was another big push to raise funds for the building in the wake of the stone-laying. Esther's secretary, Thomas Coupe, 'spoke to the members on giving up all their possessions to the Lord' about a month after the foundation stone of the tower had been laid.¹⁰⁷ Such pressure contributed to some members' disquiet. It is abundantly clear that one of the reasons James Cumming received the support he did in his rebellion against Esther in 1886 was because he claimed to offer members a

measure of financial independence and accountability in the future.¹⁰⁸ Although – as has been frequently mentioned in existing scholarship – there were generous benefactors and those who did not think twice about signing over all their assets to the Church, there were plenty of others who could not (or would not) contribute. For example, Erastus Fairman wrote from New York City in December 1885, claiming on the one hand that the American bodies aimed to raise \$2,000 for the building work but apologizing on the other that:

The Fowlerville, & Detroit members, are all or nearly all very Poor & cannot donate much if anything for the Building; & the Chelsea Members are all poor in this world[']s goods ... Indeed the Times are very hard in all parts of this Country without any visible Prospect of a change for the Better. But we trust in God.¹⁰⁹

However, Fairman's plea for understanding might have been better received had he not admitted to using \$250 donated for the tower by Thomas A. Baxter of Grand Rapids, Michigan, to cover some recent removal expenses and a loan to his son-in-law.¹¹⁰

At the beginning of 1887, thanks to the acquisition of a new printing press, Esther began a new publication *The Messenger of Wisdom and Israel's Guide*, as a means of spreading the Jezreelite message to 'the earnest seeker' and expounding her own role – now that 'Mother Jerusalem ... has descended' - in the coming salvation.

Nonetheless her battles were not over. In particular the continued presence of Noah Drew in New Brompton produced periodic flare ups. Drew had gained a considerable amount of support in the community at large and there were reports of attacks on the Jezreelites because of their alleged mistreatment of him.¹¹¹ Esther was also repeatedly criticised for her extravagance – especially for riding, sometimes far too fast, around the Medway in a luxurious carriage which rather seemed to call into question her claim to be the 'servant' of the 'House of Israel'.¹¹² The inequality between Esther's lifestyle and that of the ordinary member – especially those who had contributed substantially to Church funds or been cut off like Drew – was an added source of dissatisfaction.¹¹³ Even the Americans got to hear about her somewhat irrational behaviour. 'We have just got a newspaper from Eng[land].', wrote one in 1886, '& [learned] Esther has been fined for driving fast & breaking a large light of glass'.¹¹⁴

It would appear that such long-running aggravation did take its toll. A 'Communication given to Esther at 10.30 am, the 25th day of the 1st month [January], 1887' spoke of a prophecy 'respecting the Handmaid of the Lord that "she should be in great trouble and her eyes should be sunken and hollow, and her laugh once buoyant and joyous should be hushed and still, and that she should be worn down to a skeleton and brought to death's door with the cold sweat of death upon her brow, but her resurrection should be marvellous."¹¹⁵

In just over a year, Esther was dead. The suddenness of her demise required a post-mortem to be carried out and, even though the cause of death was publicized as ‘inflammation of the kidneys’,¹¹⁶ speculation abounded about a pregnancy. On the one hand one might dismiss this as scurrilous rumour, but there is some evidence that the origin of the story came from within the New and Latter House itself, and represented believers making a last, hopeful connection between Southcott and Esther Jezreel.¹¹⁷ Whatever the truth, Esther’s surviving family failed to keep the Church together in the wake of her death.

A well-publicized split occurred between Edward Rogers and his sister Ann, who took a number of followers with her to London where she concentrated much of her energies on printing and circulating New and Latter House literature.¹¹⁸ Edward Rogers and his wife continued to live at “The Woodlands” and oversaw ever-decreasing Jezreelite operations on the Medway. The tower and surrounding buildings had effectively been repossessed by the original builders on Esther’s death but the remaining Jezreelites had been permitted to occupy the ground floor of the main building and run the adjoining businesses under the terms of a lease. As the group’s fortunes continued to decline, Rogers was forced to give up “The Woodlands”, when the rent became prohibitive, and in 1905 the Church’s remnant suffered an undignified eviction from the tower when its owners refused to renew their lease and undertook to semi-demolish it.¹¹⁹

It was at this point that the tireless, and remarkably successful, missionary work conducted by the Jezreelites in north America for nearly thirty years came full circle and impacted directly on the Church’s ‘metropole’ in Kent. In 1891, Michael Keyfor Mills, a member of the Detroit Jezreelite community which had rebelled against Esther, came to the understanding through an intensive reading of the *Extracts* that he was the next chosen leader of the Church. “Prince Michael”, as he became known, was a Canadian by birth from a Baptist family who had been converted to the New and Latter House by an English Jezreelite missionary, Eliza Court. Court had attained church office as a ‘Judges’ in the Detroit body when James Cumming restructured its hierarchy in the wake of his revolt.¹²⁰ In January 1892 Prince Michael, his wife Rosetta, Eliza Court and several more adherents arrived in Liverpool on the White Star’s *Teutonia* and made their way to the Medway to put his claim to be the Jezreels’ successor to Edward Rogers. The old man gave him short shrift and Prince Michael returned to Detroit. His ministry there continued but not without controversy and scandal. He spent some time in prison for statutory rape,¹²¹ and came into conflict with Benjamin Purnell, his one-time second in command. Purnell was, with his wife Mary, to set up a new Southcottian community, ‘The House of David’ in Benton Harbor, Michigan, which they purposely designed as a place where ‘the pure faith [w]as taught’ unlike ‘the carnal law as practiced [*sic*] at Detroit’.¹²²

When the news came of the further decline in the Gillingham community’s fortunes, Prince Michael once again made a bid for leadership. In May 1906 he

returned with “Princess Michael” (Eliza Court, who had become Mills’ second wife) and a group of supporters. This time Rogers and the remaining Gillingham Jezreelites were too weak to resist the takeover. Furthermore, Prince Michael had more carefully prepared his way, sending two advocates on ahead in the shape of his secretary, David Livingstone Mackay, and Frank “Wroe” Harmony. These two arrived in Glasgow in November 1905 and made an extensive missionary tour of Visitation communities in Scotland and England, pressing Prince Michael’s claim, before joining forces with him the following April for their triumphant return to Kent.¹²³ Prince and Princess Michael took “The Woodlands” (where they remained until their deaths) and also managed to negotiate a re-lease of the ruined tower. However, their finances were insufficient to maintain let alone re-build the sanctuary and it was not long before they too were ignominiously ejected for failing to keep up with the rent.

Following the deaths of both Prince and Princess Michael in 1922, the Gillingham community was once again leaderless and unsure of its future. Following a period of discussion and mentoring initiated by Mabel Bartrop or “Octavia”, the founder of the Panacea Society, a number of the Prince Michael community went to join her Southcottian community in Bedford.¹²⁴ Some of the older generation retired to a small house in Banbury, Oxfordshire (arranged by Octavia), others remained in Kent and a handful returned to north America.

The decline of the Jezreelites seems to have been precipitated by financial problems and mismanagement. Finances had always been relatively tight but the luxurious living of “Queen Esther” - to which large numbers of receipts preserved in the archive, including that for a blue and white landau carriage repainted with ‘heraldry on door panel’ , testify -¹²⁵ seems to have reduced the group’s remaining assets to unsustainable levels. The absence of a strong leader to maintain unity at times of crisis also seems to have been a significant factor. This was not simply a matter of discipline and control; it was the ability to teach and preach. It is noticeable from reading, in particular the minute books of the New York body in the early 1880s, that the presence of either or both Jezreel and Esther introduced an important element of exegesis to the proceedings, otherwise simply characterised by hymn singing, bible reading and prayer.¹²⁶ Neither Edward nor Ann Rogers could really compete with the charisma undoubtedly possessed by Jezreel and Esther. Prince Michael was undoubtedly a charismatic figure and he sought to place his own stamp on the Jezreelite community of which he had assumed leadership. He re-named the New and Latter House as the “New Eve, New House or Body of Israel” but offered little that was innovative in terms of theological development or practice and did not add to the scriptural resources of the Visitation in the way that Jezreel had done nor could he reconnect with the feminized origins of the movement as had Esther.

Although short lived, the Jezreelites’ impact on their immediate locality was marked. Their Medway businesses were successful and continued to operate and

advertise under the Jezreel name well after their founder's death.¹²⁷ The semi-ruined tower endured as a recognizable British landmark and navigational aid until the 1960s. In the late 1950s it and the surrounding land was sold to a clip manufacturer who completed the tower's demolition on 1 March 1961 after a problematic and lengthy operation of 14 months in which one contractor died, fuelling local rumours of a curse.¹²⁸ Even after most physical remains had been removed, however, the group remained lodged in the local imagination and residents' memories. In the early 1970s British Journalist and broadcaster David Frost recalled growing up in Gillingham's Methodist manse overshadowed by the Jezreelites' tower, and the regular visits of an octogenarian Jezreelite to Frost's father, judged 'the nearest holy man to his house'.¹²⁹

In terms of Visitation history, the short length of time the New and Latter House of Israel operated as a coherent, independent group belies the significance of its legacy. The Jezreelites continued and extended the transnational missionary ambitions of John Wroe's Christian Israelites, importantly influencing the theological priorities of succeeding American Visitation groups. They contributed a significant body of new scripture to the Visitation, and oversaw the first significant effort to reclaim a prominent role for female leaders within Southcottianism, a project which would be continued throughout the century.

In a global context, the way that adherents and missionaries moved freely and purposefully between continents and conducted extensive correspondences, exchanging ideas on faith and social behaviour, across thousands of miles offers new levels of insight into the religious character of English-speaking interconnectedness and transnational ventures in the nineteenth-century world.¹³⁰ Jezreel and Esther both demonstrated significant management ability by controlling what was, albeit for a short period, an international church. Information and supplies were monitored by and more often than not passed through the group's Kent headquarters. Without the Jezreels' supervising presence, however, new and more creative connections could form between bodies and members in the 'periphery' that had not been previously permitted. Followers of the *Extracts* – now largely unsupervised from Britain – could listen to new prophecies and forge new practices without checking with "Headquarters" first. As a result, the early years of the twentieth century saw a significant re-distribution of power away from the Visitation's metropole, Britain, in favour of the formerly proselytized peripheries. Not only was the metropole re-evangelized by north Americans like Prince Michael but new connections were being made around the 'rim' of the Visitation.¹³¹ For example, the Purnell's "House of David" community recruited members, not only from within the United States but managed to re-connect successfully with that other Israelite 'periphery', Australia.

¹ 13-15 October 1875. P.G. Rogers, *The Sixth Trumpeter: the story of Jezreel and his tower* (London: OUP, 1963), pp. 11-12.

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- ² R. A. Baldwin, *The Jezreelites: the rise and fall of a remarkable prophetic movement* (Orpington: Lambarde, 1962), p. 1.
- ³ G. Allan, 'Southcottian Sects from 1790 to the Present Day', in *Expecting the End: millennialism in social and historical context*, ed. K. Newport and C. Gribben (Baylor: Baylor University Press, 2006), pp. 213-236.
- ⁴ Bedford, The Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher 'and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton', 25 Oct. 1883. (A copy made on 30 Nov. 1883 by G. R. Sutton, New Brompton.)
- ⁵ A flyer advertising Jezreel's writings produced in 1877 references: 'The Interpretation of the First Flying Roll, sent in Embryo to Ashton, at the close of 1875'. Panacea Society, Private Collection of New and Latter House material on loan, 'Notice to the House of Israel'.
- ⁶ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher 'and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton', 25 Oct. 1883.
- ⁷ See Chapter ?.
- ⁸ On 4 Feb. 1876. Baldwin, *The Jezreelites*, p. 30.
- ⁹ Cross reference?
- ¹⁰ Panacea Society, Private Collection of New and Latter House material on loan, Manuscript of Sermon 1 of the Extracts from the Flying Roll, internally dated to Sept. 1878: 'After the regular meeting of H[o]ly of H[olies] next Sabbath give notice that Queen Esther (Lizzie Rogers E.D.) is appointed Head purifier of the New House of Israel and her assistants or female Virgins in waiting upon her are "Rebecca, Adella and Ruth[]" – these are the four purifiers of the New House of Israel'; Letter from Jezreel to Edward Rogers, postmarked Southampton on front, n.d., and Chatham on back, 3 Dec. 81 [Jezreel's return from India]: 'the true Esther is left and the other taken' [reference to Elizabeth's early death sometime in the intervening years].
- ¹¹ Panacea Society, Private Collection of New and Latter House material on loan, Letter from Jezreel to Elizabeth Easton, 30 Nov. 1880: 'It has pleased the Lord to give thee our Beloved Sister Esther for a season to help thee in thy great work of gathering all the Israel of God in America.'
- ¹² For example, William Day, who 'was brought up in the faith when a child but never joined' gave her the addresses of his mother and grandmother, whilst a Mrs Norry[?] provided contacts for a Mr & Mrs Miller (full members) and their son & daughter (half members) of the Christian Israelite Church. Strood, Medway Archive and Local Studies Centre [MALSC], DE1173, Additional records of the headquarters branch of the New and Latter House of Israel ..., Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), Weds 16 Feb. 1881, 14v-15.
- ¹³ *Zechariah* 5:1: 'Then I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a flying roll.'
Zechariah 5:2: 'And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.'
- ¹⁴ J. J. Jezreel, *Extracts from the Flying Roll: being a series of sermons compiled for the Gentile churches of all sects and denominations, and addressed to the lost tribes of the house of Israel* (London: NLHI, 1881).
- ¹⁵ Revd C.M. Davies, *Unorthodox London*, 2nd Revd edn (London 1876), pp. 164 and 170.
- ¹⁶ *Jeremiah* 36: 2-32. In his 1877 'Notice to the House of Israel', advertising readings from Jezreel's 'Interpretation of the First Flying Roll' at Ashton, Jezreel followed the provocative announcement 'John Wroe's Return' with the following quote from *Jeremiah* "'Take thee again another Roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first Roll, which Jehoiakim, the King of Judah, hath burned.'" – Jer. xxxvi. 28'. Panacea Society, Private Collection of New and Latter House material on loan, 'Notice to the House of Israel'.
- ¹⁷ MALSC, DE1173, Private notebook of James Jershom Jezreel, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, containing mainly Biblical quotations and homilies, with index, August 1883 (1 volume), 4. This page displays a numerical calculation based on the Hebrew for 'mystery' i.e. 'Sethur' spelt out Hebrew character by Hebrew character.

¹⁸ *Exodus* 2: 22 ‘he called his name Gershom: for he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land’.

¹⁹ *Hosea* 1:11.

²⁰ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, Black softback (fabric) A5 notebook labelled ‘Minutes & Meetings’, 3-3v. See also MALSC, DE1173, Private notebook of James Jershom Jezreel, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, containing mainly Biblical quotations and homilies, with index, August 1883 (1 volume), front cover verso, 5v-7, 124v. This volume, although unfinished and sketchy, gives a good idea of Jezreel’s favourite themes and texts and indeed how he planned his writing and preaching. Gideon is mentioned numerous times.

²¹ Panacea Society, PN 611, New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, ‘Letter from James J. Jezreel “the Man in Chains for the Hope of Israel” to John Elsie Moreland, 19 Jun. 1883 ‘Columbo Ceylon On Board S.S. Pekin’, 1; see also Strood, MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885 Black softback (fabric) A5 notebook labelled ‘Minutes & Meetings’, 3.

²² Panacea Society, PN 611, New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, ‘From James J. Jezreel to our Beloved E[lizabeth]. Easton Head Trustee. Over the whole continent of America, & to all the living Bones of the Virgin of Israel in America’, 30. Oct. 1883. [One handwritten copy by ‘G. R. Sutton, B[enton].H[arbour]. Mich[igan].; one typewritten. [There is also a copy of this letter in MALSC, DE1173.]

²³ Neither did he appear to use scribes in the same way. However, there are resonances between the transmission histories of the two scriptural authorities; for example, Smith’s first version of his book was lost just as Jezreel’s first set of interpretations. See Terry L. Givens, *The Book of Mormon: a very short introduction* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), Chapter 7.

²⁴ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, ‘Letter from James J. Jezreel “the Man in Chains for the Hope of Israel” to John Elsie Moreland’, 19 Jun. 1883 ‘Columbo Ceylon On Board S.S. Pekin’, 1

²⁵ Jezreel, *Extracts*, Sermon 1, part 1, p. 23.

²⁶ There seems to have been a practice of reading passages at random (*sortes biblicae*). Thus in April 1882 Benjamin Hurd recorded in New York City that ‘the Scriptures opened on the 37 psalm which was a great comfort to me’ and in April 1886 in Port Huron, Michigan, George Sutton ‘opened the bible and the 9th Chapt[er of Ezekiel] come first ... so I read’. MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 64 [7 Apr. 1882]; Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, George Sutton to Mary Lambert, 4 Apr. 1886. See also, George Sutton to Esther, Pt Huron, Jan. 1886, 6, 10.

²⁷ MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 28.

²⁸ See for example, MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 72.

²⁹ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Renew Benedict to Thos Coupe, Pontiac Oakland Co Mich 28 Dec. 1885, 1. (Although it must be borne in mind that the request for the books originated with James Cumming who was in the midst of plotting a takeover against Esther.)

³⁰ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Geo R Sutton to Mary Lambert, Port Huron, 31 Mar. 1886, 12. (The letter was to be forwarded on to ‘Headquarters’.)

³¹ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Letter Geo. R. Sutton (Port Huron, Michigan) to Thomas Coupe (EJ’s secretary). 6 Jul. 1886, 6.

³² MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 20v [19 Dec. 1884]. This was a backdating of Jezreel’s plan, formulated on his return from Australia, to open ‘the sealed writings written by the man bound in chains’ at a Jubilee in 1885. Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher ‘and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton’, 25 Oct. 1883. For Mihan’s repeated use of Southcott, see, for example, MALSC, DE1173, Minutes of Meetings March 1885-August 1885, 19 [3 May 1885].

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- ³³ MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 27v-28.
- ³⁴ The Jezreels arrived in New York on the steam ship *Scythia*, from Liverpool in May 1882, *New York Times*, 18 May 1882. They were first listed present at a New York meeting on 19 May 1882 and last listed 5 Nov. 1882. MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 71, 82v.
- ³⁵ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, 'Letter from James J. Jezreel "the Man in Chains for the Hope of Israel" to John Elsie Moreland', 19 Jun. 1883 'Columbo Ceylon On Board S.S. Pekin', 1. In a draft version of this letter, filed with this and styled 'From J.J.J. Diary', Jezreel reiterated 'she shall no longer be called Esther. She drops that name.' Instead she was simply to be referred to as 'Mrs C. Jezreel ... my wife'. 'On Board the S.S. Pekin. China. From J.J.J. Diary', no date.
- ³⁶ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher 'and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton', 25. Oct. 1883. On Fisher (no relation to above), see Guy Featherstone, 'The Nunawading Messiah: James Fisher and Popular Millenarianism in Nineteenth-Century Melbourne', *The Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 26, No. 1, February 2002, 42-64.
- ³⁷ MALSC, DE1173, Minutes of Meetings March 1885-August 1885, 26v [29 May 1885].
- ³⁸ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher 'and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton', 25 Oct. 1883.
- ³⁹ MALSC, DE1173, Homilies, sermons, talks, notes and Biblical quotations by George Moore, Peckham, Surrey, 1885 (1 volume), no page number. [Insert GT reference]
- ⁴⁰ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 23 [26 Dec. 1884].
- ⁴¹ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 28v [11 Jan. 1885], 29v [16 Jan. 1885].
- ⁴² MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Erastus Fairman to Thos Coupe and Esther, 21 Dec. 1885, 3.
- ⁴³ Cross reference?
- ⁴⁴ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, S. P. Graham to Esther, 1 Jul. 1886, 1.
- ⁴⁵ See, for example, Rogers, *The Sixth Trumpeter*, p. 42, re. Jezreel's funeral.
- ⁴⁶ MALSC, DE1173, Homilies, sermons, talks, notes and Biblical quotations by George Moore, Peckham, Surrey, 1885 (1 volume), 5-6.
- ⁴⁷ MALSC, DE1173, [Letters with] George Moore's Diary 1885, Edward Rogers to Mr and Mrs George Moore, 5 Aug. 1885.
- ⁴⁸ MALSC, DE1173, [Letters with] George Moore's Diary 1885, John Rogers to Mr and Mrs George Moore, 13 Oct. 1885, 2-4.
- ⁴⁹ MALSC, DE1173, [Letters with] George Moore's Diary 1885, Edward and Frances Rogers to Mrs George Moore, 22 Oct. 1885, 1-2.
- ⁵⁰ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, S.P. Graham to Esther, 1 Jul. 1886.
- ⁵¹ Jezreel, *Extracts*, Sermon III, part v, pp. 157-8: 'But the souls die not, neither do they decay, or vanish into air, but are either in happiness until the first resurrection, or in misery until the final resurrection in the dark chambers of the grave, till the spirits return to raise them with incorruptible bodies, which will be spiritual bodies ... So that the natural body, which is decayed, is the first, and after than the spiritual body, which becometh as the angels.'
- ⁵² MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, T. A. Baxter to Geo Sutton, 1 Jul. 1886, 2-3. 'it is well to get under the Burden of the Law first, which is the position of an Nazarite'.
- ⁵³ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher 'and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton', 25 Oct. 1883.
- ⁵⁴ MALSC, DE1173, Homilies, sermons, talks, notes and Biblical quotations by George Moore, Peckham, Surrey, 1885 (1 volume), 51-2. Although he later included a quotation – apparently from a late Private Communication to John Wroe, dated 1861: 'The baptism in the water must come to be

baptised in their foreheads. In gospel I did not command men to be circumcised like me – but removed it to circumcision of the heart and life.’

⁵⁵ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, George Sutton to Esther, Pt Huron, 26 Dec. 1885, 23.

⁵⁶ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, ‘Com. given to J.J. Jezreel, 19.11.1882’, 1.

⁵⁷ See Roger Homan, *The Sussex Cokelers* (Hove: Chichester Diocesan Fund and Board of Finance, 1981).

⁵⁸ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 4.

⁵⁹ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 20-20v [19 Dec. 1884]. The Jezreelites were clearly not at this stage vegetarian although Esther (see below), and later Prince Michael, sought to (re)introduce this practice.

⁶⁰ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 20v-21 [19 Dec. 1884].

⁶¹ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 17.

⁶² MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 20v [19 Dec. 1884]; 22v-23 [26 Dec. 1884] This was in direct opposition to the academic work undertaken there, in which even the housekeepers with whom the children lived were warned not to interfere. 27v [9 Jan. 1885].

⁶³ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 12. Unfortunately either her ironing or something else was deemed unsatisfactory and she was ‘cut off for the last time’ in January 1885, p. 24v [2 Jan. 1885].

⁶⁴ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 22v [26 Dec. 1884].

⁶⁵ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, George Sutton to Esther, Pt Huron, 26 Dec. 1885, 26; and January 1886, 5. Mary Lambert also had a ‘Persecuting’ husband who she feared was reading her letters. MALSC, DE1173, American letters, S. P. Graham (Brantford, Ontario) to ‘Quene Esther’ [*sic*], 1 Jul. 1886, 1.

⁶⁶ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, George Sutton to Esther, Pt Huron, January 1886, 17.

⁶⁷ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, George Sutton to Mary Lambert, 4 Apr. 1886, 7-9.

⁶⁸ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, George Sutton to Mary Lambert, 4 Apr. 1886, 11-14.

⁶⁹ MALSC DE1173, Letters with George Moore’s diary 1885, Hannah Rogers[?] to Uncle George, 15 Apr. 1881.

⁷⁰ MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 30 [20 May 1881].

⁷¹ MALSC, DE1173, Chatham Tithing members’ voluntary giving register 1884-1885 (1 booklet).

⁷² Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher ‘and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton’, 25 Oct. 1883.

⁷³ MALSC, DE1173, Meeting Book May-December 1885, 30 v. Youngsters Annie Rogers and Selina Head were also present performing music to accompany the meeting.

⁷⁴ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher ‘and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton’, 25 Oct. 1883.

⁷⁵ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, S. P. Graham to Esther ‘Jeseriel’ [*sic*] 26 Mar. 1886, Brantford, Ontario, Cda, 2.

⁷⁶ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher ‘and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton’, 25 Oct. 1883.

⁷⁷ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, Letter from James J. Jezreel to Matthew and Lucy Fisher ‘and to all the spirits of the first born at Ashton’, 25 Oct. 1883.

⁷⁸ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material ‘A Collection of Hymns compiled for use at the Public Meetings of the New and Latter House of Israel. A New Edition considerably enlarged’, Hymn no. 241, p. 174.

- ⁷⁹ (pp. 515-20) Private notebook of James Jershom Jezreel, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, containing mainly Biblical quotations and homilies, with index, August 1883 (1 volume), 42v-43. Headed 'The Measuring Line'.
- ⁸⁰ Thus in April 1881, considerable time was spent by Esther and the New York body discussing the best and most economical way to get *Extracts* printed there. Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 22-25.
- ⁸¹ Quoted in Baldwin, *The Jezreelites*, pp. 56-7.
- ⁸² A call for more wealthy American adherents to sell up and move to Kent was responded to in November 1884 by only about 20 individuals. Baldwin, *The Jezreelites*, p. 57.
- ⁸³ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 24v [2 Jan. 1885], 26-27 [4 Jan. 1885 - 9 Jan. 1885]; 29v [16 Jan. 1885].
- ⁸⁴ Baldwin, *The Jezreelites*, p. 59.
- ⁸⁵ G. R. Balleine, *Past Finding Out: the tragic story of Joanna Southcott and her successors* (London, 1956), p. 120.
- ⁸⁶ MALSC, DE1173, NLHI Add. Rec., Minutes of Meetings March 1885-August 1885, [13 Mar. 1885]. For warnings against being luke-warm, see *ibid*, 15v [24 Apr. 1885], 40 [5 Jul. 1885], Meeting Book May-December 1885, 3 [21 Aug. 1885]; 46v [25 Dec. 1885].
- ⁸⁷ *Esther* 5:9, 6:4, 7:2.
- ⁸⁸ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, Geo Sutton to Mary Conklin, undated but filed with others dated Feb. 86, 9.
- ⁸⁹ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, Geo R Sutton to Thos Coupe, 24 Feb. 1886 Port Huron Mich, 10.
- ⁹⁰ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, Geo Sutton to T Coupe, 27 Jun. 1886, 16.
- ⁹¹ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, George Sutton to Mary Conklin, [copy sent to HQ] 1 Feb. 1886, 'in reply to 2 letters from her which I have sent ye', 4.
- ⁹² MALSC, DE1173, Meeting Book May-December 1885, 38v [11 Dec. 1885]
- ⁹³ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, Geo Sutton to Mary Conklin, undated but filed with others from February 1886, 8.
- ⁹⁴ See, for example, Benjamin Hurd being spoken to by Esther on late arrival. MALSC, DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), 42 [Fri 9. Sept. 1881], 'Adelaide Holbrooke four mins late and has to spend Sabbath hour in another room', 86v [Fri 22 Dec. 1882].
- ⁹⁵ MALSC, DE1173, Minute Book 1884-1885, 7v-9 [30 Oct. 1884, 2 Nov. 1884]; 9v [7 Nov. 1884], 16 [Fri 5 Dec. 1884]; 24 [2 Jan. 1885]; 35v [6 Feb. 1885]; 40 [27 Feb. 1885].
- ⁹⁶ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, Erastus Fairman to Thos Coupe and Esther, 13 Dec. 1885, 10.
- ⁹⁷ Meeting Book May-December 1885, 45 [20 Dec. 1885].
- ⁹⁸ It is worth comparing Esther's use of confession as a type of community control with the practice's deployment by Octavia. See Chapter 9.
- ⁹⁹ MALSC, DE1173, NLHI Add. Rec., Meeting Book May-December 1885, 42 [13 Dec. 1885].
- ¹⁰⁰ MALSC, DE1173, NLHI Add. Rec., American Letters, Geo R. Sutton to Esther, Port Huron, 26 Jan. 1886, 6. Original emphasis.
- ¹⁰¹ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, George Sutton to 'Esther', Pt Huron, Mich, 10 Feb. 1886, 1-2; Mary Conkin, Fowlerville to George Sutton, 11 Feb. 1886, 1; Geo R Sutton to Thos Coupe, 24 Feb. 1886 Port Huron Mich, 9; Geo R Sutton to Mary Lambert, Port Huron, 31 Mar. 1886, 2.
- ¹⁰² MALSC, DE1173, NLHI Add. Rec., Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, George Sutton to Esther, Pt Huron, 26 Dec. 1885, 28. Sutton reveals that objections to the lengthening of the Sabbath hour by 30 minutes were greeted with 'we will see Bro Cumming when he comes about it'.
- ¹⁰³ See Rogers, *The Sixth Trumpeter*, Chapter. VII for a summary.

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- ¹⁰⁴ MALSC, DE1173, NLHI Add. Rec., American Letters, Lucy A. Kidder and Eva K. Gleason to George Sutton, Vermontville, 23 Jun. 1886, 1-3. They both replied in the affirmative to both questions.
- ¹⁰⁵ MALSC, DE1173, Meeting Book May-December 1885, 8v [11 Sept. 1885]
- ¹⁰⁶ MALSC, DE1173, Meeting Book May-December 1885, 11ff [19 Sept. 1885]
- ¹⁰⁷ MALSC, DE1173, Meeting Book May-December 1885, 17 [11 Oct. 1885]
- ¹⁰⁸ MALSC, DE1173, American Letters, George Sutton to 'Esther', Pt Huron, Mich, 10 Feb. 1886, 6.
- ¹⁰⁹ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Erastus Fairman to Thos Coupe and Esther, 21 Dec. 1885.
- ¹¹⁰ MALSC, DE1173, Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Erastus Fairman to Thos Coupe and Esther, 13 & 21 Dec. 1885, plus undated letter with these two. See also Geo Sutton to T. Coupe, 27 Jun. 1886 in which he reports that he has called for donations to the tower but points out the stretched finances of his body 'especially the Sutton portion', 2.
- ¹¹¹ *Birmingham Daily Post*, Wed 10 Jan. 1887 [original report in *Chatham and Rochester News*]; Weds 15 Jun. 1887 [report of an attack on a Jezreelite banner parade in New Brompton over Drew.]
- ¹¹² *Birmingham Daily Post*, Tues 3 Jul. 1888.
- ¹¹³ *Birmingham Daily Post*, Weds 28 Dec. 1887.
- ¹¹⁴ MALSC, DE1173, NLHI Add. Rec., American Letters, Geo R Sutton to Mary Lambert, Port Huron, 31 Mar. 1886, 4.
- ¹¹⁵ Panacea Society, PN 611 New & Latter House of Israel Misc. Material, 'Communication given to "Esther" at 10.30 am, the 25th day of the 1st month, 1887'.
- ¹¹⁶ *Birmingham Daily Post*, Tues 3 Jul. 1888.
- ¹¹⁷ Baldwin, *The Jezreelites*, p. 72.
- ¹¹⁸ *Daily News*, 2 Dec. 1888 [brief report of the split].
- ¹¹⁹ Rogers, *The Sixth Trumpeter*, pp. 102-110.
- ¹²⁰ MALSC, DE1173 Additional records of the headquarters branch of the New and Latter House of Israel. . . , Letters from enquirers and members in the United States of America, Geo. Sutton to Thos Coupe 19 Aug. 1886.
- ¹²¹ Rogers, *The Sixth Trumpeter*, p. 113.
- ¹²² Panacea Society, PN 614 The Prince Michael Community, 'A Letter of Warning' published by followers of the Purnells (Elizabeth and Joseph Shuttle) against Michael Mills' colony in Detroit. Cross ref. to Madden.
- ¹²³ Mackay and Harmony travelled on the *Lakonia* (Donaldson Line) from Montreal to Glasgow, arriving 23 Nov. 1905. A record of their missionary activity is preserved in a diary kept by Mackay between 1 Oct 1905 and 7 Nov 1906 in the Panacea Society archive.
- ¹²⁴ Cross ref. Shaw.
- ¹²⁵ MALSC, DE1173, Additional records of the headquarters branch of the New and Latter House of Israel: 'To the purchase of a second hand Landau with Pole & Shafts ...', Mc Naught & Co, Carriage & Harness Manufactory, Worcester, 13 Slater Street, Liverpool and 10 Park Lane Piccadilly London, 24 Jan. 1887, Bill sent to Mrs F. M. Ball, for £71.15.0 'Nett cash on delivery'. [Attached receipt for a cheque for full amount from Ball dated 25 Jan. 1887.]
- ¹²⁶ Compare, for example, MALSC DE1173, Diary or minute book 1880-1883 (1 volume), pp. 71ff with preceding entries made by Elizabeth Easton, Catherine McLaren, and Benjamin Hurd. Compare also, services in Kent led by the Messenger or Esther with those led by others in their absence, e.g. Minute Book 1884-1885, 11 [Fri 14. Nov. 1884].
- ¹²⁷ 'J. J. Jezreel' businesses appears in Kent trade directories until at least 1903. *Kelly's Directory of Kent* (London: Kelly's Directories Ltd, 1903), p. 172. The purpose-built parade of shops in Canterbury Road, Gillingham survived until November 2008 at which date they were demolished. The only remaining physical reminders of the group in Gillingham are 'Jezreels Road' and two eponymous bus stops on Canterbury Road.
- ¹²⁸ Rogers, *The Sixth Trumpeter*, pp. 133-134.

¹²⁹ D. Frost, 'Why my youth was one great rehearsal for television', *Family Weekly* (Sarasota Herald-Tribune), 26 Sept. 1971, pp. 6, 20 (p. 6).

¹³⁰ What James Belich describes as 'a transnational, transcontinental system that permitted a greater mass of transfer, and then a greater level of integration despite distance, than had ever occurred before'. J. Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: the settler revolution and the rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p. 555.

¹³¹ This draws on the modelling of Alexander Motyl in his writings on empire. See Alexander J. Motyl, *Imperial Ends: the decay, collapse, and revival of empires* (New York, Columbia U.P., 2001).