

Green's argument is not unfamiliar to many Anglicans. Indeed, the book is heavily reliant on the writings of others. At times, his chapters seem to be a series of quotations from the truly wide range of authors he has consulted in the course of his research but without the analytic rigour that tells the reader why such voices should be credited. As a reader, I found myself wanting Green to spend more time arguing in his own authorial voice. The overall quality of the book is also lessened by the large number of proofreading errors.

Given the familiarity of the argument, it comes as something of a surprise to learn that Green is a self-described 'conservative evangelical' who once had views not that different from those he critiques in GAFCON. This is a helpful reminder that the conflict in the Anglican Communion is more complex than a monolithic conservative bloc opposing an equally undifferentiated liberal bloc. On both sides, there is depth and nuance which are frequently missed. Green's book is valuable in showing us some of the diversity of opinion which exists in the Communion.

Green writes briefly at the end about his own development and the way in which the research for this book – which began as a doctoral dissertation undertaken in retirement – altered his own perceptions of orthodoxy, broadening his horizons in a way he had not once thought possible. That experience alone might be the best testament to the argument that Green is trying to make. When we are open to God's transforming love – in ourselves as much as in our relationships with others – we can come to see others in a new light in the 'landscape' of orthodoxy.

Jesse Zink
Emmanuel College, Cambridge, UK

Jane Shaw, *Octavia Daughter of God: The Story of a Female Messiah and her Followers* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2011), pp. xvii + 397.
doi:10.1017/S1740355314000138

This detailed study presents the story of one of the more extraordinary new religious movements of the early twentieth century, the Panacea Society, which was established by a vicar's widow called Mabel Bartorp, who claimed to be the Messiah in the form of Shiloh, the child promised to Joanna Southcott, the apocalyptic prophet from a hundred years before. Given that Mabel was an unlikely messianic name, the Lord decided that she should be known as Octavia, rather less Hebrew-sounding than earlier Messiahs. It was also fortunate for her that God had revealed to her that her deceased husband was Jesus, which would be an unusual domestic job-share at the second coming. The movement was based in Bedford, which, perhaps unexpectedly given the part it had played earlier in the history of salvation, was to be 'the place of God's glory'. The new Garden of Eden was to extend for a three-mile radius around the chapel in the main community house in Albany Road.

The Society has virtually all the characteristics of (benign) religious fanaticism – people claiming to be the Messiah (alongside Mabel was a Divine Mother, Emily

Goodwin, to whom God regularly spoke), lots of secret revelations and automatic writing, the gift of eternal life, spiritualism, a bit of British Israelism, and a passion for getting 24 bishops to open Joanna Southcott's box (the subject of the hilarious chapter 14). At the same time, however, it was also strangely Anglican in its ways, at one stage attracting more than one practising clergyman. The new Messiah retained a splendid middle-class snobbishness: there are some particularly amusing accounts of comments on parties with ugly glasses and vulgar cake (e.g. p. 119). The Prayer Book loomed large alongside the more peculiar practices of the lonely who were attracted into the community. It was dominated by women and had a soteriology of a new Eve who would overcome the original sin of the first Eve. In a time long before the ordination of women, Shiloh celebrated Holy Communion. Although Jane Shaw is particularly interested in the stress on the feminine aspect of God, what she offers is a straightforward narrative that is hard to put down – as the whole movement grew larger it became increasingly strange, which makes the book riveting. It was, as one former member put it, 'full of fads and superstitions – a mixture of Theosophy, Spiritualism and High Church Ritual' (p. 283). It is extremely difficult to believe that anybody could have taken it seriously. But they did: Bartorp's personality must have been compelling. The fascinating pictures reveal a kind of Madame Arcati figure, but without Noel Coward to write the plot.

Like much sectarian religion it was highly dualistic, and practitioners had to engage in battle with the evil one after they had been 'sealed'. After sealing they were expected to tithe, but they also had to be baptized in what was called 'the standard church', the Church of England, which, while admittedly a broad church, might have found some of the Panacea's eclectic panoply of beliefs a little hard to stomach. The motive of baptism seems to have been to purify the church from within and through the agency of women (p. 294). Once inside the Society there was a constant process of self-examination which aimed at 'overcoming' or ridding oneself of personality. The strangest activity of all was the apparently sincere belief in the healing capacity of blessed water and bits of cloth – there is a huge archive of letters from satisfied customers cured of all sorts of infirmities. Sprinkling objects also proved helpful in ensuring protection at the apocalypse – there were campaigns to sprinkle everything from railway bridges and post offices to the Houses of Parliament prompted in part by a fear of the Bolshevik menace.

Every now and then things went wrong: there is a captivating account of a plausible man (Edgar Peissart) who joined the community but who turned out to have a predatory sexual appetite for members of his own sex, including a Cambridge undergraduate. He interpreted kissing as an exchange of breath which gave it a spiritual significance, and he saw the sharing of seed between men as part of his work as 'the man'. (The female members tended to have a somewhat more negative view of sexual activity, and thought sexual intercourse was only permitted seven days after menstruation). There were also the inevitable personality clashes between competing revealers of God's will. Those who left the community were subject to bitter recrimination – they were God's enemies and could not be forgiven. And, of course, eventually the Messiah was to die in 1934. (Yet another bizarre belief was that after death the believers would go to Uranus).

When she died there were 1285 members. A strong dose of authoritarianism broke out afterwards with rules for every occasion from the Divine Mother, who died nine years later. By then 72,806 people had applied for healing. Things declined rapidly after the War and by the mid-1960s when records stopped there were 21 members living in the community. When they died their rooms were left untouched so they would be ready for their return with their friends from Uranus. From 2001 there was a decision taken not to seal any new members.

Although Shaw's tone is respectful – even perhaps over-respectful – she nevertheless lapses into the occasional lighter tone. Octavia, she writes, is perhaps the 'only Messiah figure in history to name Selfridges as a selling point to her followers' (p. 72). And when Jesus returns he will come to the house prepared for him three doors down from Octavia's. Overall, Shaw's book is a wonderful, if tragic, story of human gullibility and the power of strong personalities and of the adaptability of Anglicanism. And perhaps what it also reveals is that ultimately beliefs are not really all that important to religion: it is the community life and the rites and rituals that matter. People will do all sorts of things and say they believe all sorts of things if it gives some sort of sense of corporate belonging. Although the book could have done with some editing, and some of the historical points are a little laboured (e.g. sharing a birthplace with William Blake as having some sort of significance) and there are a few minor slips, it is a great read. The most creative fantasy novelist would find it difficult to invent anything quite so strange. (Or maybe they really are waiting on Uranus for an opportune moment to return – perhaps NASA should investigate).

Mark Chapman
Ripon College Cuddesdon, Oxford

Ben Quash, *Found Theology: History, Imagination and the Holy Spirit* (London/New York: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2014), ISBN 978-0-5672-9560-6 (hbk), 978-0-5675-1792-0 (pbk).

doi:10.1017/S174035531400014X

Ben Quash's aim, in this elegant and stimulating book, is to show how theology works (we might say 'develops') as a living discipline, how it finds new ways to speak about God, and, where it does this well, how the Holy Spirit may be identified as the 'operational condition' of such 'found' theology.

The book turns on three 'case-studies' to each of which Quash give a full chapter. Each is followed by a further chapter, in which he develops the discussion further by engaging with some powerful theorists of interpretation. At the heart of the book, then, are three diptychs. For his first case study, he focuses on the translation of the Scriptures at the time of the Reformation, drawing in particular on the excellent work of Brian Cummings who writes about *The Literary Culture of the Reformation*. For his second example, he turns to a painting of Vittore Carpaccio