



Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (CenSAMM)

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The Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements

The Centre for the Critical Study of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements (CenSAMM) was formed in 2015 by the Panacea Charitable Trust (PCT) to create 'a world centre of excellence in the critical study of apocalyptic and millenarian movements[,] and aid the public understanding of the legacies and future possibilities of these crucial, creative and often misunderstood forms of human culture' ('CenSAMM'). The origins of the PCT lie in the [Panacea Society](#), a millenarian religious association founded by Mabel Barltrop (1866–1934)—known as 'Octavia'—in Bedford, UK, in the aftermath of World War I, which was recognized as a charity in 1926. Following the decline of the society's membership in the latter part of the 20th century, the charity underwent a process of modernisation in the early 2000s and was renamed the 'Panacea Charitable Trust' in 2012 after the death of the last resident member, Ruth Klein (1932–2012) (Panacea Charitable Trust 2015; Lockhart 2021).

Over time, trustees have included a number of scholars of religion including Naomi Hilton, author of 'Traversing the Heavens: The State of Scholarship on 3 Baruch' for the *Journal for the Study of Pseudepigrapha* (2013); Philip Lockley, the author of *Visionary Religion and Radicalism in Early Industrial England: From Southcott to Socialism* (2012); Justin Meggitt, University Senior Lecturer in the Study of Religion at the University of Cambridge, author of *Early Quakers and Islam: Slavery, Apocalyptic and Christian-Muslim Encounters in the Seventeenth Century* (2013); Christopher Rowland, formerly Dean Ireland's Professor of the Exegesis of Holy Scripture in the University of Oxford, author of *Revelation: the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (2004) with Judith Kovacs, and *The Open Heaven: a Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (1982); and Jane Shaw, Professor of the History of Religion, University of Oxford, the author of *Octavia, Daughter of God: The Story of a Female Messiah and her Followers* (2011). Following modernisation and the end of the society's religious affiliation, the trust included amongst its activities furthering understanding of the legacy of the society and similar movements in the contemporary world, a purpose which culminated in the formation of CenSAMM. As such, CenSAMM is not religiously aligned and seeks to foster scholarship and public understanding in the field of apocalyptic and millenarian studies without taking a confessional standpoint ('About CenSAMM').

The Centre was established under the leadership of Simon Robinson as project director until 2018. Since 2018 it has been led by two academic directors: James Crossley, Professor of Bible, Society and Politics at St Mary's University Twickenham, and Alastair Lockhart, Fellow of Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge. Crossley is a researcher in the fields of Christian origins and Judaism in the 1st century, and political understandings of religion and the Bible with a special focus on English political discourse ('Prof James Crossley'). Dr Lockhart is a scholar of late-modern emerging religion and belief, and the psychology of religion—and he has worked extensively on the Panacea Society's history ('Dr Alastair Lockhart'; Lockhart 2019).

CenSAMM's activities include establishing networks of scholars in the field, organising academic conferences and meetings, holding events and generating materials promoting public understanding, supporting scholars seeking to extend academic interaction and public understanding, and providing reliable information for individuals from all walks of life with an interest in apocalyptic and millenarian movements. These activities include supporting the *Critical Dictionary of Apocalyptic and Millenarian Movements*, launched online in 2021 and edited by Crossley and Lockhart.

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