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978-0-521-86788-7 - Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607-1876

Nicholas Guyatt

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## Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607–1876

Nicholas Guyatt offers a completely new understanding of a central question in American history: How did Americans come to think that God favored the United States above other nations? Tracing the story of American providentialism from the founding of Virginia to the collapse of Reconstruction, this book uncovers the British roots of American religious nationalism before the American Revolution and the extraordinary struggles of white Americans to reconcile their ideas of national mission with the racial diversity of the early republic. Making sense of previously diffuse debates on manifest destiny, millenarianism, and American mission, *Providence and the Invention of the United States, 1607–1876*, explains the origins and development of the idea that God has a special plan for America. This conviction supplied the United States with a powerful sense of national purpose, but it also prevented Americans from clearly understanding events and people that could not easily be fitted into the providential scheme.

Nicholas Guyatt is Assistant Professor of History at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, British Columbia. He has studied at Cambridge University (B.A., M.Phil.) and Princeton University (Ph.D.). This is his first academic monograph, but his fourth book; a work on apocalyptic Christianity will also be published in 2007. He has written about American history for the *London Review of Books* and the *Nation*.

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NICHOLAS GUYATT

*Simon Fraser University, Vancouver*



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## Acknowledgments

This book began some years ago in Cambridge, and it is with great sadness that I first acknowledge the help of two people I met there who have since died. Jeremy Maule supervised my undergraduate work on Renaissance literature, and I was inspired by his love of history and his extraordinary intellectual generosity. Jeremy was the person who suggested that I do graduate work, and I remember thinking at the time that this was an outlandish idea. (He also gave me my very first teaching job soon after I had started my M.Phil. – with barely concealed glee, he informed me that my new student would be working on “the motherliness of the Founding Fathers.”) I am sure this book would be much better if he had been around to read it, though it would have taken me some time to work up the nerve to show it to him.

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The History Department appointed me as a lecturer on the completion of my thesis, which allowed me to begin revising this book.

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