

SOUTHCOTTIANISM

Joanna Southcott, the English founder of a sect called the Southcottians which exists today as the Panacea Society is an example of how supernatural failure can never harm a false prophet who has enough charisma even when the fanatical disciples are passed away and new people who should know better take their place. She claimed that she was pregnant with Shiloh the new Christ child in 1814 though she was over sixty and a virgin. But she died and though the doctors had declared that she really was pregnant no child appeared. No baby was found in the womb at the autopsy three days after her death though she had said this was necessary to extract the living newborn saviour. Her followers decided that there was a child and that it had disappeared from her womb and gone to Heaven. Joanna seems to have been a victim of phantom pregnancy which is caused by a woman wanting a baby so much that they can delude their bodies into behaving like they were pregnant. She seems to have died of a broken heart for the saviour she had prophesied would be born into the world to save it through her never appeared. Joanna left a box to be opened that would save the world if opened in the presence of the bishops and nothing spiritual was found in it. Her followers say that this was not the right box. Good excuse. Surely the Southcottians who presented the box to the investigators would have known better?

If Joanna's disciples had been as mysterious as the disciples of Jesus the result would have been people who made their story better and Joanna would have been hailed as the lady who brought forth a child after death that visibly ascended to heaven in the presence of the witnesses. Her Church could have hunted down the one or two records that told a different story and burnt them. And Southcottianism would be a formidable religious force in the world.

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