

**'Come Out of Her my People' (Rev. 18:4) The Use and Influence of the Whore of
Babylon Motif in the Christian Brethren Movement, 1829-1900.**

Thesis submitted in accordance with the requirements

of the University of Liverpool

for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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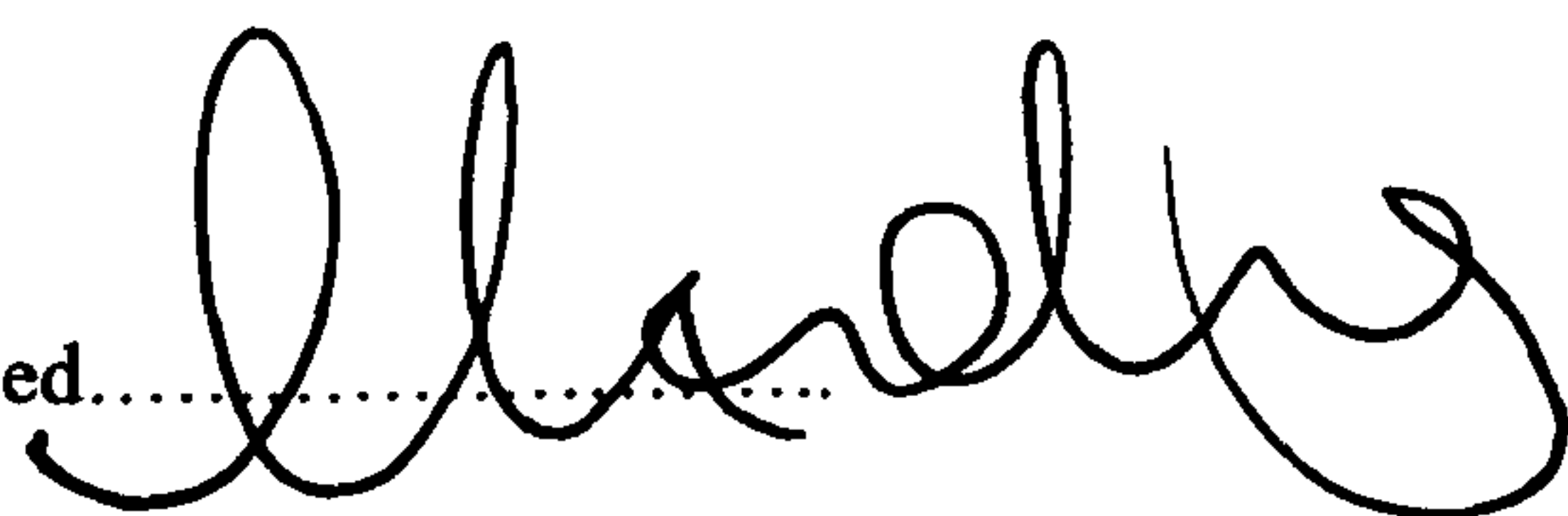
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Declaration

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any degree, qualification or course.

Signed.....

A handwritten signature in black ink, written over a dotted line. The signature is cursive and appears to be 'A. S. D.' or similar.

Abstract

This thesis provides an account of the history of the exegesis of Rev. 17-18 with a particular emphasis upon the use made of the text by, and the influence that the text appears to have had upon, Christian Brethren writers from 1829-1900.¹ This is, then, an examination of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* or 'History of Impact' of the text among largely non-critical readers. The question tackled here is: 'How was the Whore of Babylon image used by the Brethren and did the text have any significant influence on the thought and practise of the movement'? Traditional historical-critical issues relating to Revelation are hence of only limited importance and little space is given over to them.

Significant archival research has been undertaken, and it is here, in part, that the originality of this thesis lies. The Christian Brethren Collection, a special collection found in the JRULM which contains some 15000 items of printed material, including 280 periodicals, 5300 books, 7500 pamphlets and 6000 manuscripts, has been extensively utilised. Some 340 publications from twenty-eight authors containing exegetical material on Rev. 17-18 written between 1829-1900 have been studied in detail. Little work on these materials has been conducted before, and that which has, has not had a particular concern with Brethren exegesis.

Chapter one examines the major hermeneutical approaches to Revelation, identifying five different ways in which the text has been traditionally read. Chapter two is a study of how reader-response criticism can shed light on readings of Revelation. These two chapters are designed to set the context for the more original work found in the rest of the thesis. Chapter three, a historical survey of the afterlife of the Whore of Babylon motif from the second to nineteenth century, highlights the various ways the text has been interpreted. Chapter four tracks the major people and events associated with the origins of the Brethren movement in order to clarify the *Sitz im Leben* of the readers here examined. This is important, for in the overall process of reading the reader comes to the text from a very specific social, religious and historical context and this will affect in significant ways how the text functions within the community.

Throughout I argue that the Brethren use the Whore of Babylon motif as a form of vituperative rhetoric. The Brethren use Babylon to vilify all other Christian traditions and to define the 'self' on a religious level (chapters five 'Babylon is Papal Rome' and chapter six 'Babylon is All of Corrupt Christendom'). On an epistemological level those with confused doctrinal beliefs, both *extra muros* and *intra muros*, are defined as 'Babylon' (chapter seven 'Babylon is Doctrinal Confusion'). On a secular level Babylon is used to vilify the 'extreme outsider': the world, a place of pollution and contamination (chapter eight 'Babylon is Worldliness'). I also argue that the Brethren two-stage 'secret rapture' doctrine developed as the direct result of a biological 'fight or flight' response and a psychological 'fear and fantasy' response to the Babylon motif (chapter nine 'Babylon and the Secret Rapture of the Church'). For the Brethren, the ultimate application of Rev. 18:4 is to quit the earth altogether: to be 'raptured'.

This thesis hence makes an original contribution to learning in two ways. First, it accesses new material. Second, it offers new insights into the ways in which readers, texts and contexts interact within this very specific context. Throughout the Brethren are in focus, though some of what is said here is of value in the context of 'sectarian' biblical exegesis more generally.

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¹ The *terminus a quo* is 1829 when the earliest Brethren publication containing a reference to Babylon appeared and the 'Fitzwilliam Square' group first met. The *terminus ad quem* is 1900 by which time the movement had become highly segregated, fractured and numerous 'brethren' factions had appeared thus speaking of a unified 'Brethren' exegesis was impossible.

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Abbreviations

- ANF* *The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Translations of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*
- BT* *The Bible Treasury*
- CA* *The Christian Annotator*
- CF* *The Christian Friend*
- ChW* *The Christian Witness: Chiefly on Subjects Connected with the Present State of the Church* (Simpkin Marshall and Co. 1836-1837)
- CNT* *Ten Lectures on the Church of the New Testament Seen to be Established, Endowed, United and Free* (Edinburgh: Gospel Messenger Office, 1905)
- CW* John N Darby, *The Collected Works of J. N. Darby*, vols. I-XXXIV, 1st edn., ed. by William Kelly (London: G. Morrish, 1883)
- JRULM* John Rylands University Library Manchester
- LP* *Lectures on Prophecy, Delivered in Merchant's Hall, York, During March and April 1851*, 2nd edn. (Campbell, 1852)
- LW* Luther, M. *Luther's Works*, 55 vols. ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan & Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986)
- NC* John N. Darby, *Notes and Comments on Scripture*, vols. I-VII (Kingston on Thames: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.)
- NJ* John N. Darby, *Notes and Jottings* (Kingston on Thames: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.)
- n.pg.* No page
- NPNF* *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*
- NW* *The Northern Witness: A Monthly Magazine Of Biblical Literature*, ed. by J.R. Caldwell (Glasgow: The Publishing Office, 1878-1886)
- PS* *The Patmos Series* (Aylsbury: Hunt, Barnard, n.d.).
- PPPS* *Plain Papers on Prophetic Subjects* (Partridge, Oakey, 1854)
- SC* *Ten Lectures On The Second Coming And Kingdom Of The Lord Jesus*, 4th edn. (Nisbet, 1898)

TBB	Thomas B. Baines
JGB	James G. Bellett
JND	John N. Darby
ED	Edward Dennett
FWG	Frederick W. Grant
JLH	James L. Harris
WK	William Kelly
CHM	Charles H. Mackintosh
AM	Andrew Miller
BWN	Benjamin W. Newton
TAWP	Theodosia A.W. Powerscourt (Viscountess)
HHS	Hugh H. Snell
WT	William Trotter
GVW	George V. Wigram
WTPW	Walter T.P. Wolston

N.B. When the place of publication is London, this has been omitted from references.

When the publication details are (Oak Park, Ill: Bible Truth Publishers, date) this has been abbreviated to (Bible Truth Pubs., date).

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Whilst all those mentioned above, and more, have each imputed something to this thesis, it must be stated that this work is entirely my own as are any deficiencies or mistakes contained therein.

Introduction

Of all the books in the New Testament, the book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse as it is often referred to,¹ stands out from the crowd as being somehow different. It is a book of wild imagination, of vivid pictures and terrifying visions. It is a book of many-headed beasts, of dragons and angels, of seas of blood, blazing stars, earthquakes and plagues. It is a book ripe for imaginative interpretation.

Although the place of Revelation within the canon of scripture has been heavily debated,² the book has, nevertheless, been highly influential in the Christian tradition. Indeed, as will be seen throughout this thesis, the influence of Revelation has often been highly significant as interpreters are able to draw on the rich, heavy, descriptive images, and apply them easily to the world in which they live. Sometimes this has been very positive. For example, for Black South Africans struggling against the Apartheid regime in the second half of the twentieth century the text has brought hope of a better world to come,³ while for Christian women subjugated and oppressed by men in a patriarchal society, the Apocalypse has been a source of strength and hope.⁴ However, the text has not always been put to such positive use and in some circumstances interpreters have used the text to have a far less savoury impact. The leaders of some Christian sects, for

¹ The word Apocalypse comes from the Greek word ἀποκαλυψις meaning 'unveiling' or 'revelation'. The fact that the book is called 'revelation' does not go unnoticed by the kind of commentators under discussion in this thesis, who argue, reasonably enough, that the meaning of the mysterious images contained therein have been 'revealed' and can therefore be understood.

² It is not important here to discuss the history of the disputed text since this thesis is concerned with the text as it has been received. For a brief summary of the main points see, Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, rev. edn. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), pp. 21-24.

³ Fidon R. Mwombeki, 'The Book of Revelation in Africa', In *Word & World: Theology for Christian Ministry*, Volume XV, Number 2 (St. Paul, MN: Luther Seminary, Spring 1995), pp. 145-151; see also Alan A. Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: Reflections on the Apocalypse of John of Patmos* (Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1987), p. 126.

⁴ See for instance, E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p. 101.

example David Koresh, whose community the Branch Davidians in Waco Texas suffered catastrophic fire in 1993, have used the Apocalypse to justify and give validity to a number of beliefs and practices, which, so some have argued, have led to death, destruction and the suffering of many.⁵

In this thesis some other uses of the text are brought into focus, with particular reference to the way in which the symbol of Babylon the Great has been interpreted by a number of commentators, and with particular emphasis being placed on the exegesis of the Whore of Babylon passages in the Christian Brethren movement.

The book of Revelation has of course proved to be a source of great fascination and attraction to those on the margins of any society. Its magnetism and natural appeal is due in part, even allowing for the difficulty of interpreting the text in detail, to the central idea that the author is seeking to convey: that although one may suffer in this life it will be for but a moment as the end of all things is coming, maybe just around the corner. The *parousia* of Christ will right all those wrongs, and usher in a new age where God shall live with his people: ‘and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away’ (Rev. 21:4). Furthermore, as many have pointed out, the hope that is offered in such texts as Revelation does not pertain to the eschaton only, but rather it seems to be the case that the author is seeking to reassure his readers in their present experiences. Even though it may look as though the Devil has the upper hand, in fact God

⁵ Such a view is argued extensively for example in Kenneth G.C. Newport, *The Branch Davidians of Waco: The History and Beliefs of An Apocalyptic Sect* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), especially chapters 13-15. While the details of the exegetical scheme that was in place at Waco are not directly relevant in this thesis, we note in passing that according to Newport, Koresh interpreted the figure of Babylon as, among other things, the American Government and this was a factor in the catastrophic outcome that resulted from the siege.

is in control 'behind the scenes'.⁶ Such a message has an obvious application to those who perceive this world to be a threatening and dangerous place and it matters little whether those perceptions are accurate or not.⁷ As we shall see this was the case with the Brethren.

One very prominent image in the book of Revelation is that of the Whore of Babylon. This image can be seen in Rev. 14:8, 16:19, 17:5, 18:2, 18:10 and 18:21. Although Babylon is mentioned six times in other New Testament writings, five of these six references outside of the Apocalypse clearly refer to Babylon in a historical, geographical and literal way and not as an image or symbol at all.⁸ The sixth occurrence of the word Babylon, in 1 Pet. 5:13, is generally accepted as being used figuratively as a cryptogram for Rome,⁹ although it was understood by some of the Brethren authors to refer to the literal geographical place called Babylon.¹⁰ Thus the Petrine text is not relevant here. It is clear, therefore, that as half of all NT biblical references to Babylon are to be found in Revelation, and it is here that the figurative sense of that term is found, that 'Babylon', whatever that might mean in this context, plays an important role in the author of the Apocalypse's vision of the end. It was not understood even by the author as a literal, historical place only.

⁶ Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (SPCK, 1982), pp. 425, 427, 429-30.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 413.

⁸ See Matthew 1:11, 1:12, 1:17 (two occurrences), and Acts 7:43, for literal references to Babylon.

⁹ See for example, Oscar Cullmann, *Peter: Disciple, Apostle, and Martyr, A Historical and Theological Study* trans. by Floyd V. Filson (SCM, 1953), p. 86.

¹⁰ William Kelly, for example, writes: 'Peter was in Babylon, the literal Babylon on the plain of Shinar, when he wrote the First Epistle'. WK, *The First Epistle of Peter* (Weston, 1904), p. vii. Note that the Brethren authors upon which the majority of this thesis is focused held a literalistic interpretation of scripture. This enabled them to identify Babylon in 1 Pet. 5:13 as a literal women: 'a well known sister', in the literal geographical location of Babylon. See for example, JND, 'A Short but Serious Examination of the Fundamental Principles Issued by Mr. Gaussen in his Book Entitled, 'Daniel the Prophet'' (1850), *CW*, 11.108.

As we shall see in this thesis, this symbolic or figurative representation of Babylon becomes an important image for many commentators, no more so than in the Protestant tradition from the mid-sixteenth century onwards.¹¹ It was an important image too in the narrower confines of the Brethren movement, and indeed became central to their ecclesiology¹² and eschatology.¹³ Both the Reformers in general and the Brethren movement in particular, then, turned to the book Revelation and found there a church with a *Sitz im Leben* not unlike their own and found in that book images easily transferable to their own situation. It was in the same text too that they found enemies like their own enemies.

The *Sitz im Leben* of the Book of Revelation

Although historical-critical issues, such as determining the authorship and date of Revelation, are largely unimportant for a thesis such as this, which is an examination of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* or 'history of impact' of a particular part of that text, it is important to note just one historical-critical issue in passing, namely the *Sitz im Leben* of the book. This is so since, as we shall see, it was the *Sitz im Leben* of the book that probably made it particularly relevant to the Brethren movement, the focus of this study.

Within the book of Revelation there is strong, if not incontrovertible evidence, that the text had been written for a group that was either experiencing persecution or at least expecting it: a maltreated group perhaps, and a community whose members were

¹¹ See chapter three below.

¹² See chapters four to seven below.

¹³ See chapters eight and nine below.

being told to stay strong and retain hope in the midst of suffering.¹⁴ The author was offering hope to his community. Even though in the present the ‘locusts and scorpions’ may be tormenting and hurting them (Rev. 9:1-12), this will be only for a finite period of time (Rev. 8:10); even though the seven-headed, ten-horned monster from the sea wages war on the saints (Rev. 13:1-10), they must endure and have faith (Rev. 13:10). Similarly, while the two-horned dragon-like monster from the land killed anyone who did not worship its statue (Rev. 8:11-18), John¹⁵ calls for endurance from God’s people (Rev. 14:12). The Rider called ‘faithful and true’ will soon destroy these enemies (Rev. 19:11-21) and the saints will live forever with God in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:1-7; 22:4). Here is a group which is being urged to remain faithful and pure, uncorrupted by the social and religious evils of the world around them. They must not bow down and worship the beast or his statue, neither must they receive his mark or fornicate with the Great City. Their robes must remain white; they must be unpolluted, a spotless virgin bride waiting patiently for their eschatological groom (Rev. 21:8). The text hence appears to be written by a member of a persecuted community (anticipated or actual), a community whose members are both at odds with the world and in enmity with the world.

In the context of this thesis, this apparent *Sitz im Leben* of the book of Revelation is significant, for it provides an important potential link and commonality of experience

¹⁴ It must be noted here that it is entirely possible that the book of Revelation was not written by one author to be read by a group of readers. Such a view is posited by many source-critical authors of the twentieth century. However, it is the view of the present author that it is entirely reasonable to speak of the *Sitz im Leben* of the original reader or readers of the Revelation, or at the very least the *Sitz im Leben* of an implied reader of the Revelation as, the group in here focus, the Brethren to whom the attention of this thesis is turned, would indeed have understood that the book of Revelation was written by an author both to the earliest Christian readers and also to themselves.

¹⁵ For the purposes of this thesis the author of Revelation is referred to simply as ‘John’, a name he gives himself in Rev. 1:9. Which ‘John’ this might have been is unimportant in the context of the focus of this thesis.

between the author of Revelation and the Christian Brethren authors discussed here. Both perceived themselves as persecuted groups, groups who needed to stand against the world, who needed to maintain faithfulness in suffering, and hopeful of a better world to come. This thesis explores some of that dynamic as readers and text interact.

Description of Chapters 17 and 18

The references to Babylon in Revelation chapters 17-18 present an image of Babylon as an anti-Christian power. Babylon is a symbol of something highly unpleasant. She is portrayed as both a woman and a city. Yet she is no ordinary woman; she is a whore and a fornicator. This use of sexual corruption and promiscuity fits well enough into the OT world with which the author was so familiar, as one finds there, in books such as Hosea, that prostitution and promiscuity are used as metaphors to represent unfaithfulness to God.¹⁶ 'Babylon' has not only prostituted herself, but is responsible also for giving birth to all forms of whoredom, being identified as the 'Mother of Harlots' and the 'mother of the abominations' of the earth. Yet, intriguingly, the precise identity of this Babylon figure is also something of a mystery. John tells us what she looks like as a woman, that she is adorned with precious and costly materials, yet she is also filthy. She rides the scarlet-coloured beast with seven heads and ten horns symbolising her authority over them; and yet she is hated by the ten horns of the beast she is riding. The horns of the beast shall make her desolate and naked, and they shall eat her flesh and burn her (Rev. 17:16). She has glorified herself, lived deliciously, yet despite her judgment she still believes in her heart that she is a queen and not a widow.

¹⁶ On this see further below pp. 11-12.

John also identifies Babylon as a place, not just a woman. She is a city, a great city, which reigns over the kings of the earth. John also tells us the nature of her sins. She has deceived the nations by her sorcery; she is drunk on the blood of the saints, the martyrs, the apostles, the prophets, God's servants and 'all that were slain upon the earth'. She has fallen, she has become the place where devils, foul spirits and unclean and hateful birds reside. She is a center of trade not only for all luxury items but also she trades in the souls of men. John tells us of her ultimate future: she will be judged severely. God's judgment will be the plagues of death, mourning, famine and fire, which shall all come in just one day. The very kings who destroy her will mourn over her destruction because they were made rich by her. Her destruction will be rejoiced over by the people of God for they have been avenged. Finally, John tells the reader of how the people of God must respond to Babylon. They are to 'come out of her' and must not partake of her sins lest they 'receive her plagues' (Rev. 18:4).

It is apparent then that in the book of Revelation the figure of Babylon is a force opposed to God and the Church and, whatever it might have meant in its original context, such rich and enticing symbolism is easy to apply to different situations. Thus it is hardly surprising that the Christians of the first few centuries CE applied it to the pagan, imperial Roman Empire, the entity that was opposed to their own life setting,¹⁷ whereas the Protestant Reformers of the mid-sixteenth century found in such rich symbolism an image of Rome Papal, the source of suffering in their own experience.¹⁸ As is shown in this thesis in some detail, the Brethren of the nineteenth century also took up the symbol

¹⁷ See chapter three below.

¹⁸ See chapter three below.

of Babylon, in which they too saw something that they perceived as important in their own *Sitz im Leben*.

Babylon in the OT

It is now well-established that the author of the book of Revelation was steeped in both the language and the literature of the OT.¹⁹ This being so, some account must be taken here of the appearance of 'Babylon' in that material since a study might aid in understanding the use of the Babylon motif in Revelation and also the use that is made of the concept by the commentators here under review. This is not to say that the way in which 'Babylon' is used in the OT necessarily acted as a restraint on the use to which it could be put by the author of Revelation,²⁰ nor that the use of Babylon in Revelation restrained the imaginative use of it by later commentators. It might, however, provide some broader context of the study presented here.

'Babylon' is mentioned throughout the whole of the OT some 287 times.²¹ An historical-critical examination of the use of the word 'Babylon' in OT scripture reveals that the whilst the concept begins chronologically as simply a geographical and historical entity, a kingdom that occasionally is friendly towards Israel but more often than not at

¹⁹ While detail is not here needed it is relatively obvious that the author of Revelation used the OT a great deal. The intertextuality is picked up by, among others, Brethren interpreters, as we shall note throughout this thesis. For a summary of some of the more general issues see, R.H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Revelation of St. John, ICC*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1.xxi. and J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), pp. 26-27. The question of exactly how the author of Revelation used the OT is a much more debated question. For recent studies see, Gregory K. Beale, *John's Use of the OT in Revelation*, JSNT Supp. 166 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), and bibliography.

²⁰ For the purposes of this thesis the point made by Steve Moyise is relevant: 'Every quotation is out of context because it has been relocated. It cannot possibly mean the same thing as it did in its old context because most of the factors that affect interpretation have changed', Steve Moyise, *The OT in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1995), p. 140.

²¹ This figure is based upon a key-word search of the KJV using the *Master Christian Library* software CD-ROM, version 6.02 (Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1999).

war with her, in later OT writings the meaning changes significantly, symbolic overtones have begun to develop, and Babylon begins in some way to become an archetype of the enemy of Yahweh's people.

In the Torah we read of the mythological accounts of how and why Babylon came into existence. The Yahwist writer tells us the story of 'The Tower of Babel', the name given to the tower built in the land of Shinar after the Deluge. The writer hence provides a mythological narrative to account for the fact that his geographical neighbours speak a different language, and also why it is that humankind is divided into nations. This part of the Biblical account states that it was as a result of Yahweh's anger that 'confusion' came about, for it was Yahweh who defeated the design by 'confounding' the builders' language. 'Babylon' here is used with the meaning of 'confusion'. The ancient story also acts as a picture of human rejection of the rule of God and rebellion against the divine will. As we shall see, Brethren writers picked up on both of these OT themes. 'Babylon' was still 'confusion' (this time doctrinal) and it still represented a rejection of and rebellion against the word of God in scripture.²²

In the Hebrew Writings and Historical Books, we find information about the warfare of Babylon with Israel and also general historical and geographical information about the kingdom of Babylon. This is only to be expected, for, as Von Rad has so convincingly demonstrated, from the earliest days of Israel's existence as a people, holy war was a sacred institution undertaken as a cultic act of a religious community.²³ Whilst the Brethren writers make numerous references to Israel's warfare with Babylon, little importance is placed on such texts for the Brethren church, as the growing dispensational

²² See chapter seven below.

²³ Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, trans. by M.J. Dawn (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), pp. 41-51.

hermeneutic of, for example, Darby, William Kelly, George Wigram, James Bellett, Edward Dennett and William Trotter,²⁴ consigned the importance of such scriptures to the Jewish people only and placed a great emphasis on distinguishing between the spiritual hopes and promises of the church in the present dispensation and the earthly hopes and promises of Israel in the past dispensation.

In the Prophets, for example, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel, Babylon has begun to be understood in a highly symbolic way, prefiguring later Christian exegesis. The authors' understanding of Babylon clearly changes from being either a pre-critical explanation for semantic variety or a literal and geographical kingdom which threatens national security, to something more figurative and symbolic. This is hardly surprising of course given the *Sitz im Leben* of this material. The exilic and postexilic writers speak with a clear prophetic voice that utters a scathing indictment against the prevalent contemporary civilisation in which they find themselves captive. The utter desolation of the city of Babylon is foretold by the prophets. Babylon will be destroyed by Yahweh. The destruction of the first Temple, the ensuing captivity and desire for Israel to remain ethnically and religiously pure whilst subjugated in a foreign land and forced into idolatrous religious practice, found described in the Prophetic and Historical books of the OT, leads to the identification of Babylon primarily as the one who destroyed the Jerusalem Temple and took the people of God captive. Protestant Reformer Martin Luther of course famously picked up on this theme of exile in Babylon in his work *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520).²⁵ The Brethren writers also picked up on this

²⁴ Biographical details on these major Brethren authors can be found in chapter four below.

²⁵ Martin Luther, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*, October 6th, 1520, in *The European Reformations Sourcebook*, ed. by Carter Lindberg (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2000), pp. 38-39. See chapter three below for more details.

theme. Hamilton Smith (1862-1943) writes that ‘the professing Church, as a whole, was, and still is, enslaved in Babylonish captivity’.²⁶ As will become clear in this thesis, however, while the Brethren writers did pick up occasionally on such OT references, it was without doubt the book of Revelation that was the primary source for their views on present-day ‘Babylon’, a subject on which they had much to say.

For John, the author of Revelation, clearly drawing on the older traditions and writing after seventy CE and the destruction of the second Temple in Jerusalem, the way that Babylon was understood changed yet again. Babylon became a code name for Rome, because Rome was the second city to destroy the Temple. And as Babylon became ‘Rome’, so, for Brethren writers, ‘Rome’ became, among other things, ‘Apostate Christianity’. Hence the symbolism is once again transferred.²⁷

‘Whoring’ in the Book of Revelation and the OT

There is another concept in Revelation which, as we shall see, becomes very important to later interpreters, this is the concept of ‘whoring’. This is particularly important since John often uses this concept in conjunction with the word Babylon. Hence it is not just ‘Babylon’ that we read of, but the ‘Whore of Babylon’. This is picked up by Brethren writers who conflate references to ‘Babylon’, ‘the Great Whore’, and the ‘harlot’.

There is a clear Semitic context that needs to be kept in mind here and it was not lost on Brethren writers. The issue is however a little complicated for, as Charles has

²⁶ Hamilton Smith, *Haggai: The Messenger and his Message* (Edinburgh: Reid, n.d.), p.4. See also JND, ‘Notes on the Apocalypse, Gleaned at Lectures in Geneva, Revelation 18, No. 3’ (1842), *CW*, 5.101. JND, ‘Thoughts on Romans 11, and on the Responsibility of the Church in Reference to a Pamphlet of Mr. F. Olivier, entitled ‘Defence of the Principles Laid Down in the Pamphlet, ‘Essay on the Kingdom of God’’ (1844), *CW*, 1.499.

²⁷ The use of the word Babylon as a cryptogram for Imperial Rome is examined in some detail in chapter three. Whereas for Papias, Hippolytus, and Tertullian Babylon was a symbol of Pagan Rome, in Brethren exegesis, Babylon becomes a symbol for Papal Rome. See chapter five below.

noted, in the book of Revelation in general, Hebraic as well as Greek or Aramaic linguistics are at work.²⁸ It is hence often difficult to be certain of the relevant semantics when dealing with the text. What is relatively plain, however, is that the author of Revelation is using the concept of 'whoredom' and general sexual immorality in the well-worn OT sense of religious apostasy.²⁹ Such language in Revelation takes the reader back to a number of OT passages where Israel, Yahweh's chosen people, are described in similar terms and language because of their unfaithfulness to Yahweh (which will later be seen as the Church's unfaithfulness to God). In Jer. 3:1-9, 5:7ff and Ezek. 16-23, for example, the concept of harlotry became 'a picture of Israel's apostasy from Yahweh'.³⁰ The concept of whoredom and prostitution had here already taken on religious connotations and became a common form of description for the nation's religious infidelity. This will become important to later Christian commentators.

Summary of Thesis and Statement of Originality

Having sketched in some of the very general issues that are important in dealing with this area of study into the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of Rev. 17-18, the rest of this thesis will be

²⁸ Charles, 1.56. For Rev. 17:1-10, the order of words is 'Hebraic', for Rev. 17:11-17, the order is 'decidedly non-semitic . . . we are obliged to attribute [them] to a Greek or Aramaic linguistic sources'.

²⁹ Perhaps the best example of 'whoredom' as religious infidelity to Yahweh in the OT is to be found in the book of Hosea. Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh is described as fornication in Hos. 2:2, 2:4, 3:3, 4:11, 4:14 and 6:11, and the act of following after false gods is described as 'a-whoring' in Hos. 2:5, 4:10, 4:12, 4:13, 4:14, 4:18 and 5:3. It is clear that by the time that John authored his apocalypse the concept of Whoredom as an illicit activity, not only in a sexual but also in a spiritual and religious sense, was well established as a term of description. As many scholars have noted, John was clearly aware of the OT antecedents found in Hos. Jer. and Ezek. and elsewhere, which described Israel's religious infidelity as whoring after false gods, and it is even possible that in linking the words 'whore' and 'Babylon' together, John was aware of Babylon being the place where cultic prostitution was first found as a religious practice. This gave the opportunity to later writers to follow up on this OT theme and use the link between religious infidelity and prostitution to castigate their own religious communities and the communities of those around them.

³⁰ H. Reisser, *πορνεία* in, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1988), 1.499.

devoted to examining the use made of these chapters and the Whore of Babylon motif in particular in later Christian sources with an emphasis upon Brethren commentators. The first chapter examines the five major approaches taken by those who have sought to interpret Revelation. Chapter two examines the closely related issues of the relationship between 'texts and meanings'. The purpose here is to give the broad history-of-interpretation framework within which the interpreters examined in this thesis were working and also to raise some of the critical issues related to the use made of the text by those who read it, in this case the Brethren interpreters in particular. Chapter three is an overview of the history of the exegesis of Rev. 17-18 which gives a more precise account of the trajectory leading up to the Brethren material. Here we shall note that in many ways the Brethren did break some new ground, though in others they stayed within the broad Protestant paradigm. Chapter four provides a brief history of the Brethren movement including an introduction to some of the key authors and some key doctrinal beliefs held by the movement. The archival section contains five chapters (chapters five to nine). It is here that much of the original work of this thesis is presented. These chapters contain a comprehensive and systematic survey of Brethren publications relating to the Whore of Babylon theme. The chronological scale is ambitious: the work stretches from the time when the first publications from Brethren authors containing the word 'Babylon' appeared (1829) until the turn of the twentieth-century when interpretative exegetical principles operative within this community had been established as fixed and normative (which is rather surprising given that the movement had by now become rather fragmented). The material surveyed here has primarily come from the Christian Brethren Archive in Manchester, but some material was also procured from the Sovereign Grace

Advent Testimony Publishers in Chelmsford, the Chapter Two bookshop in London, the Echoes of Service publishers in Bath and also three publications pertaining to Kelly not found in the archive were available in electronic format from Stem Publishing.

Throughout this thesis I argue that the Christian Brethren use the Whore of Babylon motif as a form of vituperative rhetoric. The Brethren vilify all other Christian traditions as 'Babylon' in order to define the 'self' on a religious level (chapters five and six). On an epistemological level those with divergent doctrinal beliefs, both *extra muros* and *intra muros*, are defined as 'Babylon' (chapter seven). On a secular level Babylon is used to vilify the 'extreme outsider': the world, a place of pollution and contamination (chapter eight). The Brethren 'secret rapture' doctrine developed as the direct result of a biological 'fight or flight' response and a psychological 'fear and fantasy' response to the Babylon motif (chapter nine). The ultimate application of Rev. 18:4: 'come out of her', is not merely to leave the above noted interpretations of Babylon, but to be 'raptured', to quit the earth altogether to meet Christ in the sky.

Chapter One

The Five Different Approaches to Interpreting Revelation

Since the very earliest attempts to interpret the book of Revelation through to the present day, expositors have differed not only with regards to the interpretation of specific motifs, words, phrases and concepts, but also regarding the general hermeneutical framework that should be used to interpret the book in the broadest sense. It is generally accepted within the realm of NT studies that these various approaches to exegesis can be classified into five main categories.³¹

A survey of the five main approaches to interpretation will enable us to place Brethren exegesis in an historical context, and determine how their method of interpretation is similar to or different from the broad stream of interpretation that went before. It will also enable the Brethren to stand out in more sharply focussed relief against the background of other groups who engaged in the exegesis of Revelation during the same time period.

Contemporary Historical Critical

The first category is generally known as the contemporary historical-critical approach. This mode of interpretation has been the dominant academic approach to the exegesis of the Apocalypse from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Historical criticism is, in short, the attempt to see the text within its own historical, social, political, cultural and intellectual setting, commonly referred to as the text's *Sitz im Leben*. The origins of

³¹ See for example, Kenneth G.C. Newport, *Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 1-23. Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation, BBC* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 7-11. Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), *passim*.

the contemporary historical-critical approach are located within the broader context of changing views concerning the nature and place of Scripture that emerged during the Enlightenment period.

The approach is widely regarded as entering fully onto the academic agenda at the University of Tübingen when F.C. Baur was appointed professor of theology in 1826.³² The historical-critical approach to Scripture generally, and the book of Revelation specifically, dominated academic and scholarly works on Revelation for most of the twentieth century, and even today continues to be a normative scholarly approach to biblical exegesis. Charles, for example, took just such an approach when, writing in the first quarter of the twentieth century, he noted that Revelation was not written by a single author, but that the book was written by two writers ‘related to each other, either as master and pupil, or as pupils of the same master, or as members of the same school’.³³ These proto-authors he called ‘the Evangelist and the Seer’.³⁴ The sources they compiled were woven together by the editor of the final redaction of the Apocalypse: ‘The author of J^{ap} was a Palestinian Jew . . . a great spiritual genius, a man of profound insight’,³⁵ who died after editing together only the first twenty chapters of the book, leaving ‘a series of independent documents . . . put together by a faithful but unintelligent disciple in the order which he thought right’,³⁶ to construct the final two chapters. For Charles, Babylon is to be identified quite simply as Rome,³⁷ since the source behind Rev. 18 was written

³² For a study see Horton Harris, *The Tübingen School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975).

³³ Charles, 1.xxix.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.xxxiii.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.xliv.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.1.

³⁷ Charles, 2.87.

during the Vespasianic period, soon after the destruction of Jerusalem,³⁸ when ‘a considerable body of the faithful is presumed to be actually present in Rome’.³⁹

The source-critical form of historical-critical exegesis used by Charles emerged during the nineteenth and early twentieth-century, and sought to uncover the various sources behind the Apocalypse. Such exegesis is generally rejected in recent studies in favour of reading the book as a work with inner cohesiveness, literal integrity and ideological unity,⁴⁰ which was certainly the way in which the Brethren commentators read it. However Massyngeberde Ford’s *Revelation: A New Translation with Commentary* (1975)⁴¹ shows similarity to the earlier work of Charles in dividing up the text into its pre-existent units. It is Ford’s view that the Babylon motif has an historical application and relates to John’s own day; it is a symbol of Apostate Jerusalem.⁴² Her identification of Babylon as Jerusalem has not found widespread acceptance within the academic community.⁴³ David Aune, for example, continuing in the historical-critical tradition, in the *Word Biblical Commentary*, identifies Babylon as Rome, particularly in the form of the worship of *Dea Roma* and her cult.⁴⁴ Adela Y. Collins also suggests that Babylon is Rome, ‘not only the historical and physical city, but also what it stood for in the author’s point of view: the goddess *Roma*, the claim of the Roman Empire to dominion over the earth, the inequities . . . and violence’ of Rome.⁴⁵ Richard Bauckham,

³⁸ Ibid., 2.88.

³⁹ Ibid., 2.93.

⁴⁰ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy, Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), p. x.

⁴¹ Ford, *Revelation*.

⁴² Ibid., pp. 27, 54-55.

⁴³ See, however, A.J. Beagley, *The Sitz im Leben of the Apocalypse, with Particular Reference to the Role of the Church’s Enemies* (New York: de Gruyter, 1987), pp. 179-180.

⁴⁴ David Aune, *Revelation*, 3 vols. *WBC* (Nashville: Nelson, 1997-1998), 3.928, 1012.

⁴⁵ Adela Y. Collins, ‘The Apocalypse (Revelation)’, in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. by Raymond E. Brown, Joseph, A. Fitzmyer, R.R. Murphy, 2nd edn. (Geoffrey Chapman, 1996), p. 1012.

identifies Babylon in light of the historical-critical purpose of Revelation and *Sitz im Leben* of the group to whom it was originally addressed, suggesting that the Babylon motif is a

Prophetic critique of the political idolatry and economic oppression intrinsic to Roman power in the late first century, and as a call to its readers to bear witness to the truth and righteousness of God in the specific circumstances – religious, political, social and economic – in which they lived in the cities of the Roman province of Asia.⁴⁶

Thus for Bauckham, Rev. 18 is not only a religious and social polemic but also a political and economic critique of Rome and in fact ‘one of the most effective pieces of political resistance literature from the period of the early empire’.⁴⁷ Gregory K. Beale’s *New International Greek Testament Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (1999), follows the trend suggesting that the Apocalypse was written during the reign of Domitian, around 95 CE,⁴⁸ and he concludes with Bauckham that Babylon is the Rome of that time noting that in ‘John’s day the Roman Empire represented this wicked system’.⁴⁹

Further examples of historical-critical interpretations of the Babylon motif in the book of Revelation could easily be assembled. However, such is not necessary to this thesis, for already the broad contours of the historical-critical exegetical method have been outlined and it is thus possible already to set the Brethren rejection of such an approach in context. The kinds of interpretation that have been sketched in above were coming into prominence during the period with which this thesis is concerned. The

⁴⁶ Bauckham, pp. xii-xiii.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 338.

⁴⁸ Gregory K. Beale, *New International Greek Testament Commentary on the Book of Revelation, NIGTC* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999), pp. 4, 27.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 924. We may conclude that Babylon, as a symbol of Imperial Rome, is the standard view in historical-critical circles, see also J.P.M. Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1979), p. 264., and Bauckham, p. 345.

historical-critical approach was by definition critical and antisupernaturalistic and did not appeal to Brethren writers, indeed, the Brethren writers saved some of their most vitriolic and polemical words for an attack upon it. They were certainly aware of contemporary historical-critical interpreters: Kelly names Strauss, Baur, Weizsacker and Meyer [*sic* Meier].⁵⁰ Regarding OT historical-critical exegesis he wrote

The learned follies of Tübingen have justly aroused in all foreign countries a dislike of German-knowledge! . . . Of the new school of critics generally, we may say without exaggeration . . . that their principle consists in believing everything but the truth, and exactly in proportion to want of evidence; or, to use the words of a poet, 'In making windows that shut out the light, and passages that lead to nothing'.⁵¹

Kelly's mentor and friend Darby completely rejected the historical-critical method too.

His disdain for the hermeneutics of the Tübingen school can be clearly seen as he states

The writers of the Baur or Tübingen school . . . [are] merely part of a progressive effort, not simply to undermine the authority of the New Testament history, but to do so by the invention of a system already seen through and refuted as alike historically unfounded and absurd . . . [it] has demonstrated the animus of the inventors and their untrustworthiness in every respect.⁵²

Clearly, then, the Brethren movement strongly rejected such an approach to interpreting the Apocalypse. They are not alone, throughout the history of the Christian church, expositors have sought to find a hermeneutical method that will effectively unravel the meaning of Revelation and make its abstract and at times strange images applicable to everyday Christian life including their own. As Luz has noted: 'a major problem of

⁵⁰ WK, *Exposition of the Gospel of John edited with Additions by E.E. Whitfield* (Stock, 1908), pp. 482-483. See also WK, *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Weston, 1898), p. 178. WK, *Exposition of the Gospel of Mark* (Stock, 1907b), p. vi. Cf. Harris, *Tübingen* pp. 44, 133, 147 n.26.

⁵¹ WK (1897a), 4th edn. (Bible Truth Pubs., 1975), p. 77.

⁵² JND, 'Miracles and Infidelity', *CW*, 32.307, 301.

historical-critical exegesis today lies in isolating a text in its own time . . . thus preventing it from speaking to the present . . . to keep historical-critical distance is . . . an attempt at avoiding the reality of life'.⁵³

Historicist or Church Historical

The second type of exegetical framework for interpreting Revelation is generally known as the Historicist School of prophetic interpretation, or sometimes as the 'Church-Historical' method. This method of interpretation suggests that Revelation is an outline or panorama of the whole of world history from the start of Christianity until the end of time. The sequence of events in the Apocalypse are a prophetic blueprint outlining the major events of world history from the time of its authorship until the end of time itself, the judgement of the world, the establishment of the New Jerusalem and eternal life for the saints. The historicist interpreter sees a 'progressive and continuous fulfilment of prophecy, in unbroken sequence, from Daniel's day and the time of John, on down to the Second Advent and the end of the age'.⁵⁴

This method of interpretation is generally accepted as originating in the late twelfth century from the Calabrian monastic Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202).⁵⁵ Joachim perceived world history according to the pattern of the Trinity, that is, as divided into

⁵³ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, trans. by Wilhelm C. Linss (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990), pp. 96-97.

⁵⁴ Le Roy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, 4 vols. (Washington DC: Review & Herald, 1950-1954), 1.23. It is important to note at this stage of the thesis that Froom was himself a Seventh-day Adventist, and it was his opinion that the 'anti-papal' interpretation of Revelation 17-18 was right. Although some allowance must be made for such views, the wealth of evidence that Froom brings to bear on the exegesis of these chapters is impressive and the broad outline of what he suggests seems entirely secure.

⁵⁵ See for example, Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore and the Prophetic Future: A Study in Medieval Millennialism* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1999), preface. Froom, 1.690. Wainwright, p. 49. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Paladin, 1970), p. 108.

three distinct ages or dispensations. He called the three dispensations the 'Age of Law', under the rule of God Father, the 'Age of Grace', which began with the birth of Jesus and ended with the birth of St Benedict (c. 480-550), and the 'Age of the Spirit', the age in which Joachim lived, which was inaugurated by the establishment of the Benedictine order, but would fully arrive in 1260 CE as the final chapters of the apocalypse began to unfold.⁵⁶ In his three main works, *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (1527),⁵⁷ *Liber Figurarum* (1953),⁵⁸ and *Liber Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* (1519),⁵⁹ it is clear that Joachim read the whole of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, as a chart of human history. The Apocalypse was considered by Joachim to be a blueprint with which he could outline the major events of world history. So, for example, Joachim found in the seven-headed dragon of Rev. 12:3-4, references to Muhammad (d. 632) as the fourth head and Saladin (c.1137-93) as the sixth head.⁶⁰

The Historicist method of interpretation laid down by Joachim developed into the hermeneutic of choice within the later Protestant tradition. The reader of the Apocalypse, able to look at the signs or portents occurring in their own day and life experience, could turn to the Apocalypse and identify each contemporaneous event as an image or motif within the book. The images within Revelation thus act as 'signposts' on the roadmap, to find out exactly where one stands in the course of world history; what has past, and what

⁵⁶ See plate 21. Joachim, 'Seven Headed Dragon' from the *Liber Figurarum*, MS. Oxford, C.C.C. 255A, f. 7r. in Marjorie Reeves and Beatrice Hirsch-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), plate 21. For explanation see pp. 146-150.

⁵⁷ I will be using Reeves (1999), Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbot: Joachim of Fiore in the History of Western Thought* (N.Y.: Macmillan, 1985), Delno C. West & Sandra Zimdars-Swartz, *Joachim of Fiore: A Study in Spiritual Perception and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983) for references to Joachim's, *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (1527) in this thesis.

⁵⁸ I will be using the 47 plates attached as appendices in Reeves & Hirsch-Reid (1972) when referring to Joachim's *Figurae* in this thesis.

⁵⁹ Joachim of Fiore, *Concordia Novi ac Veteris Testamenti* (Frankfurt: Minerva, 1964). This is a facsimile of an edition originally published in 1519.

⁶⁰ Wainwright, p. 51.

events are left to unfold before the end comes.⁶¹ In 1369, when Konrad Schmid was burnt at the stake for heresy, his followers, the Thuringian flagellant movement, turned to Rev. 11:3-11, and, using the Historicist method interpreted the event as being the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning two witnesses who were to preach against the antichrist, be killed by him and resurrected.⁶² In the eighteenth century the prophetess Joanna Southcott, upon receiving heavenly revelations concerning the war in France, naval mutinies and rotten harvests, turned to Revelation and used a Historicist method of exegesis to identify herself as the 'Woman Clothed with the Sun' in Rev. 12. She believed that she would give birth to 'Shiloh' a 'man child who would rule with a rod of iron' (Rev.12:5), and seal the 144,000 elect of Rev. 7.⁶³

This view of Revelation, as a panorama of the whole of world history, has often been combined with a hermeneutical technique known as the 'year-day' principle.⁶⁴ This interpretative method was based on a number of OT passages such as Num. 14:34: 'forty years—one year for each of the forty days', and Ezek. 4:6: 'I have assigned you 40 days, a day for each year'. Interpreting Revelation in light of such OT texts led many people to try and calculate when the end will come. So, for example, using the 'year-day' principle Joachim predicted the culmination of the Apocalypse as occurring between 1200-1260 CE taking the 1,260 days of Rev. 11:3 and 12:6 to mean 1,260 years (mistakenly taking the year zero for the birth of Christ as his starting point).⁶⁵ Whereas in 1452 Nicholas of

⁶¹ Cornelius of Lapede in the early seventeenth century called Joachim 'the founder of the method of historic parallels' and was aware of Joachim's interpretation of Revelation as foretelling 'the whole history of the Church down to the Last Judgement'. Lapede, in Reeves (1999), p. 120.

⁶² Cohn, pp. 145-146.

⁶³ Frances Brown, *Joanna Southcott: The Woman Clothed with the Sun* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2002), pp. 135-138, 252-258. Eugene Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults and Millennial Beliefs Throughout the Ages* (Hutchinson, 1999), p. 114.

⁶⁴ Fromm, 4.206.

⁶⁵ Reeves & Hirsch-Riech (1972), p. 137. Reeves (1999), p. 35.

Cusa predicted the End of the Age for the year 1741 by using Dan. 8:14 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed', which according to the 'year-day' principle means 2,300 years. Cusa calculated that the 2,300 years began in 559 BCE when he presumed Daniel's vision had taken place, thus when the latter is subtracted from the former, a date 1741 CE is achieved.⁶⁶ William Miller, founder of the Seventh-day Adventist movement, interpreted the 2,300 days of Dan. 8:14 according to the 'year-day' principle as 2,300 years, the seventy weeks of Dan. 9:23-27 as 490 years and the 1,260 days of Rev. 11:3 and 12:6 as 1,260 years. This led him to predict firstly 1843 then 1844 as the year of Christ's return.⁶⁷

A second common feature of the Historicist school of prophetic interpretation is that many interpreters who use this model try to identify the Antichrist according to their own *Sitz im Leben*. As this hermeneutical framework was a predominantly Protestant tool, the Antichrist was usually identified as Rome in either Pagan but more usually Papal forms,⁶⁸ although Muslims, Jews, Napoleon and Hitler were all identified as the antichrist by Historicists who sought to understand the evil actions of individuals in their own day in light of the Apocalypse's prophecies. So, for example, during the sixteenth-century Reformation, Martin Luther believed the Pope and the Turk to be the antichrist,⁶⁹ whereas Serafino da Fermo (1469-1540), reformer of the Canons Regular of the Lateran Congregation, drawing directly on Joachim's Historicist hermeneutic,⁷⁰ in a counter-historicist twist, suggested that Luther was the star which fell from heaven in Rev. 8:10, which turned the waters bitter and caused many to die, and also the Beast from the land in

⁶⁶ Weber, p. 36.

⁶⁷ Froom, 4.689-693.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 3.252-253. 4.1191.

⁶⁹ Martin Luther, *Luther's Works*, 55 vols. ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan & Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1955-1986), 54.46, 346.

⁷⁰ Reeves (1999), p. 125.

Rev. 13:11 who 'spake like a dragon'.⁷¹ In the twentieth-century Otto Pankok and Nathaniel Micklem identified Hitler and Nazi Germany as the Antichrist during World War II.⁷² More recently, the eschatological 'Jews for Jesus' group identified Saddam Hussein as the Antichrist in the 1990's. They suggested that the ancient city of Babylon would be literally rebuilt and the Jews would be led back into Babylonian captivity,⁷³ a view that some of the Brethren authors held themselves a century earlier.⁷⁴

The final common feature of the Historicist School of biblical interpretation is that it presupposes a belief in the literal visible bodily second coming of Jesus. Such belief comes from the literal acceptance of such eschatological passages as Matt. 26:24, 2 Thess. 1:7, 2 Pet. 3:10, 1 Jn 2:28. In particular 1 Thess. 4:16-17 may be noted

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Regarding the above verses, Adam Clarke, a prominent biblical scholar of the Wesleyan Holiness tradition, writing between 1810 and 1826 commented 'Jesus Christ shall descend from heaven; shall descend in like manner as he was seen by his disciples to ascend, i.e. in his human form, but now infinitely more glorious'.⁷⁵ This view is reflected both in the fourth century Nicene Creed and the sixteenth century Augsburg Confession, Article 17. Joachim in the twelfth century, accepting the biblical account as literal, believed that Christ would physically return to the earth to personally destroy the

⁷¹ Wainwright, p. 61.

⁷² Ibid., p. 175.

⁷³ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1992), p. 330.

⁷⁴ See chapter eight below.

⁷⁵ Adam Clarke, *Clarke's Commentary on the NT*, 8 vols. (1810-1826), 8.34.

antichrist.⁷⁶ The same adventist beliefs, that is, belief in a literal, physical and visible return of Christ at the end of the age, are held in the twenty-first century by Seventh-day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses and many fundamentalist or evangelical Bible-believing Christians in the Western world.⁷⁷

There are elements of the 'Church-Historical' method of exegesis that can be found in the exegesis of the Brethren interpreters, the most obvious being that of dispensationalism. Darby renewed the tendency to divide the history of the world up into distinct eras or epochs in his day, just as Joachim had in his own day.⁷⁸

The Brethren also had some commonality of exegesis with the 'Church-Historical' school in their adherence to the belief in a literal, physical and visible advent of Christ. Thus Darby writes, in concord with Wesleyan interpreter Adam Clarke, that Christ will visibly appear: 'looking for that blessed hope, and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour'.⁷⁹ The view is reiterated by Brethren author William Trotter who writes of the Second Coming as 'the descent of the Lord Jesus into the air',⁸⁰ and 'the second coming, the appearing in glory, of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . the grand event which is before us; an event to which the Christian indeed and the Church may look forward with intense desire and expectation'.⁸¹ As we shall see in chapter nine, the literal

⁷⁶ Froom, 1.709.

⁷⁷ In the Seventh-day Adventist church: 'The Saviour's coming will be literal, personal, visible, and worldwide'. See General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe: A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (Washington, DC: Ministerial Association [of Seventh-day Adventists], 1988), p. 332. The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ's second advent has already occurred in 1914 but this was an invisible event. The sect awaits a third visible return of Christ some point in the future and in America. See Clifford Longley, *Chosen People: The Big Idea that Shapes England and America* (Hodder & Stoughton, 2002), p. 254.

⁷⁸ See for example, JND, 'Evidence from Scripture of the Passing Away of the Present Dispensation', *CW*, 2.149-150. Extensive commentary on Darby's dispensational exegesis found throughout the latter part of this thesis.

⁷⁹ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', *CW*, 34.357-358.

⁸⁰ WT, 'Apocalyptic Interpretation' Paper 18 of 24 in *PPPS*, p. 356.

⁸¹ WT, 'Approaching Judgments', Paper 2 of 24, in *PPPS*, p. 25.

belief in a second coming of Christ in the Brethren movement took a novel expression and was influenced in part by the groups exegesis of the Babylon motif.

It must be pointed out though that a belief in a literal physical advent was commonplace in the nineteenth century and that a literal interpretation of Revelation was accepted without critical question regardless of hermeneutical method at that time (with the exception of those within the Historical-Critical School). The Christian Brethren cannot be adequately described simply as belonging to the Church-Historical School of interpreters since they differ from the Protestant hermeneutical method on a number of important points, for example, the Brethren interpreters refrained both from attempting to identify the Antichrist and predicting possible dates for the end of the world. Perhaps more importantly, however, many Brethren interpreters simply did not believe that Revelation was being fulfilled in the present Dispensation. Hence, for Darby, the present age was devoid of any prophetic fulfilment for the Church. Darby writes that 'The Revelation treats of no part of the present dispensation which is yet fulfilled, though the things spoken of be distinctively characteristic of it; and that which thus distinctively characterises it as altogether future'.⁸²

Those interpreters who do apply the fulfilment of Revelation's prophecy to their own time, such as the interpreters in the 'Church-Historical' School, are according to Darby, adhering to a perverse outlook. He writes: 'I deprecate a morbid disposition to apply all things to our own times'.⁸³ Kelly, aware of Edward Bishop Elliott's *Horae Apocalypticae* (1844), a standard and comprehensive exegesis of Revelation according to the Historicist schema, stated that such an interpretation is clearly wrong. As the

⁸² JND, 'An Examination of the Statements made in the 'Thoughts on the Apocalypse', by B. W. Newton; and an Enquiry how far they Accord with Scripture' (1848), *CW*, 8.12.

⁸³ JND, 'On 'Days' signifying 'Years' in Prophetic Language' (1830), *CW*, 2.60.

'Church-Historical' method tends to see Revelation as being continuously fulfilled throughout time, such a view led Elliott to believe that the discovery of America and Australia had been predicted in Rev. 10:2. Concerning this Kelly writes 'the late Mr. E.B. Elliott . . . imagined that there is a more direct allusion to the discovery of America, if not of Australasia, in Revelation 10:2 . . . He naturally says little, and is somewhat indefinite, but as usual confident'.⁸⁴ Kelly, clearly believed that the 'Church-Historical' hermeneutic was a false system, stating that 'no ingenuity can make these revealed facts fit into the Protestant interpretation, as I showed many years ago in reviewing the last edition of Mr. Elliott's *Horae Apoc*'.⁸⁵

Preterist

The third method of interpreting the Apocalypse is known as the Preterist School of prophetic interpretation, taking its name from the Latin *praeter* meaning past. The method of exegesis first appeared in connection with the Spanish Jesuit Alcazar (1554-1613) who initially developed some of its details as a Catholic counter-reformation response to the growing popularity in Protestant circles of the historicist framework in his work *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi* (1615).⁸⁶

Alcazar, drew attention to the words of Jesus as found in Lk. 21:32: 'This generation will not pass away, till all be fulfilled', and argued that most of the prophecies in the Apocalypse had been fulfilled in the first few Christian centuries. Thus, for many Preterists, the prophetic meaning of Revelation is principally applicable to the early

⁸⁴ WK, 'Answers to Questions', in *BT*, Vol. N2, 1898, p. 47.

⁸⁵ WK, 'Answers To Questions', in *BT*, Vol. N1, 1897, p. 319.

⁸⁶ Luis de Alcazar, *Vestigatio Arcani Sensus in Apocalypsi* (1615) or, *Investigation of the Hidden Sense of the Apocalypse*, see Froom, 2.507-510.

Church,⁸⁷ although some Preterists would argue that a small percentage, that contained in the closing two chapters of the book, await fulfilment in the future.

For the Preterist, Revelation had its primary function in counselling and encouraging the needs of the early Christians through the suffering and persecution that they were experiencing, as such there is little future eschatology in the book whatsoever and hence, the Preterist, sees little meaning in the Apocalypse for the Church of today.

Although Preterism was mainly a Catholic method of interpretation, for the Dutch theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) and the English commentator Henry Hammond (1605-1660), both of whom were Protestants, the millennium had begun with the conversion of Constantine and ended in 1300 CE and as such the period they lived in was one devoid of prophetic fulfilment.⁸⁸

The Christian Brethren interpreters were not Preterists, although they, for different reasons, understood the present dispensation as an age devoid of any prophetic fulfilment for the church. They were, however, looking forward for a future millennium to begin. Such a 'Catholic' hermeneutic could never be accepted by a community who believed Catholicism to be utterly corrupt and such incorrect doctrine to be highly contagious. Kelly, for example, writes 'why then waste time in the shallow fields of Germanising Praeterists . . .?'⁸⁹ In fact Kelly considered the Preterist School of interpretation to be worse than the Historicist, and regarding the correct identification of Rome as the Whore of Babylon, rejected both 'Church-Historical' and Preterist hermeneutics, stating 'there is therefore much truth in the Protestant application of the chapter, as compared with the Praeterist theory of pagan Rome. Yet it will be found

⁸⁷ Kovacs and Rowland, p. 10.

⁸⁸ Wainwright, p. 63.

⁸⁹ WK, *Lectures On The Book Of Revelation* (Rouse, 1897b), p. 183.

imperfect, for reasons which ought to be clear to unbiassed and spiritual minds'.⁹⁰ Further, Kelly comments on Preterist interpreter Bousset's entry on 'antichrist' in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica* and states that 'any preterist or historical interpretation is out of the question'.⁹¹

Thus it is clear that the Christian Brethren interpreters rejected the contemporary historical-critical approach, the 'Church-Historical' approach and the Preterist approach to interpreting the book of Revelation, although elements of each are found in later Brethren writers.

Futurist

The fourth approach to understanding Revelation is known as the Futurist School of Prophetic Interpretation. This interpretation locates, either in a consecutive or recapitulatory way, the fulfilment of prophecies from Rev. 4:1, 'things which must be hereafter', onwards in the time of the end, when antichrist will personally appear and there will be a last great apostasy. The prophecies of Rev. 4:1ff are projected into a remote age to come.⁹²

This interpretation is widely regarded as being founded by Jesuit priest Francisco Ribera (1537-1591). Futurism was a method of exegesis developed by the Jesuits as a counter response to the historicism of the Protestant Reformation which sought to place all the negative symbolism of the Apocalypse, such as 'antichrist', on the Pope and Roman Catholicism without falling into the counter-historicism of such Catholic exegetes

⁹⁰ WK, *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Acts, the Catholic Epistles and the Revelation* (1870), reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1970), p. 542.

⁹¹ WK (1908), p. 505.

⁹² Fromm, 1.89.

as Serafino da Fermo.⁹³ The Historicist account of the Apocalypse had become a form of antipapalism, a stick in the hand of the Protestant interpreters with which to beat the pope. The 'year-day' principle in association with the historicist model had also led to the historicists trying to calculate the day of the *parousia*. This was a pitfall that the futurists tried to avoid, and in doing so drew attention to such scriptures as Matt. 24:36: 'But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only', and Matt. 24:42: 'ye know not what hour your Lord doth come'.⁹⁴

Rather than antichrist being a succession of Popes throughout the ages, as held in the historicist schema, Ribera suggested that an individual antichrist would reign for three and a half years at the end of time, just before the end of the age would come. The antichrist would be an individual Jew from the tribe of Dan who would set himself up as the Messiah in the temple at Jerusalem.⁹⁵ Ribera believed Rome was mentioned in the Apocalypse but that this referred only to a final apostasy by the Jewish antichrist in Rome (not the Pope) at the end of time.

Cardinal Bellarmine (1542-1621) developed the futurist interpretation of Ribera through his vehement opposition of the 'year-day' principle that seemed so integral to the historicist framework of interpretation. Bellarmine turned his attention to the much-cited text of Ezek. 4, which was commonly used as an evidence for the principle. Bellarmine replied to the historicists that Ezekiel could not have remained on his side for 390 years as this time period was outside the life period of one man. In the same way, antichrist could not reign for 1260 literal years as this is again outside the parameters of a single man's life, and must refer symbolically to three and a half years. Antichrist must be,

⁹³ See above, p. 23.

⁹⁴ See also Mk 13:32 and Lk. 12:46.

⁹⁵ Fromm, 2.488.

therefore, an individual figure and not a millennium of papal antichristian rule, as suggested by the Protestants, as the length of his rule is in harmony with the life of an individual, not 1260 years. The antichrist would be, maintaining Ribera's view, an individual Jew, but his time had not yet arrived. Bellarmine turned to Dan. 12:11: 'And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days'. Antichrist would destroy the daily sacrament of the Roman mass, thus he would be an anti-papal figure, but this would not occur until the very last three and a half years of world history.⁹⁶

Another Jesuit scholar, Cornelius of Lapide (1567-1637), suggested that the popular Protestant identification of the pope as antichrist was ridiculous, and that if antichrist really meant 'vicar of Christ', as suggested by a number of protestant interpreters, then Peter, Paul and all the Apostles were all antichrists too.⁹⁷

Thomas Malvenda (1566-1628), a Dominican scholar, appealed to the authority of tradition, citing the church fathers such as Jerome, Cyril, Augustine, Bede and others, who were all expecting an individual Jewish antichrist to arrive on the scene just before the world ended. He also strongly resisted the Protestant penchant for using the 'year-day' principle as a method of guessing when the end would come.⁹⁸

Although, in general, futurists understand prophecy as projected into a remote age to come, some events may have occurred or may be already occurring, and as such, for some, the futurism is in some sense inaugurated. For example, Ribera, whilst maintaining a highly futuristic exegesis of Revelation, followed in the footsteps of Augustine in

⁹⁶ Newport (2000), p. 76; Kovacs and Rowland, p. 212; Fromm, 2.496-498.

⁹⁷ Fromm, 2.504.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 2.505.

suggesting that the millennium had already been inaugurated, it began with Christ's birth and extends until the last days.

The Benedictine Bishop of Rama, Charles Walsmesley writing under the pseudonym Signor Pastorini, published his *The General History of the Christian Church, from her Birth to her final triumphant State in Heaven, chiefly deduced from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle* (1771). In it he developed further the futurist view of Revelation. We read

The Book of the Apocalypse, according to that learned interpreter of the Scriptures, St. Jerom, contains an infinite number of mysteries relating to future times . . . Some modern writers hold the same opinion. Besides these authorities, our own study of that mysterious book, diligently pursued, has entirely prevailed upon us to expound the same sentiment.⁹⁹

Walmsley, although generally holding a futurist hermeneutic, believed that some events of the Apocalypse were being fulfilled in his own time and that other events were to be fulfilled imminently, thus he writes 'every Christian must take in that part of the history which relates to the present time, and to those scenes which are approaching'.¹⁰⁰ Thus although it is clear that Walmsely was a futurist, his futurism was in some sense inaugurated, that is, the future events had already begun to unfold in the present.

In the modern period futurism has become the predominant hermeneutical framework in twentieth-century North American fundamentalism. On a popular level this kind of inaugurated futurism can be seen in the multimillion selling novels by Hal Lindsey, of which *Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), the first of twelve, is probably the

⁹⁹ Signor Pastorini, [pseudo]. C. Walmsely, *The General History of the Christian Church, from her Birth to her Final Triumphant State in Heaven, Chiefly Deduced from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle* (Wigan: R. Ferguson, 1782), p. iii. Newport describes Walmsley as 'counter-historicist', although, as will become apparent, the term inaugurated futurism is perhaps a better way of describing his interpretive scheme. See Newport (2000), p. 81.

¹⁰⁰ Pastorini, p. xxiii.

most well known. Here he interprets the narrative of Revelation, according to the inaugurated futurist hermeneutic. Such events as the tension between America and Arab nations in the Middle East was seen by Lindsey as an indicator that the Apocalypse is shortly to be fulfilled. With regards to the creation of the Jewish State of Israel in 1948, Lindsey refers to the words of Jesus in Matt. 24:34: 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled'. Lindsey then comments

What generation? Obviously, in context, the generation that would see the signs -- chief among them the rebirth of Israel. A generation in the Bible is something like forty years. If this is a correct deduction, then within forty years or so of 1948, all these things could take place. Many scholars who have studied Bible prophecy all their lives believe that this is so.¹⁰¹

Regarding the nuclear capabilities of Russia and the political aspirations of Communist China, identified as the nations Gog and Magog of Rev. 20:8, Lindsey writes 'The current build-up of Russian ships in the Mediterranean serves as another significant sign of the possible nearness of Armageddon'.¹⁰² Lindsey follows Ribera, Bellarmine and Malvenda in identifying the antichrist as a discreet individual and identifies two intriguing figures who will rise up at the end time: the Antichrist and the False Prophet. One will rule over the United European Powers and the other will be found in Israel. They will make a treaty with each other and bring in a peace for a short time. Lindsey, like Ribera, believed that the antichrist would rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem: 'obstacle or no obstacle', he writes, 'it is certain that the Temple will be rebuilt. Prophecy demands it'.¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970), p. 54.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

Such 'popular' apocalyptic futurism still captures the public imagination. Currently, LaHaye and Jenkins whose *'Left Behind Series'* has spawned a movie, an official website, a clothing company and audio, video and DVD products, promote the inaugurated futuristic interpretation of the Apocalypse to an enormous fan base. Throughout the series we see events occurring with 'apocalyptic' undertones: precursors to a final and future end of time. Overall LaHaye and Jenkins paint a picture in their novels of an imminent but 'not quite yet' end of the world. The antecedents to the final end have begun to occur, but the worst awaits the reader in the future. These novels represent the most recent occurrence of the inaugurated futurist exegesis of Revelation.

The Brethren interpreters followed a Futurist method of exegesis. As has been mentioned earlier, the Brethren community divided the world up into epochs or eras, which is the heart of the dispensational view of history that they adopted. However, as will become clear in this thesis, the Brethren approach to prophecy as a whole is considerably more complicated than has been traditionally allowed. As we shall see later, the Brethren understanding of the Whore of Babylon motif in particular, introduces clear historicist elements into the exegetical methodology, hence, while futurism was in general the approach adopted, on some particular points other approaches to the book of Revelation can be seen to have had their influence. What is more, the precise details of the futurism adopted by Brethren authors were relative to their own historical context, and in places quite unique. This included a belief in the restoration of the Jewish nation, and most particularly the development of the doctrine of the secret rapture of the church. They also had a particularly nuanced version of the anti-papal identification of Babylon which will become clear in what follows.

Idealist

The final way that biblical expositors have attempted to interpret Revelation is known as the Idealist School of prophetic interpretation. This method of exegesis is also known as the Triumphalist or Symbolic interpretation. It is marginally unimportant in the context of this thesis, since it was not a method that appears to have had much impact on Brethren authors. The idealist interpretation of the Apocalypse understands the narrative as offering abiding moral and spiritual principles which are applicable in every age of the history of Christianity. The whole of the book is an allegorical and symbolic message of the struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil in the world. It describes in symbolic language the struggle between Christianity and her religious and social enemies, yet ultimately, throughout all the symbolism of oppression the book contains a message of hope; that Christ is the victor. In this understanding, the contents of the book are not seen to relate to any historical events at all, but only to symbolise the ongoing struggle between good and evil during the church age until Christ returns. Among the kinds of interpreters dealt with in this thesis idealism has never achieved the popularity of the four other schools (contemporary historical-critical, historicist, preterist and futurist).¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ On idealism see further Newport (2000), p. 15; Wainwright, pp. 13, 38, 203-211; Kovacs & Rowland pp. 28-29, 56-57, 144-145. The method goes back a long way, perhaps as early as Victorinus of Pettau (d.c. 303 CE), who in *De Fabrica Mundi* encourages the development of an allegorical and spiritual interpretation of Revelation. Tyconius also promoted an idealist interpretation of Revelation in which he focussed on the narrative as a metaphor for the relationship between Christ and the Church. See, Manlio Simonetti, *Biblical Interpretation in the Early Church: An Historical Introduction of Patristic Exegesis* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994), p. 97. The method continues to inform the work of some contemporary scholars for example, Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation After Christendom* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), p. x., p. 38; Boesak, p. 38; and Schüssler Fiorenza, *passim*.

Chapter Two

Texts and Meaning

As has been shown above one of the many ways in which the figure of Babylon has been interpreted is as a symbol of 'confusion'.¹⁰⁵ It is perhaps ironic, then, that the variety of interpretative methods which one might apply to the Apocalypse have themselves led to a great deal of confusion over the meaning of this text.

As has also been shown, there are five basic methods which have been adopted by those seeking to interpret the book of Revelation. All of which have all been put forward as the 'correct' way to interpret the text. Expositors representing each of the above hermeneutical models claim that they know the truth; that they have the key to understanding what the text really means. The implications of this are that either one method is correct and the other four are wrong, or, in some way, the variety of interpretative models means that the text is somehow flexible and open to more than one, or potentially any number, of various interpretations.

Here attention will be given to theories of interpretation and hermeneutics and to two key questions which need to be addressed: is it the author who places the meaning into the text (which the reader then needs to unlock in order to discover the meaning)? Or is it the reader who decides or imposes the meaning on the text? Seeking to address these questions will help to determine the relationship between the text of Revelation, its author and its readers. In the immediate context of this thesis such a theoretical discussion will help to determine whether Brethren readers of the text can be said to be truly involved in exegesis (that is bringing the meaning 'out' of a text) or in *eisegesis* (that is reading the meaning 'into' the text).

¹⁰⁵ See above 'Babylon in OT', pp. 7-9.

Possibly the earliest example of how words and language have been understood is known as the referential theory of meaning; a hypothesis that postulates that the meaning of a word lies in the object to which it refers. Meaning is not merely a matter of subjective perception, or even of interpretation.¹⁰⁶ Whilst the Enlightenment saw the rejection of Scripture and Tradition as sources of authority preferring experience and intellect as the basis of meaning, non-critical, non-academic, popular biblical exegesis was often still based, in the commentaries and sermons of interpreters such as the Brethren, on the referential theory of meaning. The Brethren believed that it was not only the author who had placed meaning into the text, which the reader could actually extract, but also, through the belief in the dual-authorship of scripture, that God himself had placed the meaning there.

Reader-Response Theories of Meaning

In the postmodern age the way biblical texts have been understood has radically changed. It is no longer possible for modern biblical scholars simply to believe, as did the Christian Brethren interpreters of the nineteenth century, that a text has a single fixed meaning which God placed there. One of the methodological responses to the challenge of postmodernism to traditional biblical interpretive theory, was that of reader-response theory. This approach contends that 'readers' or 'interpretative communities' are the ultimate determiners of the text's meaning and not the original author's intention in that text. Hence McKnight writes

¹⁰⁶ G.R. Evans, 'Meaning' in *A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by R.J. Coggins & J.L. Houlden (Philadelphia: Trinity Press, 1990), p. 436.

This approach [reader-response] views literature in terms of its reader's values, attitudes and responses, thus supplementing or displacing approaches to literature that focus on either the universe imitated in the work, the author, the original audience, or the work itself. The nature and role assigned the reader may vary however according to the critical theory being used and the implicit or explicit worldview of which the theory is a central part.¹⁰⁷

Reader-response theory is a postmodern hermeneutical method insofar as the notion that there is one correct meaning contained within a text is rejected. Instead it is held that texts are open to more than one meaning. Each of the hermeneutical methods of interpreting the Apocalypse sketched in above approach the text with a form of cognitive absolutism and objectivism. In other words, the interpreter takes a metaphysical stand and claims to recognise absolute truth, historically invariable and unconditioned. The contemporary historical-critical approach might reduce this interpretation to several statements, such as representatives of each epoch, or each culture, are the possessors of their own truth, yet according to reader-response theory, truth as a whole, in a postmodern world, is always open and incomplete; no one can claim that his or her hermeneutical method is exclusive.

The literature devoted to such issues is significant and no attempt to deal with it all is here made. One example is Richard Rorty's *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (1991) in which Rorty ridiculed such 'representational' truth claims - claims of objectivity or finality - as fictional 'sky hooks', and advocated an abandonment of 'the search for Truth'.¹⁰⁸ Such a position has obvious consequences for those interpreting the book of Revelation. Thus for example it would not be possible for Alcazer to assert confidently that the Preterist method of interpreting the Apocalypse is the only way to

¹⁰⁷ E.V. McKnight, 'Reader-Response Criticism', in *Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, K-Z*, ed. by J.H. Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), pp. 370-373.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991), pp. 13, 24.

unlock the truth within, or for Ribera to contend that the Futurist hermeneutic is the key to discovering the meaning of the Apocalypse. Even the historical-critical interpreters, in their endeavour to discover the meaning of the text in its historical *Sitz im Leben*, are attempting to find the mythical Archimedean place outside of the phenomenological realm and assert that their hermeneutical method is essentially the key to finding meaning.

GADAMER

The intangible and normative transcendental character of truth has been noted by H.G. Gadamer where in his analysis of the understanding of texts he suggests that in trying to understand a text, that is, in taking part in the hermeneutical exercise, we are engaging in an event or process geared towards finding truth. However Gadamer goes on to note that when we arrive at a conclusion we are, as it were, too late. The truth is transcendent, beyond our grasp, and as such Gadamer understands 'the act of understanding itself as the movement of transcendence, of moving beyond things'.¹⁰⁹ Building on K. Jaspers existentialist postmodern rejection of the Archimedean vantage point over truth, Gadamer writes 'the very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and are hence unable to have any objective knowledge of it'.¹¹⁰

One of the reasons is that the truth of particular statements always depends on the truthfulness of our own worldview which may change as frequently as the next paradigm shift in thought comes along. That is why from the hermeneutic point of view the task of understanding and interpretation which leads to meaning and truth always involves

¹⁰⁹ Hans G. Gadamer, *Truth & Method* (Sheed & Ward, 1975), p. 230.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 269.

communication and dialogue among individuals, groups and cultures.¹¹¹ Yet Gadamer also highlights the idiosyncratic and intrinsic nature of truth and meaning when he states 'all understanding is ultimately a self understanding'.¹¹² Truth, for Gadamer, has an existential and personal dimension. His semantic examination of the German verb *Verstehen*, 'to understand', uncovers its forensic origins and the original legalistic sense of the word used in asserting one's own standpoint in a law court. Therefore, Gadamer concludes, to understand is not only a dialogical process but also a personal process. Thus he suggests that a person who understands projects himself into the text according to his own possibilities and experiences.¹¹³

The importance of Gadamer's hermeneutical theory in helping us elucidate how an interpreter might read Revelation goes beyond simply highlighting the transcendental and communicative yet simultaneously existential dimension of understanding texts. He has shown how the individual's understanding occurs in a larger historical and hermeneutical context. To do this Gadamer developed the notion of 'effective historical consciousness' (*Wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewusstsein*). It is the conscious act of the fusion of old and new interpretations, past and present understandings 'the fusion of horizons' that is the task of effective history and it is through this process that one arrives at an answer of 'living value', an answer that is able to overcome the problems of hermeneutics noted above.¹¹⁴ Effectively, Gadamer is putting forward a hermeneutical approach that takes seriously and gives sufficient weight and importance to both the

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 331, 347, & 419.

¹¹² Ibid., p. 231.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 273.

variety of effects that a certain text may have had upon a tradition or individual and the multiplicity of interpretations that may have arisen within that tradition diachronically.

The starting place of understanding texts for Gadamer is found in tradition. He accords great importance to the role of tradition and prejudice (*Vorurteil*) in any interpretation. Thus, for example, Gadamer writes

It is true that the interpretation process has to start somewhere, but it does not start just anywhere. It is not really a beginning . . . the hermeneutical experience always includes the fact that the text to be understood speaks in to a situation that is determined by previous opinions.¹¹⁵

Gadamer notes that ‘the prejudices we bring with us’¹¹⁶ and the very traditions and backgrounds that we come from have an essential role to play in our understanding of texts. We cannot escape or get away from the past to read or interpret a text in a vacuum or isolation, but rather, as Warnke has noted concerning Gadamer’s work, the effect and influence of the past has a realigning effect on our understanding in the present. She writes

We find ourselves in historical and cultural traditions that hand down to us the projections or hypotheses, the prejudices, in Gadamer’s terminology . . . our understanding is oriented by the effective history or history of influences of that which we are trying to understand.¹¹⁷

Each prospective interpreter, each individual who seeks to understand and find meaning, must look to their own tradition. Each tradition has texts and works that belong to it. For the Catholic tradition this may include the Old and New Testament, the Apocrypha, the

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p. 429.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 273.

¹¹⁷ Georgia Warnke, ‘Hermeneutics, Ethics and Politics’, in Robert J. Dostal (ed.) *The Cambridge Companion to Gadamer* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 81.

work of the Church Fathers and Papal Encyclicals. For the Christian Brethren this may include the biblical scriptures as with Catholics, perhaps with a particular emphasis on prophetic parts, but involve a rejection of Apocryphal, Patristic and Papal works, perhaps replaced with some of the publications that will be examined below by their highly esteemed founders, such as Kelly and Darby.

An interpretation cannot simply involve an individual reading of a text but must include an awareness of every effect that that text has had on a tradition and the ways it has influenced the thoughts, beliefs worldviews and practice of its members. The interpretations of the texts that we read do not arise out of the idiosyncratic autonomous will of the individual but are effectively bequeathed to us as a legacy of the tradition one stands in. They are an intrinsic part of our identity. As Taylor states in his work on Gadamer 'We are part of the 'effective history' (*Wirkungsgeschichte*) of this past, and as such it has a claim on us'.¹¹⁸

If the insights Gadamer has given concerning truth and meaning are applied to the general question here of the relationship between the text and the reader, and to the specific question of the relationship between the Christian Brethren interpreters and Rev. 17-18, one might conclude that it is not possible to limit the meaning of the text to the presumed opinion of its author. We must reject the referential theory of meaning. One cannot simply say, for example, St. John meant Imperial Rome when he described Babylon, or even Papal Rome for that matter. Finding the 'real' meaning of a text is an existential act which involves both self-understanding and an awareness of our own experiences. One's history, tradition and prejudices will effect the way in which the text is approached and understood. Thus Brethren writers will understand the text specifically

¹¹⁸ C. Taylor, 'Gadamer on the Human Sciences', in Dostal (ed.) (2002), p. 142.

within the context of their own worldview, a conceptual scheme which involved seceding from the established Anglican and Roman churches as well as segregating from Non-conformist and Dissenting movements. Discovering meaning involves awareness of the relationship between the reader and the world around him.

Above all to understand fully the text we need to be aware of the 'effective history' of the text, the 'history of the interpretation' of that text and then begin to develop a new horizon which fuses together both old and new interpretations. All understanding is in itself actually interpretive and hermeneutical; 'understanding and interpretation are ultimately the same thing'.¹¹⁹ To understand fully what the author of Revelation meant by Babylon one must take into account all the ways the text has affected readers throughout time and the variety of interpretations that have been arrived at. We cannot escape the effects the past has had on our understanding of texts in the present, for as Gadamer asks 'Is it not the past which has stamped us permanently through its effective history?'¹²⁰

LUZ

The Tübingen NT scholar Ulrich Luz, in his works on Matthew, has highlighted the importance of Gadamer's 'history of effects' in the area of NT studies. As Sheppard has correctly noted Luz has 'built significantly on Gadamer's stress on the 'effective history'

¹¹⁹ Gadamer, p. 350.

¹²⁰ Hans G. Gadamer, 'The Philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer', ed. by Lewis E. Hahn, in *The Library of Living Philosophers* (Chicago: Open Court, 1997), 24.95.

of texts and reopened important questions about the role of the history of interpretation and its methodological implications for biblical scholars'.¹²¹

The first thing that Luz identifies as an important consideration in the interpretation of Biblical texts is that the reader who approaches the text can never read in an isolated or independent manner as we 'are not independent from the history of the effects of the Bible'.¹²² To explain what he means by this statement Luz uses that analogy of a small boat in a river where the unchanging water represents the biblical text, the stream represents the history of the effects of that text and the boat represents the reader. He uses this analogy to explain why a text can be open to a variety of interpretations whilst still remaining the same text according to where the reader stands in history

Interpretations change because situations and interpreters change. There is no uniquely true interpretation of a text . . . the attempt to understand a biblical text always includes a stable element, namely the text itself, and a variable element, namely, the interpreter and his or her situation.¹²³

Such an observation makes the text come to life. It is living insofar as it is moving, replicating, travelling along the stream of its own effects. The text interacts with the reader in a relational and dialogical way

The texts come from life, witness to life, and want to produce life . . . the biblical texts have a history of effects, which is the history between them and us. The history of effects . . . cannot be separated from texts, because it is an expression of the texts own power. It belongs to a text in the same way that a river flowing away from its source belongs to its source.¹²⁴

¹²¹ G.T. Sheppard, 'Biblical Interpretation in Europe in the 20th Century', in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. by D.K. McKim (Leicester: IVP, 1998), p. 417.

¹²² Ulrich Luz, *Matthew in History: Interpretation, Influence and Effects* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), p. 25.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Here Luz is borrowing and developing Gadamer's earlier metaphor in *Text and Meaning* of a moving river to describe the interplay between the openness and the closedness of hermeneutics. The act of exegesis holds the reader in tension within the boundaries of 'a continuous tradition that is already completed' a 'unified stream of historical life'.¹²⁵

Using language reminiscent of postmodern philosopher Rorty, Luz informs us that the text cannot be understood as 'an objectively confronted entity which can be scientifically investigated' but rather, maintaining the nautical analogy, he suggests 'The interpreter is like a person who must investigate the water of a river while sitting in a little boat which is carried and driven by this same river. Thus the interpreter is carried by the texts'.¹²⁶ This is where Luz begins to use and develop Gadamer's concept of *Wirkungsgeschichte*. Luz draws our attention to the usefulness of the 'History of Interpretation' in determining the original meaning of the text, yet also in a Gadamerian way simultaneously highlights the existential 'being' dimension of determining meaning, hence we read as interpreters with all our history, understanding, tradition and prejudice.

Luz writes

The history of interpretation and the history of influence are meant to help us understand how each interpreter is influenced by the text, it illuminates the prehistory of one's own preunderstanding . . . our distinctiveness- what we are- makes necessary a distinctive, situational listening to the original meaning of the text.¹²⁷

Luz does make an important and often neglected distinction between *Auslegungsgeschichte* (simply History of Interpretation) and *Wirkungsgeschichte* (History of Effects or Impact), that is, the difference between simply plotting a chart

¹²⁵ G. Figal, 'The Doing of the Thing Itself', in Dostal, R.J (ed.) (2002), p. 121.

¹²⁶ Luz (1990), p. 96.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 97.

highlighting the variety of ways that a biblical text has been interpreted and going further to suggest that the same text has had a profound effect or impact on the way that the reader has acted or behaved in real life. Luz clarifies the distinction between the two forms of interpretation by writing that by *Auslegungsgeschichte*, or 'history of interpretation' he means simply 'the history of the interpretations of a text in commentaries and other theological writings' whereas by using 'history of influence', or *Wirkungsgeschichte*, Luz means

The history, reception, and actualizing of a text in media other than the commentary, thus, e.g., in sermons, canonical law, hymnody, art, and in the actions and sufferings of the church. The history of influence and the history of interpretation are related to each other like two concentric circles so that 'history of influence' is inclusive of 'history of interpretation'.¹²⁸

Thus for Luz, Gadamer's concept of Effective History, when applied specifically to Biblical texts, is the history of the impact or influence that those texts have had on people. Such a concept raises the question, 'if a specific text were missing from the Bible, would the reader still act in the same way as he or she would after reading the text, or is it a case of simply the reader acting in a certain way then looking back into scripture to find some kind of divine authority for acting in such a way?'¹²⁹ Luz seems to think that, at least in some cases, biblical texts can and do have an effect on the reader: 'Biblical texts have a history of effects, namely, the history of the churches and their confessions after them and, through them, the whole history of the human world'.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ Luz (1990), p. 95.

¹²⁹ A Texan Snake Handler's reading of Mk 16:18 and, as Newport has suggested, the Jehovah's Witnesses' view on blood transfusions are probably safe examples of History of Effect, whereas Catholic evidence for Papal authority through reading of Mt 16:18: 'You are Peter . . . I will build my church' etc. is probably History of Interpretation. Newport (2000), p. 6.

¹³⁰ Luz (1994), p. 23.

Luz's use of *Auslegungsgeschichte* in his commentary on Matthew shows how the Gospel is a text which provides for the reader a rich source of subsequent readings, demonstrating its *Sinnpotential* or potential to effect the senses. Thus his aim is no longer to discover the literal or original meaning of the text but to demonstrate and explain the sources of the multivalency of the text and this is why he writes

The history of interpretation and the history of influence remind us of the fullness of the potential of meaning which is inherent in biblical texts. It reminds us of the fact that biblical texts do not simply have a closed, set meaning but are full of possibilities.¹³¹

RÄISÄNEN

Finnish NT professor Heikki Räisänen takes on the subtle distinction between *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte* to which Luz has drawn our attention and develops it further. He too believes that a distinction should be made between the history of effects and the history of interpretation and as such he writes 'In my opinion the decisive line should be drawn, not between reception in different media [for example in sermons, art, actions of the church etc.], but between the actual 'effectiveness' of a text and such 'reception' as does not let it be effective'.¹³² There is thus a distinct difference between an interpretation of a text that has had an effect on the interpreter and an interpretation of a text that has not had any effect on the interpreter. Although the interpreter in both instances has engaged in the same act, namely the act of exegesis, the results and outcome of that exegetical activity are in reality different. Hence Räisänen suggests that the history of reception is different to the history of effects. The deciding

¹³¹ Luz (1990), p. 98.

¹³² Heikki Räisänen, 'The 'Effective History' of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship?' in the *Scottish Journal of Theology* 45, 1992, p. 311.

factor in determining if the interpretation of a text belongs in the category of *Auslegungsgeschichte* or *Wirkungsgeschichte* is according Räsänen 'If it can be shown that a particular allegorical interpretation has actually brought about a *new* idea or a new practice, and not just legitimated an existing one, that would belong to effective history'.¹³³

Essentially Räsänen is asking 'if a specific biblical text had not been written, would the interpreter who cites such a text as the reason for his or her actions still behave in the same way'? If the answer to that question is 'yes' then that interpretation belongs to the 'history of effect'. However, if the answer is 'no', that is, rather than the text exerting an influence over the interpreter, the text is simply being used retrospectively to add validation to an action, then that interpretation belongs to the 'history of interpretation'.

Räsänen's question is raised in this thesis in a very specific way. A central concern here is 'exactly how was the Whore Of Babylon image used by the Brethren movement and did the text have any significant influence on the thought and practice of the movement'? Did the image of Babylon as a blood-thirsty whore impact the Brethren readers to such an extent that the text had an effect on how the community perceived themselves, the denominations from which they seceded, and the world around them? Or did that image simply provide a useful tool to give divine authority to doctrines of sectarianism and exclusivity that had been developed anyway, and was that motif simply used retrospectively to provide divine sanction to existing notions? It is argued here that the Brethren reading of the Babylon motif belongs both to the 'history of effects' (as seen for example in their development of the 'secret rapture of the church' doctrine) and to the

¹³³ Ibid., p. 312.

‘history of interpretation’, as seen for example in the identification of Babylon as the Papal System and ‘Worldliness’.

BOXALL

Ian Boxall explores the specific link between *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Babylon motif found in Rev. 17.¹³⁴ He examines the way that this image has been interpreted in Dürer’s woodcut of 1482, Cranach the Elder’s woodcuts which accompany Luther’s *New Testament* (1522 edn.), and Holbein the Younger’s woodcuts of 1534. He goes on to extrapolate a history of interpretation of the Babylon motif, citing the way it has been understood by Tertullian in the late second-early third century CE, by Cyprian in the third century CE, and Beatus of Liebana in the Middle Ages. However Boxall fails to make the important distinction that both Luz and Räisänen have made of the nuanced difference between *Auslegungsgeschichte* and *Wirkungsgeschichte*. He clearly sets out a whole variety of interpretations throughout history, such as, Babylon as Imperial Rome or as the world in opposition to the church and the anti-papal tradition etc. but fails to ask the question ‘if Rev. 17 were missing from the Bible, would Cranach and Holbein have created woodcuts of the Pope as a great harlot, or would Tertullian and Cyprian have warned women against wearing luxurious feminine attire’? As such Boxall’s chapter should be located not in the area of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the Whore of Babylon motif but in the area of the *Auslegungsgeschichte* of the whore of Babylon motif.

¹³⁴ Ian Boxall, ‘The Many Faces of Babylon the Great: *Wirkungsgeschichte* and the Interpretation of Revelation 17’, in Moyise, S. (ed) *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), pp. 51-68.

FISH

There are three reader-response theories that will help shed light on the specific way that interpreters within the Christian Brethren community read and understood Rev. 17-18 that will be briefly examined in the remaining section of this chapter. The first is that of Stanley Fish and his theory of 'interpretive communities'. In *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (1980) Fish argues that the most important consideration when one begins interpreting any text is that of the reader's membership of a particular institution. The same we may assume for religious texts and religious institutions which may be defined as 'interpretative communities'.¹³⁵ Such social affiliation predisposes the reader to a shared interpretation rather than the imposition of an individual subjective and idiosyncratic reading of the text. Fish's work into the role of the reader in making literature has enabled people to realise that readers do not interpret texts by self consciously trying to figure out an idiosyncratic response, but rather, that interpretation is a collective and sociological phenomenon bound within the context of communities.¹³⁶ Fish suggests that 'getting texts right is a matter of

¹³⁵ G. Graf, 'Intro to Fish, S. 'Is There a Text in this Class'' ed. by H.A. Veaser, in, *The Stanley Fish Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 38.

¹³⁶ Of course Fish is not without his critics. Criticism of Fish's work can be found in Gary A. Olson & Lynn Worsham (eds), *Postmodern Sophistry: Stanley Fish and the Critical Enterprise* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), pp. 11-26. Here Michael Berube notes that 'On theoretical grounds the term "interpretive communities" has been beset by problems at every point in its existence' p. 11, and draws reference to Iser's criticism of Fish's: 'denial of determinate meaning, the insistence on the ubiquity of interpretation, and the anti-voluntarist, strong-constructionist account of "communities" that constrain any individual's activity of interpretation' p. 17. See also Elizabeth Freund, *The Return of the Reader: Reader Response Criticism* (London: Methuen, 1987), pp. 108, 110. Freund raises the ethical problem of interpretative communities becoming 'grimly coercive' p. 110. Such criticism does not, however, weaken the central argument being made here, namely, that meaning is determined by interpretative communities and the Brethren are one such interpretive community who interpret the text within a collective and sociological context.

negotiation within a community, not arriving at the Holy Grail of the text itself or at fixed rules of interpretation'.¹³⁷

Having simply a shared language in common between author and reader is not enough to be able to understand another person; a commonality of life is needed. Fish uses the analogy of an argument with a fellow academic. If he and his peer disagree on the nature and style of a poem it is only possible because 'poem' is a 'possible label of identification' within set parameters of what counts as an identifying mark and what does not. Such observations are of direct relevance to this thesis. For example, within the Western Christian Protestant tradition, the commonly held view within that 'interpretative community' is that the Whore of Babylon is the Pope of Rome, and this view can be seen for example in Luther, Calvin, Adam Clarke, etc. and within all who belong to that interpretive community. Using Fish's social theory of language, 'Whore of Babylon' can be interpreted and understood, not because the meaning is placed there by the author John of Patmos, or because Luther or Clarke simply share a language, but because 'Whore of Babylon' is a phrase that has identifying marks of what it 'is' and what it 'is not' stipulated within a defined interpretative community.

Fish claims that 'communication only occurs within a community'. In order to argue that communication is not possible between disparate communities he suggests that there exists a radical distance between such discrete communities. It would not be enough to 'give someone "on the outside" a set of definitions' because, going back once again to Rorty's post-modern epistemological stance

An understanding that operates above or across situations- would have no place in the world even if it were available, because it is only in situations-

¹³⁷ Ibid.

with their interested specifications as to what counts as a fact, what it is possible to say, what will be heard as an argument- that one is called on to understand.¹³⁸

If an interpreter is not part of the interpretive community in which the act is done, written, spoken or uttered they have no access to its 'intention' nor can they gain 'understanding'. Thus we are sealed off from the utterances of history, bound to interpret them based on our cultural assumptions and 'prejudices', to borrow Gadamer's language, and unable to penetrate into the mindset of the past. This though is as far as the Gadamerian hermeneutic goes in Fish's work as he denies that an individual, idiosyncratic interpreter could find the meaning of the text. Rather the meaning can only be what the interpretive community understand it to be, not what the author originally intended the text to mean. As such Fish defines the 'text' simply as whatever the interpretive community says the 'text' is. Because 'the intentions of the author are unavailable and the responses of the reader too variable',¹³⁹ Fish concludes that the 'correct' interpretation

Is not constrained by something in the text, nor does it issue from an independent and arbitrary will; rather it proceeds from a collective decision as to what will count as literature, a decision that will be in force only so long as a community of readers or believers continue to abide by it.¹⁴⁰

The 'true' interpretation of the text is based on a communities shared beliefs about the world, texts, and reading behaviours. Those beliefs establish legitimate and illegitimate categories of behaviour for readers, and define unacceptable or acceptable interpretations.

¹³⁸ Stanley Fish, *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), p. 304.

¹³⁹ McKnight (1999), p. 370.

¹⁴⁰ Fish (1980), p. 11.

The Christian Brethren of the nineteenth century are one such interpretive community. As such they will find the 'true' explanation of Rev. 17-18 through their shared belief about the world, through their reading behaviour and what they themselves as a community define as acceptable and unacceptable interpretations. For a person, who dissents and secedes from a Christian tradition, to belong to the Brethren community, and in order to define themselves as 'Brethren', they must share a mutual understanding of the perceived correct and incorrect interpretations of Scripture. When a member of the Brethren community diverges on an issue of the correct interpretation of Scripture, then that individual is placing themselves outside of the boundary of 'community interpretation' or the Brethren hermeneutical circle, and the result is that they can no longer be classed as 'Brethren'. We shall see that this is not just a theory but is something that has been well documented throughout the history of the Brethren movement. In chapter four of this thesis we will see just how many times particular individuals who held onto an idiosyncratic interpretation of scripture were excommunicated or 'put out of fellowship', and left to form their own, new, sectarian Brethren group. Such a new group will be made up of like-minded individuals who hold onto a shared, yet alternative, explanation of Scripture. Similarly, in chapter seven below we shall see how 'Babylon' was used in such situations to vilify those who interpreted scripture differently to the Brethren from which they seceded.

ISER

Wolfgang Iser's phenomenological approach to reading outlined in his book *The Act of Reading* (1978) posits the inseparability of texts and their reception;¹⁴¹ the interaction between text and reader is the place where meaning is constructed.

Iser's reader-oriented theory is constructed around the concept of what he calls narrative 'gaps'. These gaps are the details, the connections, the areas of vagueness that can be found within a story. He also refers to these gaps as 'places of indeterminacy' or 'vacancies'. The task of the reader is to fill in or take up meaning from his or her own experience and place it within the gaps. He writes

What is missing from the apparently trivial scenes, the gaps arising out of the dialogue- this is what stimulates the reader into filling the blanks with projections. He is drawn in to the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said.¹⁴²

The structural needs of the text, or indeed of the author, is to fill these 'gaps'. Doing this acts as a way of the text completing itself through the reader's own experience and ensuring the reader's existential self is placed in that work. Iser writes: 'It is the gaps, the fundamental asymmetry between text and reader, that give rise to communication in the reading process . . . the interaction between persons'.¹⁴³

This dialogue, the communication between text and reader, is a symbiotic relationship where both text and reader are in some way reliant on each other, both playing integral parts in the composition of the text. The reader is reliant on the text for narrative and the text is reliant on the reader to complete it with the missing details. In

¹⁴¹ R.C. Davis, R. & Schleifer, *Contemporary Literary Criticism: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 3rd edn. (Longman, 1986), p. 158.

¹⁴² Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: JHUP, 1978), p. 168.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

this way the reader becomes absorbed or assimilated by the text. There is a flow of information from reader to text and text to reader, as Iser notes, 'the message is transmitted in two ways, in that the reader 'receives' it by composing it'.¹⁴⁴

There is no story, no matter how realistic, that can provide the number of details that would lead to such gaps disappearing altogether. Although reader and text assume similar conventions from reality, texts leave great portions unexplained to the reader, whether as gaps in the narrative or as structural limits of the text's representation of the world.

Iser states that 'one automatically seeks to relate it to contexts that are familiar',¹⁴⁵ and this is certainly true in the area of biblical exegesis and in particular the interpretation of the Apocalypse. Essentially there are three types of gaps in Revelation. The first is the gap that is created by the author failing to name, or positively identify, any of the specific motifs and symbols found there. For example John mysteriously speaks of a blood-thirsty prostitute riding on a ten horned beast in Rev. 17. However, he fails specifically to name the identity of this image, thus enticing interpreters to fill in the gaps, becoming part of the text and composing the meaning through suggesting who and what such things must be. The second type of gap found in the Apocalypse is that the author fails to give specific times when things will happen, thus in participating in the composition of the text the medieval interpreter may see the events being fulfilled in his own time and likewise the sixteenth-century interpreter will fill in the gaps and often suggest that the prophecies are being fulfilled in his own time. The final type of gap left in the text of Revelation is a failing to give specific location or place where things will happen. Thus in

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

filling in the gaps an English interpreter will ordinarily see events unfolding in England whereas an American interpreter will in general see events unfolding in America.

Understanding Revelation, then, is not like approaching a locked box awaiting a person to come along with the right key to unlock it and reveal its secrets (as perhaps interpreters in the five above schools of exegesis would suggest). Rather, according to Iser, the process of reading is a fusing together of text and imagination in an experience of continual modification analogous to one's own existential experiences in life. The study of literature, and thus by association the exegesis of Revelation, Iser concludes, tells us perhaps more about ourselves than about the books we read. In reading we discover not only alternate visions to explore, but also our own human thirst for freedom of action, ultimate understanding, and unity of experience.

HOLLAND

In his work *Five Readers Reading* (1973), Norman Holland provides another example of literary criticism in which the reader, rather than the author, plays the central role in understanding the text. However unlike Fish and Iser, Holland begins his work from a more psychological perspective. The 'five readers' in Holland's work can be defined as psychological subjects whose unconscious drives may be studied by examining their interpretations of texts for the errors of omission and commission they reveal. The text of the author itself is not the most important aspect of the reading experience, but rather the text of the readers' own interpretations of literature is the critic's true 'text'. These interpretations are read for thematic repetitions of, additions to, or subtractions from, the

literary work which reveals the reader's 'life themes', personality and grounding narrative about his or her own existence.

The meaning of a text, according to Holland, does not come from the author, but rather is determined by the type of person the reader is and the stage in life that that reader has attained:

Typically, the dynamics in any given reader's mind will not coincide with the authors processes, nor will one readers experience match another's, and even the same reader, we shall see, will respond differently at different times in his life.¹⁴⁶

Thus Holland recognises the ability to misread the text but treats it as a reader's 'symptom' rather than erroneous reading.

Holland believed that it was possible to classify every reader into archetypal groups according to their psychological makeup.¹⁴⁷ As a result he created a number of ways to test his students and determine how they responded to texts. A number of psychoanalytical personality tests were carried out on his literature undergraduates including the Rorschach personality test, which involved the interpretation of an inkblot, the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), in which a person tells a story about a picture,

¹⁴⁶ Norman Holland, *Five Readers Reading* (Yale: YUP, 1975), p. 13.

¹⁴⁷ In *Five Readers Reading* (1975), Holland comes across as somewhat dogmatic and inflexible about the five archetypal readers he identifies. Such rigidity has, of course, come under criticism in for example Andrew Bennett, *Reader's and Reading* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 44, and Freund, pp. 123, 127-128. Both criticise the validity of Holland's empirical research. Holland himself, in later years, was to become more tentative about his conclusions. In Holland, *The I* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1985), pp. 94-106, Holland reinforces the conclusions made in *Five Readers Reading* ten years previously, yet he is more cautious in that he reworks the material without insisting that the readers belong to fixed archetypal groups. Holland acknowledges here that such fixed archetypal groups were, to an extent, a result of his own desire to create a 'model that makes the person active [and] allows us to understand reading and listening and speaking more fully' yet continues to 'insist on the evidence of Sam and Sandra' p. 102. As we shall see in chapter nine, when the Brethren authors read Rev. 17-18 they reacted to the text in a psychological way which seems to simultaneously transcend two or more of Holland's reading archetypes. Whilst this adds further weight to a more cautious definition of reading archetypes it in no way undermines the central point being made here: that the meaning of a text is determined, in part, by the reader's psychological make-up.

and the COPE test, a questionnaire designed to determine an individual's defence mechanisms. The collection of this data, Holland argued, would lead determining 'feelings about gender and sexuality, attitudes towards aggression, preferred defences, sensory modes, recurring configurations, and imagery of all kinds'.¹⁴⁸

Holland concluded that there are four overarching principles that describe the inner dynamics of reading. Each reader has their own style based on the extent and nature to which these principles are present or absent in their responses. The first principle is that 'Style Seeks Itself'. What Holland means by this is that if a reader has read a story, enjoyed it, and responded in a positive way to it, then that reader will be able to identify with the work to such a degree that they place themselves in the work. The reader can become so absorbed by the text that he sees dimensions of the text in which he can 'act out his own lifestyle'.¹⁴⁹ A person who reads Revelation and finds it both absorbing and something with which they can identify, in terms of finding themselves in a place of persecution or suffering on account of their religious convictions, will become absorbed by the work to such an extent that they place themselves in the text and act out their own lifestyle according to the text. This response can be seen in the Brethren movement insofar as in seceding and segregating from their original denominations, rejecting all associations with the world and its politics. They saw their true citizenship as being in heaven and perceived themselves as discriminated against, as a result of their religious convictions, by those from whom they had seceded. The Brethren became absorbed in apocalyptic texts, such as Revelation, as these presented a picture of a rejected,

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 114.

persecuted and suffering church, for whom the world was just a temporary place of sojourn, until the future day arrives when they would be translated to heaven.

The next principle of literary experience is that 'Defences Must be Matched'. Here Holland suggests that if the reader is to engage with the text fully, the text must itself react or respond to danger or perceived threat in a way that is a reality, at least in parallel form, to the experience of the reader. Holland explains the various defence responses that an individual may use to cope with danger from a psychological stance. The important thing is that different individuals have different defences and different forms of verbal, physical and intellectual responses in fight or flight situations. Holland writes

This re-creating of one's own defences from the materials of the story becomes very delicate and unpredictable . . . for a reader to match his defences by means of elements within the story, he must be able to satisfy his ego with them at all levels . . . perceptions of the texts, even the most subtle and intellectual ones, rest on their need to match defences.¹⁵⁰

Revelation is full of predictions of danger, whether that is the danger of receiving the mark of the beast, dangers of hail, fire and brimstone, or of having one's blood drunk by the great whore. In Revelation the way that these dangers are averted is through remaining faithful, pure and uncorrupted by the social and religious evils of the world. Those who are to be defended from danger by the Lamb must not bow down and worship the beast or his statue, neither must they receive his mark or fornicate with Babylon, the Great City. Their robes must remain white, they must be unpolluted, a spotless virgin bride. As we shall see in chapter nine below, 'flight or fight' responses to reading texts will be shown to be a very important factor in the development of the 'Secret Rapture of

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 117.

the Saints' doctrine in the Brethren movement. In the book of Revelation the Brethren read of a terrifying, seductive prostitute who has become drunk on the blood of the true believers. They read also that the true believers would not be able to fight and overcome her. Applying Holland's views, therefore, they were left with only one psychological response: flight.

Holland suggests a third overarching principle of literary response, that 'Fantasy Projects Fantasies'. Once again, this involves the reader strongly identifying with a character in the text. Developing on the ideas of Feuerbach, Holland suggests that for a reader to be fully absorbed by the text he must be able to read out a 'wish-fulfilling fantasy characteristic of himself'.¹⁵¹ Rather than seeing a fantasy as trapped or placed in the text, Holland postulates that 'fantasy is not "in" the work but in the reader . . . works do not have fantasies- people do'.¹⁵² Each reader will build up a fantasy surrounding the text according to their own specific characteristics and reading styles. In Revelation, a reader who finds himself in a situation similar to that of the people described in the text might project their fantasies into the text in two ways. The first positive fantasy projection would be concerning sections of Revelation which describe the final blessing of the saints of God such as Rev. 7 and 21. Here the reader might project onto the text his or her own fantasies about desiring a better future where things will turn out all right in the end. The second projected fantasy might be a more negative one concerning the punishment and judgement of the reader's enemies, such as Rev. 12, 17-18, 20 etc. Here the reader might project onto the text his or her fantasy to see those who have caused them to suffer eternally punished.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁵² Ibid.

The final principle of literary experience that Holland identifies is termed 'Character Transforms Characteristically'. The reader will transform what he has read, through identifying himself within the work, identifying the defence mechanisms within the work as being like his own and projecting his own fantasies into the text, into an interpretation that is characteristic of him and pleasing to him. With regards to specific transformation strategies, Holland writes that individual transformation may be analogous to sublimation, that is the channelling of an individual's impulses or energies which may be regarded as socially, morally or religiously unacceptable (especially sexual desires) toward activities regarded as more socially acceptable. Perhaps this may include the prolific publication of apologetic material or the formation of a sectarian denomination, as was the case with the Brethren. Alternatively the reader might be transformed as he or she constructs meaning from the content of the text through symbolisation whereby the symbols from a highly symbolic text such as Revelation are used to represent something completely abstract in the reader's own life experience in order to give concrete and even divine meaning. In both instances the text has had some kind of transformative effect on the reader.

Conclusion

The book of Revelation is not interpreted or even approached by readers in the same way; each individual brings their own unique experience of life to the text and constructs meaning out of the text in union with their life experiences. Readers who have defence mechanisms of 'turning-on-the-self' will identify strongly with the Letter to the Churches in Rev. 2-3, who have been found guilty and await punishment. Readers who have a

defence mechanism of 'sexualising' a threat will be absorbed by the image of Babylon in Rev. 17-18; a wrathful, bloodthirsty enemy of the church, is sexualised as a whore, she is filthy and mysterious. A reader whose fantasy is violent, hostile and bloodthirsty will find a fantasy like their own to be transformed by the language of locusts, plagues and beasts. For those who perceive the world as a great mystery, the mysterious images of Revelation such as the mark of the beast, the whore, the rich symbolism and metaphors, will be particularly absorbing.

In the modern, rational, post-enlightenment age, it is impossible to believe that the original intentions and thoughts of the author can be unlocked from a text simply by finding the right key. John of Patmos speaks, but through the millennia his voice cannot be heard directly, only indirectly insofar as the reader must translate meaning from his words, from the roar of a lion to the language of a twenty-first century individual.¹⁵³ Meaning and interpretation come through belonging to an interpretative community. If one belonged to the early Brethren group and believed that the Babylon of Revelation referred to the kinds of entities which are explored later in this thesis, then because this is a common interpretation held by all the community, then for that community it is true. To accept such an interpretation is to place oneself within the community's conceptual sphere, or list of truth claims, beliefs and world-view, to hold onto a divergent interpretation is to place oneself outside the conceptual sphere of that community and thus the interpretation is wrong. It is entirely possible that different communities may hold different truth claims and interpretations, however, it is adherence to a certain

¹⁵³ To use Wittgenstein's analogy, 'if a Lion could talk, we could not understand him'. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. and ed. by G.E.M. Anscombe (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), p. 223.

interpretation that holds an individual within their distinctive community, and difference is maintained. There is a place in interpreting the Apocalypse for an individual to develop their own view, but only insofar as there occurs gaps or areas of vagueness in the text which allow an individual to co-create meaning with the author. Individuals within communities will identify with specific passages of Revelation to a greater or lesser extent depending on the level to which a specific motif, narrative and/or character absorbs the individual reader. Thus we will see a variety of different interpretations of Rev.17-18 are held simultaneously by the Brethren community because of the 'gaps' John has left in the text. A reader will find texts more absorbing when he can identify with the lifestyle of the character, when the reader's and the text's defence responses to perceived threats are similar, and when the fantasy within the text becomes the fantasy of the reader. In such cases the reader is transformed not only by the experience of the author but existentially through the actions of the character in the text. Thus throughout history Revelation has always been held as an important text by communities on the fringes of society, who perceive or experience persecution. Within mainstream Christian movements however, the Apocalypse often has less importance since they are less able to identify with the suffering Church.

Chapter Three

'Babylon' in the History of Interpretation

In the previous chapter it was shown that although many readers who engage in biblical exegesis, particularly those who adhere to a literalistic understanding of scripture, believe they can unlock the text and discover a single absolute meaning, it is not quite that simple. The historical and cultural tradition in which we locate ourselves, the community to which we belong, the enticing areas of indeterminacy or vagueness within the text and one's own psychological profile, all mean that it is the reader who determines the perceived meaning of the text and not the author of the text or the text itself.

We turn now to trace and identify the history of the interpretation of Revelation's Babylon motif in particular, and in some detail, in order to provide the broader context within which to see the Brethren writers, whose work forms the heart of this thesis. As we shall see, the Brethren authors were not the first biblical interpreters to become interested in the 'proper' application or 'true' meaning of Rev. 17-18. Many other readers of the Apocalypse have, throughout history, tried to understand and make sense of this motif. In this chapter some of those other attempts to identify the Babylon of the Apocalypse are sketched in. The survey is not exhaustive, but it is illustrative and helps us to see the Brethren in context. The survey stretches from the earliest hermeneutical efforts towards the end of the first century CE, to the start of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, which is when the Brethren interpreters began their work.

The link between early commentators on the Apocalypse and the Brethren authors may well have been direct. Brethren authors Darby, Kelly and Newton were all trained in

Classics to degree level and excelled in the reading of Latin and Greek.¹⁵⁴ Through them the views of the early Church may have been passed to others in the community. This is not to say, of course, that the views of the Fathers were necessarily held in any particular regard. ‘The tradition’ held little sway in this community. Darby’s disdain for appealing to the authority of Tradition can be seen, for example, when he writes ‘superstition and spiritual ignorance’ covered the ‘Fathers’ minds’.¹⁵⁵ Yet it is not all-negative criticism from Darby towards the authors of the Patristic era, as he writes that ‘though they misapplied it [i.e. Scripture] I believe in the substance, Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr and Nepos, and the orthodox of those days, were right’.¹⁵⁶

Kelly was by no means any less aware of the authors of the early church period than was Darby. In his work references to the views of Papias, Eusebius and Polycrates can all be found. In addition Kelly shows an awareness of other authors from the Patristic period including Athanasius, Cerinthus, Eusebius, Papias, Caius the Roman Presbyter, Origen, Dionysius of Alexandria, the Sabellians, Jerome, Augustine, Justin Martyr, Theoderet, Celsus, Porphyry, Basilides, Theophilus of Antioch,¹⁵⁷ and Clement of Alexandria.¹⁵⁸ Clearly, then, the Brethren community did have access to the views of those who had gone before, even if they would have felt under no particular obligation to accept what they there found. And it does not stop here: the same commentators show an

¹⁵⁴ See chapter four below.

¹⁵⁵ JND, ‘Miracles and Infidelity’, 32.284.

¹⁵⁶ JND, ‘Romanism: or an Answer to the Pamphlet of a Romish Priest, Entitled ‘The Law and the Testimony’’ (1870), *CW*, 34 vols. 2nd edn., ed. by William Kelly (Kingston on Thames: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.), 18.76. Darby also mentions, Papias, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Nepos, Origen, Dionysius, Victor Bishop of Rome, St Augustine, Ambrose, Cyprian, Tertullian, Montanus, Praxeas, Pope Gregory the Great, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Pope Leo in this work pp. 66-74. See also JND, ‘Evangelical Protestantism and the Biblical Studies of M. Godet’ (1875), *CW*, 23.244, 246; JND, ‘Miracles and Infidelity’, 32.275; JND, ‘Dialogues on the Essays and Reviews, No. 4, ‘Inspiration and Interpretation’’, *CW*, 9.476, 364, 367, 371, 428, for further negative references to Patristic authors.

¹⁵⁷ WK, ‘On the Millennium: A Review of the Late Bishop of Lincoln’s Two Lectures’, in *BT*, vol. N1, 1875, p. 252.

¹⁵⁸ WK (1908), p. 482.

awareness of later exegetical developments. Thus Kelly refers to ‘the Abbot Joachim’, in his *Lecture on the Book of Revelation*,¹⁵⁹ while The Waldensians and Bohemians, two groups for whom the book of Revelation was pivotal, are referred to in Miller’s *Church History*.¹⁶⁰ Darby too refers to the Waldensians and the Inquisitor Reinarius Saccho who condemned them in *The Vaudois*.¹⁶¹ Later in this chapter it will also become clear that the Brethren authors were acutely aware of the exegesis carried out in the later Reformation period by both Protestant and Catholic expositors.

Exegesis in the Period 100-400 CE

In the first epoch of the exegesis of Revelation, c.100-400 CE, Babylon appears to be commonly used as a cryptogram both for the city of Rome in particular and the Roman Empire in general. The earliest recorded use of the motif ‘Babylon’ used in this way is attributed to Papias (c. 60-130 CE), Bishop of Hierapolis. Although Papias’ five books of ‘Interpretation of the Sayings of the Lord’ is no longer extant, his views on Babylon were known by Clement (c. 153-217 CE) who, in the eighth book of his ‘Hypotyposes’, another lost book, agreed with Papias’ exegesis. Although neither of these books now exist, a summary of the lost views of Papias and Clement on the Apocalypse can be found in Eusebius’ *Church History* (3rd CE). Eusebius himself wrote with regards to the use of the term ‘Babylon’ by the apostle Peter in 1 Pet. 5:13 as a cryptogram for ‘Rome’.¹⁶² This illustrates that the reference to Babylon in the Petrine epistle was already

¹⁵⁹ WK (1897b), p. xii.

¹⁶⁰ AM, *Short Papers on Church History*, 3 vols (Wheeler, 1873-78), 2.376-397.

¹⁶¹ JND, ‘The Vaudois’ (1871), *CW*, 20.534, 536, 540.

¹⁶² The dispute over the authorship of 1-2 Peter is not relevant here. Eusebius takes it as a given that it was by the Apostle.

understood at that time to be referring to Rome rather than to geographical Babylon.

Eusebius wrote

Clement in the eighth book of his Hypotyposes gives this account, and with him agrees the bishop of Hierapolis named Papias. And Peter . . . in his first epistle which they say that he wrote in Rome itself . . . calls the city, by a figure, Babylon . . . 'The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you'.¹⁶³

Eusebius makes a clear reference here to 1 Pet. 5:13 and it is highly unlikely that this reference to Babylon implies the actual geographical Mesopotamian city of Babylon.¹⁶⁴

Along with Papias and Clement the cryptic metaphor of Rome as Babylon was developed also by Irenaeus of Lyons (c. 120-202 CE), disciple of Polycarp and Bishop of Lyons, in '*Against Heresies*'. Irenaeus began chapter twenty-six of this work with the words 'John and Daniel have predicted the dissolution and desolation of the Roman Empire which shall precede the end of the world'. He went on to explain how the Roman Empire will befall such a fate by using the language of the Apocalypse to describe the danger the Church was experiencing in his own time, using the cryptic title 'Babylon' to refer to Rome: 'they shall lay Babylon waste, and burn her with fire, and shall give their kingdom to the beast, and put the Church to flight'.¹⁶⁵ Thus a link is made between the imperial city of Rome and Babylon the Great of Rev. 17:1-18:24. Irenaeus used the metaphor again, but this time he did not explicitly identify Babylon as Rome but allowed the allusion to remain cryptic describing a city called

Babylon, haughty in the flower and pride of impiousness, and its inhabitants completely given over to sin of every description. But he, emerging from the

¹⁶³ Eusebius, 'Church History', in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 1.116.

¹⁶⁴ See above, p. 3. n. 9.

¹⁶⁵ Irenaeus, 'Against Heresies', in *ANF*, 1.555.

depth, spat out the brine of sins, and rejoiced to plunge into the sweet waters of piety.¹⁶⁶

Thus although Irenaeus did not proclaim outright that the imperial city Rome is the Babylon of Revelation, he clearly understood the plight of the Church in his own time as the fulfilment of Rev. 17:1-18:24. It is very probable, given that the terrible persecution of the martyrs of Lyons and Vienne¹⁶⁷ under the ‘good Aurelius’,¹⁶⁸ (177 CE) as he was miscalled, that it is Rome to which Irenaeus referred.

This idea that Irenaeus held, of associating the suffering of the Church in his own day and time with those who suffer in Revelation, is not unusual. In fact, as we have seen, the act of placing oneself into the text can be seen throughout the history of the exegesis of this passage.¹⁶⁹ The Christian Brethren movement of the nineteenth-century did exactly this, understanding the events of Revelation to be referring to their own *Sitz im Leben*.

Tertullian (160-c.225 CE) from Carthage in North Africa was another commentator who described Rome as the Babylon of Rev. 17-18. He wrote: ‘Babylon, in our own John, is a figure of the city Rome, as being equally great and proud of her sway, and triumphant over the saints’.¹⁷⁰ With regards to the imminent *parousia* expected in the (disputed) Pauline epistle 2 Thess. 2:1-2 Tertullian resigned himself to a long continuation of the world before the Lord’s arrival, for: ‘the very end of all things . . . is only retarded by the continuing existence of the Roman Empire . . . in praying that their [i.e. the ‘dreadful woes’] coming may be delayed, we are lending our aid to Rome’s

¹⁶⁶ Irenaeus, ‘Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus’, in *ANF*, 1.578.

¹⁶⁷ A. Cleveland Coxe, ‘Introductory Note to Irenaeus’, in *ANF*, 1.310. See also Eric Osborn, *Irenaeus of Lyons* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ A. Cleveland Coxe (1969), p. 310.

¹⁶⁹ See chapter one.

¹⁷⁰ Tertullian, ‘The Writings of Tertullian’, in *ANF*, 3.162.

duration'.¹⁷¹ Again in *'On the Pallium'*, Tertullian spoke of Rome in cryptic terms, using the imagery of the Whore of Babylon in Revelation. So, for example, Tertullian described Rome using such language as 'Prostitute' (cf. Rev. 17:1, 17:15, 17:16), dressed in 'purple and scarlet and gold and precious stones' (cf. Rev. 17:4, 18:18), as presiding over very many waters (cf. Rev. 17:1, 17:15), and cursed (cf. Rev. 16:9, 17:1, 18:8, 18:10, 18:20, 18:21, 19:2).¹⁷² Similarly he carried on the tradition of interpreting the bloodthirsty nature of the whore (cf. Rev. 17:6, 18:20, 18:24, 19:2), and blamed this Babylon for the death of the martyrs in his own time.¹⁷³

Thus Tertullian identified Babylon as a cryptogram for Rome in the same way that Papias, Clement, Eusebius and Irenaeus did, and along with Irenaeus he understood the deaths of the martyrs at the hand of Imperial Rome in his own day to be evidence for this. However, Tertullian developed the exegesis of the Apocalyptic Babylon one stage further, using it for the first time in the history of interpretation as a polemic against the world and prevailing society. Tertullian used the Babylon motif in Rev. 18:4 'Come out of her' as a call to the people of his own day to flee from decadent secular Roman society.

For state reasons, the various orders of the citizens also are crowned with laurel crowns; but the magistrates besides with golden ones, as at Athens, and at Rome . . . From so much as a dwelling in that Babylon of John's Revelation we are called away; much more then from its pomp.¹⁷⁴

The next expositor of the Apocalypse who tried to understand the image of the Whore of Babylon in Revelation was Hippolytus (c. 170-c.230 CE), bishop of Portus, then Rome,

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 3.43.

¹⁷² Tertullian, *'On the Pallium'*, in *ANF*, 4.24.

¹⁷³ Tertullian, *'The Writings of Tertullian'*, in *ANF*, 3.332. see also 3.646.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 3.101.

and disciple of Irenaeus. In his *Dogmatical and Historical Treatise on Christ and Antichrist*, we read 'Tell me, blessed John . . . what didst thou see and hear concerning Babylon? Arise, and speak; for it sent thee also into banishment'.¹⁷⁵ Hippolytus then went on to quote Rev. 17-18 and John of Patmos' description of the Great Whore. The identification of who Babylon is can be deduced from the text as 'for it' means the one who sent John 'into banishment', that is, Rome. It was, according to tradition, under the authority of Rome that the apostle John was exiled. However, Hippolytus compared the Apocalypse with OT prophecies and alluded to the spiritual connection between the Babylon of the prophet Daniel and the Rome of the apostle John's day. Hippolytus identified the Rome, of which he was Bishop, as the beast who represents the fourth and last revived Babylonian kingdom in Dan. 7:7,¹⁷⁶ and urged his reader that, although obliged to discuss 'such matters of the times', people should not be hasty and make predictions of when the end will come.

Hippolytus also identified Babylon as the 'world' in a broader, more spiritual sense. This can be seen in '*On Susannah*' where he identified Babylon as the world, stating:

Susannah prefigured the Church; and Joacim, her husband, Christ . . . And Babylon is the world; and the two elders are set forth as a figure of the two peoples that plot against the Church . . . in this world they exercise authority and rule, judging the righteous unrighteously.¹⁷⁷

This designation of Babylon as a spiritual rather than physical allusion to 'the world' can be further seen in *The Refutation of All Heresies*, and although whilst not referring to

¹⁷⁵ Hippolytus, 'The Extant Works and Fragments of Hippolytus', in *ANF*, 5.211.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.178-179, 182.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.192.

Babylon in the Apocalypse, Hippolytus still used the language of Revelation to speak of the world as the 'spiritual Babylon' through evoking such Apocalyptic allusions as 'mystery', 'evil' and 'carnal'.

We, however are spiritual, who, from the life-giving water of Euphrates, which flows through the midst of Babylon, choose our own peculiar quality as we pass through the true gate, which is the blessed Jesus. And of all men, we Christians alone are those who in the third gate celebrate the mystery, and are anointed there with the unspeakable chrism from a horn, as David (was anointed), not from an earthen vessel, he says, as (was) Saul, who held converse with the evil demon of carnal concupiscence.¹⁷⁸

Thus for Hippolytus, the tradition of identifying Rome by the cryptogram 'Babylon' that began with Papias was continued, but was also broadened to mean the world in general, a place through which the spiritual are only passing. Rome is indeed seen as a great threat to the church but is not simply identified just as the Apocalyptic Babylon figure, Hippolytus also sees Rome as being like the Danielic 'beast' terrible, powerful, exceedingly strong, devouring and destroying the church.

As we shall see later in this thesis, in the nineteenth-century the Christian Brethren engage in a form of exegesis that has a number of remarkable similarities with that of Hippolytus. They too identify Babylon in light of OT prophecy; they too understand Babylon as referring to 'worldliness'; and they too, at times, undertake both a spiritual and literal or physical exegesis of the Babylon motif.

The final commentator in this first period of exegesis that will be examined is Origen (185-254 CE). The view that Babylon referred in a metaphorical and cryptic way to the city of Rome, rather than being a physical and geographical reference, sits well with the method of exegesis developed by Origen whose hermeneutical framework was

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 'The Refutation of All Heresies', in *ANF*, 5.57-58.

based on a spiritual rather than physical interpretation of scripture. For instance, in Origen's Homily on Ex. 1 and in '*Scholia*', the '144,000' of Rev. 7:4 spiritually alludes to the 'whole church' but in commentary on 1 Jn, the '144,000' has a spiritual interpretation as meaning the first fruits of Jewish and Gentile converts'. Thus with regards to the exegesis of the Babylon motif Origen understands the prophecy concerning Babylon to refer to 'spiritual Babylonians'.

The prophecies delivered concerning Judea, and Jerusalem, and Judah, and Israel, and Jacob, not being understood by us in a carnal sense, signify certain divine mysteries, it certainly follows that those prophecies also which were delivered either concerning . . . Babylonia and the Babylonians . . . are not to be understood as spoken of that . . . which is situated on the earth, or of the earthly Babylon.¹⁷⁹

In Origen's exegesis of the Babylon motif a new interpretation developed. In *De Principiis*, above, we find that Babylon is a symbol of confused, troubled and sinful thoughts. This can be seen in Origen's interpretation of Ps. 137, in the context of which he writes

For 'the little ones' of Babylon (which signifies confusion) are those troublesome sinful thoughts which arise in the soul and he who subdues them by striking, as it were, their heads against the firm and solid strength of reason and truth, is the man who 'dasheth the little ones against the stones'.¹⁸⁰

This suggests that for Origen Babylon symbolised a sinful thought process, and that those who are Babylonians are the ones who have not used reason and truth to overcome such thoughts. For him, the correct understanding of what Babylon is can be found in Gen. 11 and the story of the tower of Babel, a place where people became 'confused' in their

¹⁷⁹ Origen, *De Principiis*, in *ANF*, 4.371-372.

¹⁸⁰ Origen, 'Origen Against Celsus', in *ANF*, 4.619-620.

thoughts and tongues for the first time. Origen's understanding of Babylon as confusion of thought is also expressed in the Brethren exegesis of the passage some sixteen hundred years later. This is not necessarily to argue for direct literary dependence on the part of the Brethren on Origen's exegesis, but simply to note what was to become a recurring theme in the exegesis of this passage. We shall see in chapter seven, that the concept of Babylon as doctrinal confusion became a very important way of interpreting the Babylon motif.

More could be said about this period of exegesis, though this is not necessary since already the main lines of interpretation seem fairly clear. For writers in this period Babylon meant Imperial Rome, and to a lesser extent Babylon referred to worldliness and confusion.¹⁸¹ As we shall see below, some Brethren writers also identified Babylon in similar ways, although their identification would be understood primarily in religious rather than political terms.¹⁸² They did, however, identify Babylon as the 'world'¹⁸³ and 'confusion'.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ See further: Athanasius, 'Circular Letter', in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 4.95, 234. The Arian and Meletian 'madmen' are 'Babylonians' and have drunk from the cup of Babylon. Marius Victorinus, 'Commentary on the Blessed John', in *ANF*, 7.352. Babylon is the Roman state responsible for the deaths of the martyrs in his own day. See also Victorinus, in *ANF*, 7.357-3588. Babylon means 'confusion' and 'names of blasphemy'. Methodius, 'The Banquet of the Ten Virgins', in *ANF*, 6.324. Babylon is voluptuousness, impurity, corruption, sensual, pretentiously distorting and degrading the scriptures, captivating, enticing and deceiving. Commodianus, 'The Instructions of Commodianus in Favour of Christian Discipline, Against the Gods of the Heathens', in *ANF*, 4.211. Babylon is a cryptogram for Imperial Rome. Theodoret, 'The Ecclesiastical History of Theoderet', in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 3.100-101. The Roman Emperor Julian Valens is identified as a Babylonian King. Addaeus the Apostle, 'Memoirs of Edessa and Ancient Syriac Documents', in *ANF*, 8.656. Babylon is the city of Satan. In *The Sibylline Oracles* (c. 3rd-5th CE) trans. by H.N. Bale (SPCK, 1918), Book 2, lines 16-21; Book 3, lines 442-445; Book 8, lines 48-109, and *The Apocalypse of Baruch*, trans. by R.H. Charles (SPCK, 1917), pp. 41, 81. Imperial Rome is Babylon.

¹⁸² See chapter five below.

¹⁸³ See chapter eight below.

¹⁸⁴ See chapter seven below.

Exegesis in the Period 400-1100 CE

The first major exegete of Revelation in this period is Augustine (354-430 CE) in whose voluminous writings there are to be found a number of attempts to provide an exegesis of the Babylon motif in Revelation. For example, in *Confessions* we read of the author's awareness of Babylon as something unpleasant where he uses the language of John of Patmos to describe her. She is filthy (cf. Rev.17:4), seductive (cf. Rev.18:3,9) and something from which to flee (cf. Rev.18:4).

I walked the streets of Babylon. I wallowed in its mire . . . the unseen enemy trod me underfoot and enticed me to himself because I was an easy prey for his seductions . . . my mother . . . had by now escaped the centre of Babylon.¹⁸⁵

Further treatment of the motif can be seen in *City of God* where Augustine explores the 'city of earth' and links it with Babylon the Great City of Revelation. The first thing that we can ascertain from *City of God* is that the city of the earth is Babylon: a city of confusion.¹⁸⁶ The source of confusion experienced in Babylon is highlighted as the speaking of falsehood mixed with some truth regarding doctrine, which Augustine describes as 'contradictory errors', however as of yet Augustine has not given any positive identification as to who Babylon is

Even if some true things were said in it, yet falsehoods were uttered with the same license; so that such a city has not amiss received the title of the mystic Babylon. For Babylon means confusion, as we remember we have already explained. Nor does it matter to the devil, its king, how they wrangle among themselves in contradictory errors.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ Augustine, *Confessions* (1961), book 2, p. 46.

¹⁸⁶ Augustine, 'City of God', trans. by Marcus Dods, in *NPNF*, 1st series, 2.312, 354. See also, Augustine, 'On the Catechising of the Uninstructed', trans. by S.D.F. Salmon, in *NPNF*, 1st series, 3.305. Augustine, 'Exposition on the Book of Psalms', ed. by A. Cleveland Coxe, in *NPNF*, 1st series, 8.268, 269.

¹⁸⁷ Augustine, 'City of God', in *NPNF*, 1st series, 2.385.

The king of Babylon is identified by Augustine as Satan and sometimes referred to as Lucifer

‘How he is fallen from heaven, Lucifer, son of the morning!’ and the other statements of the context which, under the figure of the king of Babylon, are made about the same person, are of course to be understood of the devil.¹⁸⁸

Augustine makes the first direct identification of who Babylon is in chapter two of *City of God*. He is quite clear that the Babylon that he has been describing, a place of confusion and lies mixed with half-truths, a place that is ruled by the devil whose inhabitants are the enemy of the church. This Babylon is Rome.¹⁸⁹ In another place we find an apparent reference to Rev. 18:4, ‘Come out of her’, as he writes

Men must fly out of the midst of Babylon . . . this prophetic precept is to be understood spiritually in this sense . . . we must flee out of the city of this world, which is altogether a society of ungodly angels and men.¹⁹⁰

Augustine was not alone in his age. For John Chrysostom (c. 347-407CE) the antitypical harlot who seduces the Church is not Babylon but Egypt. However, Chrysostom does identify Babylon as the fiery trial that every believer must resist in order to remain chaste and pure before the Lord and something that the believer must, in the language of Rev. 18:4, ‘come out of’ and ‘flee from’.¹⁹¹ Chrysostom sees the world in which he and the church live as a ‘spiritual’ Babylon and that, whether or not his contemporaries realise it, they are subject to a ‘spiritual’ captivity akin to the captivity that the Jews underwent

¹⁸⁸ Augustine, ‘On Christian Doctrine’, trans. by J.F. Shaw, in *NPNF*, 1st series, 2.573. Augustine, ‘Exposition on the Book of Psalms’, 8.153, 252.

¹⁸⁹ Augustine, ‘City of God’, 2.362, 372.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.369. See also, Augustine, ‘On the Catechising of the Uninstructed’, 3.295. Augustine, ‘Exposition on the Book of Psalms’, 8.213.

¹⁹¹ John Chrysostom, ‘Homilies on the Gospel of St John’, trans. by Philip Schaff, in *NPNF*, 1st series, 14.239.

during their physical captivity in Babylon.¹⁹² Chrysostom stresses the importance of coming out of this Babylonish captivity and further reiterates the hidden, mysterious nature of the spiritual captivity that weakens the Christian who is caught unaware. However, the full force of captivity has not yet arrived. It is in some way an eschatological event at the end of this world, yet the nature of this eschatological captivity is not clear. It could be a move from spiritual bondage into physical bondage or simply an increase in the level and intensity of the spiritual captivity

‘Out of weakness were made strong’. Here he alludes to what took place at their return from Babylon. For ‘out of weakness’, is out of captivity . . . But to us, some one says, ‘no such thing has happened’. But these are figures of ‘the things to come’.¹⁹³

The Brethren authors from the nineteenth-century onwards held a similar understanding of what it meant to ‘come out’ of Babylonian captivity. They too, like Chrsyostom, believed that such a call to ‘come out’ referred to the Church of their own time having nothing to do with the seductions of the world.

Jerome (c.340-420 CE), in *Lives of Illustrious Men*, written in Bethlehem towards the end of his life, used Babylon as a cryptogram for Rome. Not only is he aware of this use of Babylon by Clemens and Papias,¹⁹⁴ but he too, like Origen and Augustine, makes reference to Babylon as a symbol of confused doctrine and heretical interpretation of apostolic teaching. In particular the heresy espoused by Rufinus is identified as Babylonian:

¹⁹² John Chrysostom, ‘Homilies on the Epistle to the Hebrews’, trans. by Philip Schaff, in *NPNF*, 1st series, 14.485.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 14.488.

¹⁹⁴ Jerome, ‘Lives of Illustrious Men’, trans. by Ernest C. Richardson, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 3.364.

You alone have the privilege of translating the venom of the heretics, and of making all nations drink a draught from the cup of Babylon. You may correct the Latin Scriptures from the Greek and may deliver to the Churches to read something different from what they received from the Apostles.¹⁹⁵

There a number of letters from Jerome in which he discusses the Babylon of Revelation. For example, in his letter to Asella we read: 'Pray for me that, after Babylon, I may see Jerusalem once more'.¹⁹⁶ Jerome is probably referring to a 'spiritual' Babylon and a 'spiritual' Jerusalem here as they have a juxtaposed relationship in Revelation and are seen as antitheses. Although it is possible that he is referring to literal Babylon and literal Jerusalem in this letter, this is unlikely, for the text would refer to him returning to his home in Rome not Jerusalem. In another letter, maintaining the use of Babylon as a cryptogram for the city of Rome, and vilifying the decadence and worldly corruption of that city he writes

Read the apocalypse of John, and consider what is sung therein of the woman arrayed in purple . . . of Babylon. 'Come out of her, my people' . . . It is true that Rome has a holy church . . . [and] a true confession of Christ . . . But the display, power, and size of the city, the seeing and the being seen, the paying and the receiving of visits, the alternate flattery and detraction, talking and listening, as well as the necessity of facing so great a throng even when one is least in the mood to do so — all these things are alike foreign to the principles and fatal to the repose of the monastic life.¹⁹⁷

To 'come out' of Babylon is then, for Jerome, only fulfilled when one takes up the monastic life. Jerome uses the image of Babylon in Revelation as a warning to women to

¹⁹⁵ Jerome, 'Jerome's Apology in Answer to Rufinus', in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 3.532. For further examples where Jerome explicitly links Babylon with confusion see also, Jerome, 'The Principle Works of St Jerome', trans. by W. H. Fremantle, in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 6.9, 266, 274.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.60.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 6.64.

stay away from worldly and fleshly activities. Thus for example in his letter to Laeta he sends out the warning:

Prevent her from drinking of the golden cup of Babylon . . . keep her from going out with Dinah to see the daughters of a strange land . . . save her from the tripping dance and from the trailing robe? No one administers drugs till he has rubbed the rim of the cup with honey; so, the better to deceive us, vice puts on the mien and the semblance of virtue.¹⁹⁸

This emphasis on ‘worldliness’ is found also in the Brethren writers as shall be seen in chapter eight, where the Brethren use the Babylon motif to vilify the world; the ‘secular other’, in order to define the ‘self’.

Cappadocian Father, Gregory of Nyssa (d.c. 385 CE) built on the concept of Babylon as a metaphor for doctrinal confusion. Those who adhere to doctrinal heresy are described by Gregory as ‘carried away captive to Babylon from Jerusalem that is above, — that is from the Church of God to this confusion of pernicious doctrines, — for Babylon means ‘confusion’.¹⁹⁹

Gregory again speaks of heresy by using the image of Babylon, this time linking the death of Melitius of Antioch, the president of the first council of Nicea, and his leadership in the war against heretical teaching, with the loss of the one who will guide the church through the waters of Babylon, that is, through confused and heretical doctrine.²⁰⁰ The idea that Babylon may be a metaphor for heretical teaching was to become a very important notion in the writings of the Christian Brethren in the nineteenth-century. As is shown in chapter seven of this thesis, Darby and the Exclusives developed a coherent doctrine based on the contagious or contaminating effect of

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 6.194.

¹⁹⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, ‘Against Eunomius’, trans. by H.C. Ogle, in *NPNF*, 5.222-223.

²⁰⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, ‘Oratorical: On Melitius’, trans. by H.A. Wilson, in *NPNF*, 5.516.

heretical teaching through a novel application of the Whore of Babylon motif, in order to define who was 'in' and who was 'out' of the Brethren on an epistemological level.

Gregory Nazianzen, c.325-389, another of the Cappadocian Fathers, continues in this vein of using Babylon to describe doctrinal confusion, he writes of

The Sacred Night, the Anniversary of the confused darkness of the present life, into which the primeval darkness is dissolved, and all things come into life and rank and form, and that which was chaos is reduced to order . . . the children of Babylon dashed against the rocks and destroyed . . . the removal of leaven; that is, of the old and sour wickedness . . . or relic of Pharisaic or ungodly teaching.²⁰¹

Ambrose (b.c.340-d.397 CE), bishop of Milan, continued the growing hermeneutical tendency to use Babylon as a metaphor for doctrinal confusion and a love for heretical teaching in his own writings, stating of

The daughter of Babylon . . . 'Blessed is he who shall take thy little ones and dash them against the rock'. That is to say, shall dash all corrupt and filthy thoughts against Christ . . . if any one is seized by an adulterous love, to extinguish the fire, that he may by his zeal put away the love of a harlot, and deny himself that he may gain Christ.²⁰²

Yet we also see that Ambrose understood Babylon in the same way as some of his other predecessors as being a symbol of worldliness and lustfulness, thus he writes

The snares of Babylon, that is, of the tumult of this world, are to be likened to stories of old-time lust, that seemed upon this life's rocky shores to sing some tuneful song, but deadly withal, to catch the souls of youth.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Gregory Nazianzen, 'Select Orations', in *NPNF*, 2nd Series, 7.428.

²⁰² Ambrose, 'On Repentance', in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 10.358.

²⁰³ Ambrose, 'On the Christian Faith', in *NPNF*, 2nd series, 10.242-243.

It would be easy enough to extend this list of interpreters who similarly looked to 'Babylon' as an image of all that the true church and Christian should not be. Andreas of Caesarea (c. 6th CE),²⁰⁴ the anonymous *Apocalypse of Daniel* (9th CE),²⁰⁵ and Remigius, Bishop of Lyons (d.c. 875 CE)²⁰⁶ all interpreted Babylon in one way or another inline with the unfolding hermeneutical schema. However, little is perhaps to be gained by extending the list here. Rather, we note the main point that has already been adequately documented in the work of the authors cited above. It is this: that worldliness and confusion are beginning to take over from Imperial Rome as the main interpretations of Babylon in the second period of exegesis here examined. Brethren authors were able to combine all of the above.

Exegesis in the Period 1100-1800 CE

Much has been written about the specific methods of interpretation the visionary Calabrian monastic Abbot Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202 CE) used to read the book of Revelation.²⁰⁷ Here we are concerned only with his understanding of Revelation's 'Babylon'.

Joachim's unique contribution to the history of the exegesis of the Babylon motif was through his juxtaposing of two different Babylons to fit in with his proto-dispensational recapitulatory method of interpreting scripture. According to Joachim, in

²⁰⁴ Andreas of Caesarea in Wainwright (1993), p. 45. Babylon is something worldly.

²⁰⁵ 'Apocalypse of Daniel' ed. and trans. G.T. Zervos, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, J.H. 2 vols. (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), pp. 764-766, 3:13, 6:2, 6:10, the Empress Irene is the whore, Constantine V is the fornicating king.

²⁰⁶ Remegius, '*Libellus de tribus epistolis*', in McCracken, G.E. & Cabaniss, A. (eds.), *Early Medieval Theology*, 4.175. Remegius identifies Babylon as, 'the whole city of the world'.

²⁰⁷ See the numerous works on Joachim by Marjorie Reeves and in particular her classic study, now reissued as, Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages: A Study in Joachimism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000). In addition the work of Bernard McGinn, *The Calabrian Abbott* (New York: Macmillan, 1985), and bibliography, is important here.

the second dispensation or status, from the time of king Josiah through to Christ, there was an entity known as 'Old Babylon', the historical enemy of God's people, yet in the present status, the third dispensation, which began with Saint Benedict and will continue till the end of the world, there will arise a New Babylon, who will be the persecutor of the monastic order and the faithful.²⁰⁸

In the *Liber Figurarum*, a series of Apocalyptic diagrams drawn by Joachim c.1202, we see Babylon portrayed in both these ways. The 'Earlier Table of Concords' (Old Testament Half),²⁰⁹ in which a stylised diagram of a tree is used to show seven subjects that are represented in both Old and New Testaments, we see, on the left, the 'striking of the first Babylon'. On the right of the illumination, the 'Later Tables of Concords' (New Testament Half),²¹⁰ we see the 'striking of the new Babylon'. This image describes the two parallel destructions of Babylon, one, occurring in the sixth division of the first age when the Jews returned from the literal Babylon upon Malachi's death, the other, with the sixth seal of Revelation in the third age, which in Joachim's own day referred to the 'striking' of the 'New Babylon'.²¹¹

In the *Liber Figurarum*, we see another diagram of a tree which Reeves and Hirsch-Reid title, *Babylon/Rome figure (Old Dispensation)*.²¹² Here Joachim shows Babylon as 'the Mother of fornication' and links her with Adam, perhaps in order to contrast the original or first sin, with the final or last form of sin. The next tree figurae,

²⁰⁸ Reeves & Hirsch-Reich, pp. 142-152, Reeves (1999), pp. 1, 14, 23, Judith Kovacs & Christopher Rowland, *Revelation* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), p. 192.

²⁰⁹ Joachim, *Earlier Table of Concords (Old Testament Half)*, from the *Liber Figurarum*, MS. Oxford, C.C.C. 255A, f. fv. In Reeves & Hirsch-Reich (1972), Plate 10.

²¹⁰ Joachim, *Later Table of Concords (New Testament Half)*, from the *Liber Figurarum*, MS. Oxford, C.C.C. 255A, f. fv. In Reeves & Hirsch-Reich (1972), Plate 11.

²¹¹ Reeves & Hirsch Reich (1972), p. 134.

²¹² Joachim, *Babylon/Rome figure (Old Dispensation)*, from the *Liber Figurarum*, MS. Oxford, C.C.C. 255A, f. 15v. In Reeves & Hirsch-Reich (1972), Plate 23.

titled *Babylon/Rome figure (New Dispensation)*,²¹³ was created to warn against ‘trusting in earthly apotheosis’ yet also to give comfort to those who ‘had descended into Babylon’.²¹⁴ Of this New Babylon Joachim writes that in the future a *Novus Rex Babilonis* will arise to persecute the church and lead the last great Pope, *summus pontifex*, along with the church, into captivity.²¹⁵

Although it may be said of Joachim in general terms that Babylon represents any force ‘in opposition to the Church of St. Peter’²¹⁶ this opposition takes two main forms. The first form of Babylonian opposition to the Church that Joachim identifies is that of the worldly or ‘reprobate’ Christians of Rome,²¹⁷ that is, those who comprise the carnal church in contrast to the spiritual church. The true Church, the *sacrum ecclesia sancte mysterium*²¹⁸ or the *sancte miris ecclesia*, is juxtaposed against the Great Whore Babylon, the *novus dux de babylone*,²¹⁹ that which Joachim describes as being made up of, the *ecclesia cum generali multitudine reproborum*,²²⁰ or the evil members of the Church. It is to warn the faithful of such evil members of Babylon within the Church that Joachim writes a *Letter to the Faithful*, in which we read that the apostate children have not remained faithful to the Church and have abandoned ‘the bosom of the Chaste Mother . . .

²¹³ Joachim, *Babylon/Rome figure (New Dispensation)*, from the *Liber Figurarum*, MS. Oxford, C.C.C. 255A, f. 16r. In Reeves & Hirsch-Reich (1972), Plate 25.

²¹⁴ Reeves & Hirsch-Reich (1972), p. 191.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 295. Joachim consistently identified the Roman Empire with Old Babylon, the persecutor of the Church, and simultaneously expected a New Rome symbolised by a New Babylon to arise during the opening of the sixth seal to persecute the church. For further examples see, Reeves & Hirsch Reich (1972), pp. 114-116, 184-191; McGinn (1985), p. 67. Reeves (1999), p. 14. West & Zimdars-Swartz (1983), pp. 22-24; Froom 1.701-702.

²¹⁶ West & Swartz, p. 24.

²¹⁷ Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, fols. 194 r. 195 r. 198 r., in Froom, 1.708-710.

²¹⁸ Reeves & Hirsch-Reich, p. 251.

²¹⁹ Joachim, *Liber Concordia Novi et Veteris Testamenti* (Venice, 1519), p. 56. See also, Joachim, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, fols. 189 vb., and 193r-194r. in McGinn (1985), p. 152, for Joachim’s remarks about evil simoniacal bishops and unholy clergy and monks.

²²⁰ Reeves & Hirsch-Reich, p. 149.

and preferred the Whore who rules over the kings of the earth . . . the kings of the earth will assemble against you, daughter of Babylon'.²²¹

The other main form of opposition to the church that Joachim identifies as Babylonian is that of the German Empire. It is in Henry VI of the *Hohenstaufen* dynasty, King of Germany and Holy Roman Emperor 1190-1197 CE, that we find Joachim's final identification of Babylon,²²² for he writes *Lucifur rexit Rex alius in babylone . . . Henrici . . . intracitis questionibus angustatur ecclesia.*²²³

Joachim's dispensational world-view can be seen in the apocalyptic diagram of the Seven Headed Dragon. He annotated the diagram: 'Just as the old Babylon was struck under the sixth seal, so the new one will be pierced under the present sixth opening'.²²⁴ McGinn suggests that this refers to the abbot's parallel or recapitulatory understanding of 'the victory of Cyrus over Babylon in the sixth age of the Old Testament with the coming defeat of the German empire at the hand of the revived sixth head allied with the seventh'.²²⁵ Just as OT prophecy foretold the coming of Cyrus, the Messiah,²²⁶ to destroy the Babylonian kingdom Joachim believed that NT prophecy foretold that Henry VI and his Babylonian German kingdom would be destroyed in the present dispensation.²²⁷

²²¹ Joachim, 'Letter to the Faithful', in McGinn (1979), pp. 114-115.

²²² Joachim, *Liber Concordia Novi et Veteris Testamenti* (Venice, 1519), p. 52. See also McGinn (1985), p. 152. Reeves (1999), p. 23.

²²³ Joachim, *Liber Concordia Novi et Veteris Testamenti* (Venice, 1519), p. 56. 'The Devil directs the King, the one in the midst of Babylon . . . Henry . . . provokes complaining and choking inside the church'.

²²⁴ Joachim, *Liber Figurarum*, 'The Fourteenth Table, The Seven-Headed Dragon,' in McGinn, B. (trans. & intro.) & Reeves, M. (pref.) *Apocalyptic Spirituality: Treatises and Letter of Lactantius, Adso of Montier-en-der, Joachim of Fiore, The Franciscan Spirituals, Savonarola* (New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 138.

²²⁵ Joachim, *Liber Figurarum* in McGinn (1979), p. 295. n.16.

²²⁶ See Isaiah 44:28, 45, 46:11.

²²⁷ On this point history proved Joachim to be wrong. Henry VI died in the height of his power in 1197. Whilst Germany was divided by rival kings, Henry's son Frederick II, made Sicily and southern Italy (which included Calabria, Joachim's place of domicile), the seat of his power.

The Christian Brethren, who began writing some six hundred years after Joachim, interpreted Babylon in a number of ways that had a remarkable similarity to the Calabrian Abbot showing again the enduring yet flexible afterlife of this biblical image. The Christian Brethren, like Joachim found in the motif of Babylon a symbol of worldliness within the church.²²⁸ Some Brethren authors, like Joachim, identified Babylon as secular ungodly authority (albeit either British and European rather than specifically German). However, unlike Joachim, the Brethren saw little or no godliness within the Roman church and little or no chance for the system itself to 'come out of her', only for individuals to leave her captivity.

Joachim was not the only person who began to interpret the Whore of Babylon motif in this time period, as not referring only to Imperial or Pagan Rome, but as referring to Papal, Catholic Rome. The Waldensians, a movement that began towards the end of the twelfth-century in Lyons and spread rapidly through the Languedoc and Piedmont into Central and Eastern Europe, identified the Pope as the Whore and the Church of Rome as the Beast on which the Whore rides.²²⁹ One indication of this is found in the work of Dominican Inquisitor Rainier Sacchoni, the author of 'Treatise on the Cathars and Waldensians' (1250), in which he published a catalogue of the doctrinal errors held by the Poor Men of Lyons, or Waldensians as they are more frequently referred to.²³⁰ The treatise reveals that the Waldensians identified the Catholic Church as

²²⁸ See chapters five-nine below.

²²⁹ Froom, 1.877-879.

²³⁰ Gabriel Audisio, *The Waldensian Dissent: Persecution and Survival c. 1170-1570* (Cambridge: CUP, 1999), p. 10.

the Whore of Babylon: 'They say that the Roman Church is a church of evil, the beast and the harlot which are found in the book of Revelations'.²³¹

The Albigensians, also known as the Cathars, were a heretical sect that flourished in southern France in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, which adhered to a number of dualistic Gnostic and Manichaean beliefs.²³² They too identified the Catholic Church in light of their exegesis of Rev. 17-18, understanding that church to be 'a den of thieves and the harlot spoken of in the book of Revelation',²³³ and that the 'Roman church is the Devil's church and her doctrines are those of the demons, she is the Babylon whom St. John called the mother of fornication'.²³⁴

It is clear enough, then, that in the work both of Joachim, Waldensians and the Albigensians that the symbol of Babylon was now being applied very directly to refer to the Church of Rome rather than just Imperial Rome. The change in interpretation reflected the change in the *Sitz im Leben* of the interpreter. Imperial Rome had now long gone, and since her fall in 476CE, Papal Rome had become not only a powerful religious force, but also a formidable political power. Whilst successive Popes had crowned successive kings as Holy Roman Emperor from 800-1806CE in return for their protection, the European Renaissance of the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries sought to revive and imitate the Classical era, of which Imperial Rome was the culmination. It was

²³¹ Rainier Sacchoni, 'Treatise on the Cathars and Waldensians' (1250), in R.I. Moore, *The Birth of Popular Heresy* (Edward Arnold, 1975), p. 145.

²³² See W.A. Sibly & M.D. Sibly, *The History of the Albigensian Crusade* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), p. xxxiii.

²³³ Peter of les Vaux-de-Cernay, *Historia Albigensis, or The History of the Albigensian Crusade*, trans. by W.A. & M.D. Sibly (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), p. 12.

²³⁴ Joseph R. Strayer, *The Albigensian Crusades* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1992), p. 22. See also, Jaques Madaule, *The Albigensian Crusade, An Historical Essay*, trans. by Barbara Wall (New York: Fordham University Press, 1967), p. 31. J.C.L. Simonde de Sismondi, *History of the Crusades Against the Albigenses, in the Thirteenth Century* (Wightman & Camp, 1826), p. 7.

perhaps inevitable that the symbol of Babylon which, as we have already seen had begun to be applied to the Roman Church in particular, should prove a particularly effective weapon in the arsenal of the emerging Protestant movement.

Perhaps the most famous character from this period is that of Martin Luther (1483-1546CE). Luther's treatise on the *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* (1520) was a sustained attack on the bondage in which the church had been held by Catholicism. In making this attack Luther used the image of Babylon as the enemy and captor of the true church.²³⁵

Surprisingly, in *A Treatise on Goods Works* (1520) Luther extols his reader to pray and offer intercession for those who have ecclesiastical authority in the Catholic Church. In the treatise he draws an analogy from Jeremiah's exhortation to pray for the king of Babylon, and thus again makes a link between Babylon and the Roman Catholic Church. Luther writes 'those who belong to the parish or bishopric . . . pray for the city and land of Babylon, because in the peace thereof they should have peace'.²³⁶ Likewise, Luther urges his reader to pray for the government, temporal power and authority. Such authority should not be lied to, neither should it be cursed, for no matter how unjust the secular authority appears, its power is only temporal and cannot destroy the eternal soul. In this way, Luther suggests that the injustice of the governmental authority of his own day is like the injustice the people of Israel suffered at the hands of the King of Babylon:

²³⁵ Martin Luther, 'Babylonian Captivity of the Church' (1520), trans. by A.T.W. Steinhauser, in *Luther's Works*, 55 vols, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan & Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 36.3-126.

²³⁶ Martin Luther, 'A Treatise on Goods Works' (1520), trans. by C.M. Jacobs, in *Luther's Works* 55 vols. ed. by J. Atkinson & H. T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1966), 44.64-65.

‘even if the government does injustice, as the King of Babylon did to the people of Israel, yet God would have it obeyed, without treachery and deception’.²³⁷

Continuing with *A Treatise on Goods Works* Luther explains, in line with the tradition of interpretation that began with Augustine (which is hardly surprising given that Luther was himself an Augustinian), that the image of ‘the little ones of Babylon’ (Ps. 137) symbolically referred to evil lust, thoughts and adultery. These sinful compulsions can be ‘dashed on the rock’ which is Christ, and overcome through prayer and God’s mercy. He does not however link these ‘Little ones of Babylon’ with confused heretical doctrine as Augustine does. He writes

When evil lust stirs let a man flee to prayer, call upon God’s mercy and help, read and meditate on the Gospel, and in it consider Christ’s sufferings. Thus says Psalm 137 . . . ‘taketh and dasheth the little ones of Babylon against the rock’, that is, if the heart runs to the Lord Christ with its evil thoughts while they are yet young and just beginning; for Christ is a Rock, on which they are ground to powder and come to naught.²³⁸

Although Protestant Reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) did not write a commentary on Revelation he was, however, an important and influential person in the Reformation. His *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) were widely distributed and read throughout Europe, and he too, like his contemporary Luther and their protesting predecessors of the thirteenth century, identified the Roman Catholic Church rather than the Roman Imperial Empire as the Apocalyptic whore. He writes of Papal Rome

What is it at the present day that the world venerates in its horned bishops unless that it imagines those who are seen presiding over celebrated cities to be holy prelates of religion? . . . God alone knows who are his . . . his own people were dispersed and concealed amidst errors and darkness, he saved

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Ibid., 44.105.

them from destruction. No wonder; for he knew how to preserve them even in the confusion of Babylon'.²³⁹

In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* Calvin uses language reminiscent of Luther's description of the captivity of the true Church in *Babylonian Captivity of the Church* through employing a comparison between the Reformers and ancient Israel, both of which were subjugated at the hand of Babylon: 'God the Redeemer, who was not only to bring back the people from Babylonish captivity, but restore the Church, and make her completely perfect'.²⁴⁰

Calvin specifically identifies the Pope as Babylon, a wicked and abominable character, profane, cruel, evil and poisonous. We read of the 'Roman Pontiff' and his 'wicked and abominable kingdom' full of 'evil and deadly doctrines like poisoned potions' a place which presents 'the appearance of Babylon rather than the holy city of God'.²⁴¹ For Calvin the Catholic Church as a system is only a pseudo-church, a pretend temple of God, devoid of the truth of God. It is for this reason that Calvin suggests

In this way the Romanists assail us in the present day, and terrify the unskilful with the name of Church while they are the deadly adversaries of Christ. Therefore, although they exhibit a temple, a priesthood, and other similar masks, the empty glare by which they dazzle the eyes of the simple should not move us in the least to admit that there is a Church where the word of God appears not . . . Nay, Jerusalem is to be distinguished from Babylon, the Church of Christ from a conspiracy of Satan, by the discriminating test which our Saviour has applied to them.²⁴²

²³⁹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. by Henry Beveridge, 4 vols (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 1.19-20.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.180.

²⁴¹ Calvin (1846), 3.55.

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 3.48.

Many other authors and artists interpreted the Whore of Babylon motif found in Rev. 17-18 during the Reformation period as either the Pope, individually or as Roman Catholicism, corporately. Thus Boxall refers to an 'Anti-Papal Tradition' developing in this time period as part of his work on the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of this passage.²⁴³ From lists many other authors in the Reformation period who identified Papal Rome as the Great Whore, including, Melancthon, Lucas Cranach, Osiander, Funck, Flaciu. He writes that 'The Christian Church . . . this unchaste, figurative woman was guilty of spiritual adultery with her lovers . . . she was denominated a 'harlot' or 'whore'. These terms were frequently employed'.²⁴⁴

The Christian Brethren were well aware of the Protestant Reformers and their methods of biblical exegesis. Darby states in a very complimentary manner

I see in Luther an energy of faith for which millions of souls ought to be thankful to God, and I can certainly say I am. I may see a clearness and recognition of the authority of scripture in Calvin, which delivered him and those he taught (yet more than Luther) from the corruptions and superstitions which had overwhelmed Christendom.²⁴⁵

In like manner, Kelly informs us that Luther was 'a man known for the wonderful work God gave him to do'.²⁴⁶ Brethren author Edward Dennett observed in the Reforming work of Luther an anti-Papal purpose: 'God, in His sovereign grace, used Luther to recover, in measure, this precious truth from the corruptions of Popery'.²⁴⁷ T.B. Baines,

²⁴³ Boxall, in *Moyise*, p. 63.

²⁴⁴ From, 2.241-464.

²⁴⁵ JND, 'The Sufferings of Christ', in *BT*, vol. 2, 1858-1859, p. 205.

²⁴⁶ WK, 'Jonah' in *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Minor Prophets* (Broom, 1871b) p. 206. See also AM, *CH*, 2.570-571; GVW, *A Letter*, London, March 8th 1846, p. 3; WT, 'The Millennial Reign of Christ, and the Universal Blessing Of The Earth, Connected with the Restoration of the Jews', Lecture 4 of 8 in *LP*, pp. 114-115.

²⁴⁷ ED, *Recovered Truths: Being Letters to Certain Believers*, 4th edn. (Broom & Rouse, 1885), p. 8. JND mentions specific individual Reformers in 36 further publications. WK names the major Reformers in a

speaking specifically in the language of Rev. 18:4, writes of Luther: 'The horrible mass of corruption in the professing Church in the days of Luther compelled him and all who cared for God's glory to come out'.²⁴⁸

Clearly the Brethren authors were aware not only of what these Protestant Reformers had achieved on a historical level, but also their methods of biblical exegesis and hermeneutics and the way that they interpreted the Babylon motif.

Moving onward into the eighteenth century, the religious identification of Babylon has moved from being understood as the religion of Pagan Rome, to being understood as Papal Rome, and then for the first time as referring to all forms of corrupt, violent and worldly Christianity.

John Wesley, 1703-1791 CE, an important figure in the eighteenth-century Evangelical revival and the primary founder of Methodism, saw the figure of the Apocalyptic Babylon all around him in the form of Christians who act in a violent persecuting manner towards other Christians:

See how *these Christians* love one another! These Christian kingdoms, that are tearing out each other's bowels, desolating one another with fire and sword . . . that bear the name of Christ . . . and wage continual war with each other! that convert sinners by burning them alive! that are 'drunk with the blood of the saints!' Does this praise belong only to 'Babylon the Great, the mother of harlots . . .?' Nay, verily; but Reformed Churches (so called) have fairly learned to tread in her steps. Protestant Churches too know to persecute, when they have power in their hands, even unto blood.²⁴⁹

further 45 publications. GVW in a further 7 publications and ED in a further 7 publications. Clearly they were acutely aware of Reformation hermeneutics.

²⁴⁸ TBB, 'The Church of God', Section 3 of *The Lord's Coming, Israel, and the Church*, 4th edn. (Broom, 1881), p. 394.

²⁴⁹ John Wesley, *The Works of John Wesley*, ed. by Albert C. Outler (Nashville: Abingdon, 1984), 1.507-508.

Wesley speaks of Babylon as symbolic of the type of idolatry experienced by the Protestant Church and also links Babylonian idolatry with Roman Catholic idolatry; the worship of created things of gold and silver, however, he does not see this kind of idolatry as the primary threat to the dissenting church of his time. The main type of idolatry is quite simply in not giving one's heart to God. The 'gross Idolatry' that 'entangled' the Israelites during their Babylonish captivity . . . is likened to the 'idols that are now worshipped in the Church of Rome' Wesley concludes that: 'whatever takes our heart from him, or shares it with him, is an idol; or, in other words, whatever we seek happiness in independent of God'.²⁵⁰

Exegesis at the Start of the Nineteenth Century

The survey presented above is indicative rather than exhaustive but it does give a sense at least of the very broad tradition that the Brethren writers inherited (and it is worth noting again that the Brethren writers with which we are here concerned were well-read in much of the literature that has been cited).

As we arrive at the start of the nineteenth century, less than thirty years away from the formation of the Brethren movement, we find that the interpretation of Rev. 17-18 was still an important concern for those engaged in Biblical exegesis. On the one hand the historical-critical school which developed in Tübingen Germany began to interpret the text in light of its original *Sitz im Leben*, whereas on the other hand, popular exegesis grew exponentially with Prophetic Schools meeting to discuss the meaning of Revelation, such as the Powerscourt and Albury conferences, the London Missionary Society, the

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 1.103-104.

Society for the Investigation of Prophecy.²⁵¹ All provided opportunities for the popular discussion of all kinds of Apocalyptic symbolism. Something in the region of one hundred important books appeared on the premillennial advent and the interpretation of prophecy in the first four decades of the nineteenth century.²⁵²

Thus, in light of such increased study and discussion on all things prophetic at this time, it is indeed fair to see the start of the nineteenth century as a time of significant increase in the study of apocalyptic scriptures. Froom suggests this rise in popularity developed from a 'definite conviction that mankind has entered a new epoch- the era of the last things, the time of the end'.²⁵³ Weber on the other hand takes a more sociological approach listing sightings of Comets, erupting volcanoes, the Great Reform Act of 1832 and the production of penny handbills and broadsheets as reasons for such an increase in things prophetic.²⁵⁴

Perhaps this increase in apocalyptic interest was due in part to the French Revolution, an event which 'encouraged English evangelicals to study the signs of the times, and Catholic emancipation stirred again the Apocalyptic mysteries'.²⁵⁵ Thus, in reaction to this event, in 1795 Richard Brothers wrote that the Revolution was a sign from God of imminent judgment. He states 'The British government's support of the French monarchy made London a latter-day Babylon'.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ See for example, Crawford Gribben & Timothy C.F. Stunt (eds), *Prisoners of Hope? Aspects of Evangelical Millennialism in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1880* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004).

²⁵² Froom, 3.266.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 3.263.

²⁵⁴ Eugene Weber, *Apocalypses: Prophecies, Cults, and Millennial Belief Throughout the Ages* (Hutchinson, 1999), pp. 119-121.

²⁵⁵ Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, 3rd edn. (A&C Black, 1971), 1.36.

²⁵⁶ Brothers, R. 'A Revealed Knowledge of the Prophecies and Times' (1794-1795), in Gribben, & Stunt (2004), pp. 9-10.

Such increase in prophetic study was also due in part to the Cholera epidemic which reached England from the continent in 1831 killing some estimated 50,000 people. Many saw this disease as a judgement of God upon the nation in an evil hour. Chadwick notes: 'There were cries to close theatres and ballrooms, to destroy card tables, to remedy breaches in keeping the Sabbath'.²⁵⁷ It was not only religious fanatics that looked for such 'signs of the times', but many educated, wealthy and political men too. For example writing during a time of European cholera infection, Lord George Montague Mandeville, during the 1829 Albury Prophetic conference, continued in the anti-papal tradition when he 'declared the Papacy to be the Apocalyptic Babylon from which the Continental Society urged Europeans to depart',²⁵⁸ and William Wilberforce (1759-1833), campaigner against slavery, held a 'literal belief in the prophecies concerning the premillennial return of Christ to usher in the millennium in a darkening world' and a 'fierce hatred of Roman Catholicism and of the papacy as the Beast and Scarlet Woman of the Book of Revelation'.²⁵⁹

For Edward Irving, founder of the Catholic Apostolic Church, in this time of pestilence and plague, all of Christendom had failed to maintain faithfulness to God, every denomination was guilty of the sins of Babylon. God was in the process, through Irving's charismatic movement of 'redeeming his church out of the captivity of Babylon'.²⁶⁰ Whereas Scottish Presbyterian Andrew Bonar writing in 1839, uniquely

²⁵⁷ Chadwick, 1.36, also Coad, pp. 43-44.

²⁵⁸ Montague, G. 'Proceedings' 1829, p. 28. In Gribben & Stunt (2004), p. 146.

²⁵⁹ E. Norman, 'Church and State since 1800', in *A History of Religion in Britain*, ed. by Gilley, S. & Sheils, W.J. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 296.

²⁶⁰ Edward Irving, 'An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse' (1832), p. 284, in Gribben & Stunt (2004), p. 120.

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²⁶⁰ Edward Irving, 'An Interpretation of the Fourteenth Chapter of the Apocalypse' (1832), p. 284, in Gribben & Stunt (2004), p. 120.

identifies Paris as 'the streets of that Great city', her sin was a political one, being subject to Roman Catholic authority.²⁶¹

Thus we have arrived at the time of the formation of the Brethren movement with some 1,700 years of exegesis of the Whore of Babylon motif to hand. The next chapter of this thesis will examine the formation of the Brethren movement before we go on to the archival section of the thesis which will examine specific Brethren exegesis of the Whore of Babylon motif.

²⁶¹ Andrew A. Bonar, & McCheyne, R.M. 'Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839', 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: n.p. 1842), pp. 47-48, 293. in Gribben, & Stunt (2004), p. 187. See also, Andrew A. Bonar, *The Development of Antichrist*, 1853 (repub. Chelmsford: SGAT, n.d.), p. 71.

Chapter Four

History of the Christian Brethren Movement

After tracing the history of the interpretation of the Babylon motif, from the first century and through to the early nineteenth century, we arrive at the place in history in which the Christian Brethren interpreters began their work, that is, the first quarter of the nineteenth century. In this chapter the *Sitz im Leben* of the Christian Brethren is determined through an examination of the history of the movement, and a discussion of its principle ideas and doctrines (in particular ecclesiology and eschatology). This will enable us to find the place in which the new movement stands within the stream of interpretation that went before them.

Such an historical overview of the movement will facilitate both an understanding of the history of the movement generally and the unique stories of the individual authors specifically, thus enabling us to understand why and how their biblical exegesis developed according to the social and historical factors they experienced. Biblical exegesis does not arise simply out of the interplay between text and reader in a vacuous and closed environment, but is informed and influenced by every social, cultural, historical, emotional and religious experience that the reader has had. Identifying such sociological factors will shed light on how, and perhaps more importantly why, individual Brethren authors interpret texts the way they do. Given these sociological and historical considerations Rev. 18:4 became highly important to Brethren interpreters.

Founding Fathers

The history of the Christian Brethren movement is the history of a group that began with the aim of seeking unity, commonality and inclusiveness- a pan-denominational 'pure' church within the broader Christian tradition. It ended with separation, exclusivity and sectarian division. In 1829 in a room at nine Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin, Ireland, five young men disillusioned with the distance to which their own denominations had diverged from the simplicity of the NT early church model, shared communion.²⁶² Their desire was to find a way in which they could come together in a simple act of worship and communion regardless of individual denominational affiliation or tradition. They came from the established Protestant and Catholic Churches as well as from the Non-conformist groups and Dissenters. Some were members of the clergy others the laity. All were educated and wealthy upper class Victorians.²⁶³ The group desired to be ecumenical, non-denominational and inclusive of all who called themselves Christian in their sharing of the Lord's Supper, an act of devotion that they believed could transcend the fractured and fragmented Churches of their day and bring true Christian unity. It was to this shared sentiment of unity that this group opened the invitation to 'break bread' to all who would come rather than to those who held adherence to any particular creed or doctrinal belief.

Within only one year, the group had grown in number, attracting other small groups who, in like manner, were meeting in other homes throughout Dublin, and as they grew, they began to meet in a public hall in Augnier Street, Dublin. Just one year later, in

²⁶² Francis Hutchinson, JGB, JND, Brooke and Dr Edward Cronin (A Roman Catholic convert) joined forces with another small house group which included William Stokes and Lord Congleton (J.V. Parnell) in 1830 shortly before moving to the larger public premises in Augnier Street. See F. Roy Coad, *A History of The Brethren Movement: Its Origins, Its Worldwide Development and its Significance for the Present Day*, 2nd edn. (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1976), pp. 29-30.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

1831, Providence chapel was founded in Plymouth, England²⁶⁴ and during the next ten years (1832-42) the movement spread geographically out from England's West Country into London, the North of England and even into parts of Europe. Churches were opened in Bristol, Torquay, Bath, Salcombe, Islington, Tottenham, Hereford, Stafford, Kendal, Hull, Geneva, Vaud and Stuttgart.

The movement continued to grow and by the time of the Religious Census of 1851 we find that on Sunday 30th March 1851 there were in England and Wales 7,272 Christian Brethren attending chapel services. Although this seems an insignificant figure when compared to population 27,533,755, it can be put in perspective when one considers that Anglican Church attendance on that day came to 5,292,551 combined for morning, afternoon and evening services,²⁶⁵ merely 20% of the English and Welsh population, and that the census also revealed that 5,500,000, people attended no church at all.²⁶⁶ Brethren attendance at the time of the census was over twice the number of Irving's Catholic Apostolic Church, which numbered 3077 people on that Sunday and was founded in 1831, roughly the same time as the Brethren Movement, and half the amount (14,363) of the Quaker 'Society of Friends' founded in 1660 nearly two hundred years earlier.²⁶⁷ One does need to take into account however with such statistics the specific problem of the Brethren not wishing to be labelled as a denomination or church *per se* as well as the more general and well-known problems of the census.²⁶⁸ Social-religious

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 308.

²⁶⁵ R.P. Flindall (ed) *The Church of England 1815-1948, A Documentary History* (SPCK, 1972), p. 131.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁶⁷ Chadwick (1971), pp. 36 & 430.

²⁶⁸ David M. Thompson, 'The Religious Census of 1851', in Richard Lawton (ed) *The Census and Social Structure: An Interpretive Guide to Nineteenth Century Censuses for England and Wales* (Frank Cass, 1978), pp. 247-249. Thompson notes that the main problem with the religious census relates to the incompleteness of the returns. Because enumerators were asked to seek out every place of worship in their district it seems likely that some smaller places of worship (such as meeting rooms) would have been

historians Embley and Wilson accept these statistics as more or less accurate believing the morning attendances recorded on the Census Returns to give a fair guide of the actual membership of Brethren meetings.²⁶⁹ By 1880, just over fifty years on from those first house meetings in Dublin, there were believed to be some 750 congregations established in the United Kingdom, 101 in Canada, ninety-one in the USA, 189 in Germany, 146 in France and scattered congregations throughout some twenty-two other countries. Brethren publishers in London printed some eleven monthly journals with an estimate readership of 40-50,000 people.²⁷⁰

There were a number of important factors for this rapid growth and proliferation, the first and most important being the influence of leading figures involved in doctrinal teaching and leadership. Although the community to this day strongly reject any formal ministry or clergy, it is clear that there have always been a number of dominant personalities in the movement who have been influential. These characters were able to impress their insights upon the ordinary members who looked to them as spiritual guides through their 'sheer personal charisma' and this was, according to Embley, the most important factor for the growth and spread of the Brethren Movement.²⁷¹

missed. Moreover, many forms were only partially completed and thus out of 34,467 completed forms, 2,524 contained no information about sittings and 1,394 contained no information about attendance. However, in compiling the published tables the census authorities attempted to overcome this problem by estimating both the total attendance and the number of sittings. See also Peter L. Embley, *The Origins and Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Cambridge 1967b), p. 11, who states that 'the Returns of the 1851 Census of Religious Worship in England and Wales are essential sources for estimating the distribution and numerical strength of Brethren meetings shortly after the schism of 1848 . . . Those who completed the Returns on behalf of the meetings only rarely described the congregations as 'Plymouth Brethren', and often felt obliged to register a special protest in the 'Remarks' column against accepting any denominational title'.

²⁶⁹ See also Peter L. Embley, 'The Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren', in Bryan Wilson (ed) *Patterns of Sectarianism* (Heinemann, 1967a), p. 213.

²⁷⁰ Coad (1976), p. 209., quoting AM, *The Brethren: A Brief Sketch of their Origin, Progress and Testimony* (c.1880), p. 163.

²⁷¹ Embley (1967a), p. 217.

It is somewhat paradoxical that the publication of Henry Pickering's *Chief among Brethren* (1931), a comprehensive list of the prominent men who joined and had an influence on the formation of the movement in its early years, places the words 'Chief' and 'Brethren' next to each other in the title. This publication illustrates that although ideologically the Brethren rejected formal authority, which led to a clergy-laity divide, in practice and reality human ambition is the arch foe of egalitarian brotherhood and theistic government, thus the individual chapels and congregations increasingly looked to their charismatic founders to provide authoritative church government and leadership.

It is important to mention at this stage, before any examination of individual Brethren authors is undertaken, something about the potential for 'use' of scripture within such a sociologically sectarian group. As will become clear throughout their history the Brethren became increasingly exclusive and more sectarian concerning who was 'in' and who was 'out' of the community. Such a factor promoted an increasingly sectarian use of scripture as the group sought to give divine authority and credence to their numerous excommunications, schisms and segregations. The Whore of Babylon was a text that was used by the Brethren to define the 'self' by vilifying the 'other'. As we shall see in what follows, the Brethren authors levelled the accusation of being 'Babylon' upon all those from who they wished to distinguish themselves, on a religious, epistemological and secular level.

It is something of a tradition within Brethren historical writings to begin with John Nelson Darby. Darby, the godson of Lord Nelson, was educated at Trinity College Dublin where he read law, and later became an Anglican curate in county Wicklow, Ireland. He was one of the original five that met at nine Fitzwilliam Square. Darby began

tirelessly to spread his message first of all throughout the UK, then into Europe. He was involved in the foundation of the first Dublin congregation, the Raleigh Street chapel in Plymouth, and congregations in Geneva and Vaud in Switzerland. His untiring and energetic itinerant preaching tours led to a geographical spread of the movement.

Darby was a prolific writer and had an essential role in developing doctrine through his many publications. The anti-establishment polemical tone of his first publication *On The Nature and Unity of the Church* (1829) was to flavour the tenor of all his subsequent writings. In particular, from quite an early time, Darby began to develop a 'doctrine of contamination' a belief that doctrinal heresy could be transmitted from one believer to another through fellowship (if the heretical member was not put out of fellowship the purity of the whole community would suffer), which became a fundamental factor in the Exclusive split and the movement towards sectarianism that followed it. Again the image of 'Babylon' was a useful motif on which to draw in this context.

Darby's influence was fundamental and lasting to the extent that in effect he became the leader of a movement that denied it had a leader, for: 'The real authority lay in effect with Darby'.²⁷² His influence on the movement was so significant that it lasted far beyond his years or his own Exclusive Brethren community: 'Without understanding the driving forces of Darby's personality we cannot understand, even today, the nature of many of the currents which run beneath the surface of the diverse expressions of the movement'.²⁷³ Such an individual, it will be seen, was able to exert a tremendously strong influence over the identity, beliefs and practices of the nascent Brethren

²⁷² Ibid., p. 242.

²⁷³ Coad (1976), p. 109. N.B. The various sub-sects of the Brethren movement will be discussed below in the remainder of this chapter.

movement. His exegesis of Rev. 17-18 played a fundamental role in not only defining the movement but also influencing the exegesis of the next generation of Brethren authors.

Benjamin Wills Newton (1807-1899) met Darby in Oxford 1830. A Fellow of Exeter college and a gifted academic, he was born into the Quaker tradition but had become a practising Anglican by the time of his early adulthood. A dissenting fire was lit in Newton after hearing his friend and mentor Henry Bulteel preach a radical sermon at the University Church on the 6th Feb 1831. During this sermon Bulteel rejected the authority of the Established churches and resigned from his curacy to begin a career preaching in the Non-conformist congregations. However, Newton became repelled by the accompanying practice of charismatic gifts such as *glossolalia* and healings, which he associated with the Irvingite movement. Thus Newton returned with Darby to his hometown of Plymouth in 1831, leaving Oxford, academia, and his affiliation to the Church of England behind. Newton was the first leader of Providence chapel in Plymouth, which was one of the most flourishing Brethren chapels at that time, a testimony and demonstration of his skills of leadership and persuasive manner. As far as his influence on doctrinal development is concerned Newton was 'more of an intellectual than almost anyone among the Brethren'.²⁷⁴ Even after his excommunication his influence remained in part through his so-called 'theological censorship' of the *Christian Witness Journal*.²⁷⁵ Newton was indeed one of the movements most brilliant teachers²⁷⁶ as well as a prolific writer, and his many publications still exert an enduring influence to this day over students of millennialist prophecy through the reprinting and dissemination efforts of Sovereign Grace Advent Testimony publishers.

²⁷⁴ Embley (1967a), p. 228.

²⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 229.

²⁷⁶ Coad (1976) p. 153.

Newton's exegesis of the Babylon motif differed vastly from that of Darby. The two early driving forces in the Brethren community differed significantly in their exegesis of Babylon on two levels. Firstly for Darby Babylon was predominantly a spiritual entity whereas for Newton she was predominantly a physical entity.²⁷⁷ Secondly for Darby Babylon's destruction would occur after the church had been 'raptured', whereas for Newton her destruction would occur before the *parousia* and the rapture of the church.²⁷⁸ The difference in emphasis continued into Darby and Newton's Christological disagreements. Newton placed more of an emphasis on Christ's humanity and less emphasis on the supernatural dimension of Christ existence, suggesting that throughout the whole thirty-three years of Christ's life he had experienced real physical human suffering as a consequence of being born both fully human and a Jew.²⁷⁹ He did not deny that Christ was divine, but merely emphasised his humanity and suffering,²⁸⁰ and that as Christ was born a Jew, a descendant of Adam, although sinless, was accredited with vicarious guilt or Adam's guilt.²⁸¹ Darby responded by emphasising the sinless divine nature of Christ, suggesting that if Christ had been in such a position that he himself would be classed a sinner in need of salvation.²⁸²

The same difference occurred in the ecclesiology of the two early Brethren leaders. Newton's ecclesiological approach to the Plymouth Ebrington Street chapel,

²⁷⁷ See chapter eight below.

²⁷⁸ See chapter nine below. For a detailed analysis of Darby and Newton's disagreement on the timing of the rapture see Jonathan D. Burnham, *A Story of Conflict: The Controversial Relationship Between Benjamin Wills Newton and John Nelson Darby* (Bletchley, Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), pp. 155-157.

²⁷⁹ J.L.H., *The Sufferings of Christ as set forth in a Lecture on Psalm VI* [by B.W.N.] *Considered by J.L. Harris* (Campbell, 1847), pp. 6-10, 24-37.

²⁸⁰ B.W.N. *Observation on a Tract Entitled, 'The Sufferings of Christ as set forth in a Lecture on Psalm VI', Considered* (Campbell, 1847), pp. 11-12, 20-21, 49-50.

²⁸¹ B.W.N., 'Doctrines of the Church in Newman Street Considered', in *ChW*, 2nd edn., of 1835 vol. (1838), p. 112.

²⁸² J.N.D., 'Observations on a Tract Entitled, 'Remarks on the Sufferings of the Lord Jesus.' A Letter Addressed to Certain Brethren and Sisters in Christ by Mr. B.W. Newton' (1847), *CW*, 15.63.

which had grown to some eight-hundred members under his leadership, was one that, although rejecting formal ordination, required a formal organised structure of ruling elders, prearranged primary teachers preaching on a platform and a strict order imposed on worship.²⁸³ Darby's ecclesiology was, in contrast, much more impulsive, supernatural, spiritual and divinely led. For Darby the church's hopes and promises were spiritual and heavenly, not earthly and human. This led him to develop an impulsive theory of ministry, whereby the service was led entirely by the Holy Spirit rather than by pastors or elders; the earthly church was far too corrupt to be led by men.²⁸⁴

William Kelly (1821-1906) was, like Darby, a graduate of Trinity College Dublin where he read Classics.²⁸⁵ He first met Darby in 1845, only a year before the damaging schisms of the 1846 Exclusive/Open break and the 1848 Bethesda division, and thus remained untainted by the painful events of earlier years. His skill as a Church leader was immense; within the Exclusive movement he was a 'prominent leader'²⁸⁶ and the most 'erudite' of Darby's followers.²⁸⁷ His theological and doctrinal influence was vast, and as a man of 'deep learning' he became the 'chief interpreter of Darby's theology'.²⁸⁸ His publications included '*The Prospect*' 1849-1850, '*The Bible Treasury*' 1856- 1906, '*The Christian Annotator*' and he collated and edited '*The Collected Works of Darby*'. He

²⁸³ See BWN, *Answers to Questions on the Propriety of Leaving the Church of England* (Wertheimer, 1841), pp. 10-14. Also JND, 'Narrative of the Facts Concerned With the Separation of the Writer From the Congregation Meeting in Ebrington Street' (1846), *CW*, 20.32-34, 20, 23, 29. Darby notes that Newton stopped public prayers, impulsive hymn singing and prayer and that a discourse was prepared prior to the service.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 24. Regarding 'ministry' Darby writes, 'I trust Brethren will seek nothing but the guidance of God's blessed Spirit'.

²⁸⁵ Edwin N. Cross, *Irish Saint and Scholar: A Biography of William Kelly* (Chapter Two, 2004), p. 14.

²⁸⁶ Coad (1976), p. 74.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 210.

penned some 300 commentaries on every book of the Bible along with numerous other books, pamphlets and tracts, and translated the NT from Greek into English.

Of these publications nearly one hundred contain comments on 'Babylon'. As we shall see later, Kelly did not interpret Babylon simply in just one way. He held a multilevel and layered understanding of the text. This enabled him to understand Babylon on a religious level as Roman Catholicism and all of the major denominations of Christendom, on an epistemological level as the source of heretical doctrine and confusion, on a secular level as worldly behaviour and on an eschatological level as the event which immediately follows the rapture of the saints.

Kelly led the 1881 schismatic Exclusive Kelly division, which was the opposing faction to Darby's Exclusive division, thus becoming the leader of his own Brethren sect bearing his name. In the following chapters it will become clear that Kelly 'used' the Babylon motif to give a scriptural basis to his increasingly sectarian tendencies.

It is often quoted that Spurgeon remarked that Kelly had 'a mind made for the universe, but narrowed by Darbyism',²⁸⁹ yet Kelly was of the opinion that Darby's foundations were certainly worthy of building on, and thus he disseminated and popularised 'Darbyite' doctrine to a wide audience through his vast publication record of his own work and through his compilation of Darby's *Collected Works*. In this way Kelly helped maintain and strengthen Darbyite Exclusive Brethrenism into the twentieth century. It is little wonder then that with such an illustrious track record, Kelly has been

²⁸⁹ Cross (2004), p. 7.

labelled 'the greatest of all the Exclusives'²⁹⁰ and that he was regarded as 'second only to Mr Darby in knowledge of the Truth, and first in ability to state it clearly'.²⁹¹

Financial Factors

The second significant reason for the rapid growth of the movement was through the financial giving of wealthy members who, whether through business or birth, were rich enough to pay for the construction of churches and chapels. The nineteenth century ushered in a time of financial prosperity in England with agricultural and industrial accomplishments, both at home and throughout the colonial empire, enriching trade with Europe and the United States of America. It was a time when 'Victorian Middle class philanthropy, munificence of the nouveau riche, and the moral earnestness of the aristocracy provided the capital to erect churches'.²⁹² Many wealthy Victorians, already attracted to numerous nineteenth-century evangelical awakenings, became members of the Brethren movement and gave their financial backing to the building and purchase of the movement's own places of worship.

It must be stressed at this juncture that the Brethren, like many sectarian groups with a high interest in apocalyptic sections of scripture during that time period, originated as much from within intellectual circles as they did from more humble origins. Garrett has convincingly demonstrated that the end of the eighteenth and start of the nineteenth century was a time when discussion regarding the identity of the Beast and the Whore

²⁹⁰ Coad (1976), p. 210.

²⁹¹ Cross (2004), p. 12.

²⁹² Flindall, p. 4.

was a 'respectable' pursuit of the wealthy, titled and privileged classes.²⁹³ Such an interest in the prophetic was not merely the pursuit of the uneducated, poor and underprivileged people, whose desire for a better world to come was fuelled by hardship in this one, but was a particular preoccupation of the intelligentsia and wealthy people throughout Europe. It will become clear that many of the key figures in the Brethren movement were educated to a very high standard, and many seceded to the movement from a place of financial security. The Brethren did not offer a Christianity based on mere 'wish-fulfilment' of a better world to come for those who could find no amelioration in this life, but offered a internally cohesive and intelligent, albeit uncritical, hermeneutical alternative to that which the Established churches offered.

The first character that played an important role in the development of the movement during its early years through finance was Henry Drummond: banker, wealthy Tory M.P. and 'generous supporter of evangelical enterprise'.²⁹⁴ He was not a Brethren member but a member of the Catholic Apostolic Church led by Irving. However, his conferences of 1826-1830, which were convened annually for the study of biblical prophecy, became an excellent opportunity for the early Brethren members to meet like-minded individuals, often clergy, who were attracted to Prophetic study and ready to secede from the Established churches. These Conferences were held at Albury Park, Drummond's countryseat six miles east of Guildford, and nearly half of the forty evangelicals who attended the first of them were clergymen of the Established church. Drummond became known as 'the Banker of the New Doctrine',²⁹⁵ and whilst the

²⁹³ Clarke Garrett, *Respectable Folly: Millenarians and the French Revolution in France and England* (Baltimore: JHUP, 1975), pp. 6-9, 225.

²⁹⁴ Coad (1976), p. 71.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

Irvingite and Darbyite followers viewed each other at best with suspicion, he was responsible for the dissemination of Brethren ideals in an age without internet, television and telephones through facilitating this melting pot of dissenting minds.

Whilst the Exclusive Brethren such as Kelly, Wigram and Mackintosh would come to identify the Irvingites as 'Babylon',²⁹⁶ Drummond's influence on the formation of the very group that came to deride him as 'Babylonian' cannot be dismissed as his home provided the fertile soil in which some peculiarly Brethren doctrines would grow into internally coherent doctrinal systems.²⁹⁷

Lady Theodosia Powerscourt (1800-1836) was not a member of the new Brethren movement, although she had attended some of those earliest meetings in Augnier Street, Dublin and even contemplated marriage to Darby. Her untimely death occurred before Brethren ideology had coalesced into a solid well-defined movement. However, after attending Drummond's Albury Conferences on prophecy, she opened her Irish mansion, Powerscourt House, near Bray for a series of Prophetic Truth Conferences which ran from 1830-1833.²⁹⁸ Powerscourt had been overwhelmed by the sense that Christ was soon to return, thus, she invited the group to her family mansion to discuss unfulfilled prophecy and the signs of the times. Subjects like the meaning of 1260 days of Dan. 12:11 and Rev. 11:3, 12:6 and the question of whether the saints are to suffer in the last days were discussed at her home. Discussion also was centred on dissenting themes, such as 'Is it the present duty to resist or endure corrupt Institutions?'²⁹⁹ These conferences were immensely popular and it has been noted that they were attended by significant

²⁹⁶ See chapter six below.

²⁹⁷ The role of Albury Park in the formation of the Secret Rapture of the Church doctrine will be discussed in more detail in chapter nine below.

²⁹⁸ Froom, 4.422, suggests 1830, others sources suggest 1831, e.g. Harold H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren, 1825-1850* (Pickering & Inglis, 1967), p. 88.

²⁹⁹ Rowdon (1967), p. 88. The relevance of this theme will become clear in chapter eight below.

numbers of interdenominational participants³⁰⁰ and it was here that Darby met Groves and Parnell (Lord Congleton), thus providing a platform for the earliest members to meet likeminded, influential people and thereby facilitate the growth of the movement. Darby, Bellett, Craik, Newton, Müller, Wigram all attended these conferences, as did Irving and the radical evangelical rector Daly.³⁰¹

Lady Powerscourt was clearly intrigued by prophetic scriptures, not only insofar as she opened her home for the discussion of such theories, but in that she discusses prophecy in a number of her personal letters, and indeed mentions Babylon in a number of them,³⁰² the exegesis of which will be discussed in the following chapters.

George Vicesmus Wigram (1805-1879) was a close friend of Newton at Oxford and he too decided to secede from the Established Church after hearing Bulteel's fiery sermon of 1831.³⁰³ He was an eccentric character who was prodigal with his wealth, using his financial resources to purchase a disused chapel on Providence Road, Plymouth,³⁰⁴ which was to become the flagship Brethren congregation of the mid to late nineteenth century. The movement in London was started in the early 1830's largely through the philanthropic activity of Wigram who 'was active in the initiation of a like testimony in London, where by the year 1838 a considerable number of gatherings were formed on the model of that at Plymouth'.³⁰⁵ In his later life Wigram was able to devote

³⁰⁰ Ernest R. Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism: British and American Millenarianism, 1800-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), pp. 18-22.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36, 61-62. See also, H. Dunton, *Millennial Hopes And Fears: Great Britain 1780-1960*, Andrews University Seminary Studies, Autumn 1999, Vol. 37, No. 2. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1999), pp. 181-210.

³⁰² TAWP, *Letter and Papers of the Late T.A. Viscountess Powerscourt*, ed. by R. Daly, 9th edn. (Broom, 1872), Letters 18, 23, 46, 57, 60, 78 and 'Paper on Genesis 22', written between 1828-1836 contain references to Babylon.

³⁰³ Rowdon (1967), p. 75.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁰⁵ Coad (1976), p. 76.

his whole time to religious pursuits, writing, and preaching throughout the Brethren movement. The Exclusive community after 1848 was on the whole a wealthy one, in part through the generosity of Wigram, who after his death made bequests totaling £36,000 in his Will to the movement, and through this financial support he proved to be influential in promoting the rise of Darby as the single most respected and authoritative leader among Brethren. Like Darby and Kelly, fellow Exclusive Wigram had a multivalent interpretation of Babylon and his views on the exegesis of Rev. 17-18 will be seen in all but one of the following chapters.³⁰⁶

Prolific Publication

The final significant reason for growth came through prolific publication and the use and distribution of pamphlets and journals. (This was to some extent linked into wealth and charismatic teachers: the wealthy were able to pay for print runs and fund writers who had a great deal to write about). Darby, Newton and Kelly were prolific writers, not only of books but also of journal articles, with wide readerships and large publication numbers, as well as pamphlets that could be distributed quickly, easily and cheaply, thus promoting the Brethren movement and encouraging likeminded Christians to secede from their traditions and join the movement. Evidence of the above can be seen in the formation of the Christian Brethren archive in the JRULM. During the first century of the Brethren movement there was an overwhelming number of authors contributing to the dissemination of Brethren doctrine and theology.

³⁰⁶ In the following chapters of this thesis the only identification of Babylon that Wigram does not make is that of Roman Catholicism. He does, however, identify Catholicism as part of the 'professing church' thus we may conclude that he indirectly identifies Catholicism as Babylon. See chapter six.

Scotsman A. Miller (1810-1883), a wealthy business man in London and voluntary Baptist Pastor, seceded to the Brethren movement after an invitation to attend a bible study. He is mentioned as a prominent member of the Brethren movement in Pickering's *Chief Men Among the Brethren*.³⁰⁷ His publication *Plymouthism and the Modern Churches* (1900) is cited in E. E. Whitfield, 'Plymouth Brethren', in *New Schaff-Herzog Encyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge*, P-R, 9.98. His highly regarded and extensively comprehensive *Papers on Church History*, 3 vols. (1873-1878) and *The History of the Brethren (commonly so-called) A Brief Sketch of their Origin, Progress and Testimony* (1879) are among the most well known of his publications, and the latter was considered such valuable source within Brethren circles that W. R. Dronsfield would write a sequel to it a century later entitled *The Brethren Since 1870* (c.1966). Miller's exegesis of the Babylon motif will be seen in all but two of the following chapters³⁰⁸ suggesting that, for Miller, defining the Brethren on a religious level over and against other Christian denominations and on a secular level as in contrast to the world, was of more importance than defining the Brethren movement on an epistemological level or eschatological level.

Irish Brethren member Charles Henry Mackintosh (1820-1896) converted after the prayerful reading of Darby's *Operations of the Spirit of God* (1865). He was a prolific author, but perhaps his most well-known publications are his massive 'Notes' on the five books of the Pentateuch and the frequently reprinted *Miscellaneous Writings* (c.1880) consisting of seven volumes, totaling over 2500 pages. His importance as a Brethren author cannot be underestimated. It has been correctly noted that it was Mackintosh who

³⁰⁷ Pickering, p. 74.

³⁰⁸ See chapter seven and nine below.

both popularised and disseminated Darby's ideas throughout North America. Furthermore in Mackintosh's exegesis we find the starting point for the trajectory of Brethren doctrine and practices from England to America at the end of the nineteenth century. Like Miller's, Mackintosh's exegesis of the Babylon motif will be explored in detail in chapter five, six, and eight. He is notable by his absence from chapters seven and nine. This is because Mackintosh, unlike many Brethren writers, did not make a link between Babylon and doctrinal confusion and Babylon and the secret rapture.

Edward Dennett (1831-1914) was originally an Anglican who, after studies at London University, became a minister of a Baptist Chapel in Greenwich from which he seceded to the Brethren movement after attending a breaking of bread service during a period of illness at Veytaux.³⁰⁹ He published a number of books and papers and preached widely throughout England, Ireland, and Scotland, and paid visits to Norway, Sweden, and America. Dennett's exegesis of the Babylon motif will be seen in all of the following archival chapters with the exception of chapter seven 'Babylon is Doctrinal Confusion', and as such this suggests that in the general terms of using Babylon as a means of defining the 'self' by vilifying the 'other', Dennett places a greater emphasis on the religious, secular and eschatological boundaries of the movement than the epistemological or doctrinal boundary.

James G. Bellett (1795-1864) was one of the original five brethren who began to meet in Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin, in 1829.³¹⁰ Among his best known books are *The Patriarchs* (c.1875), *The Evangelists* (1889), *The Son of God* (c.1870), and the *Moral Glory of the Lord Jesus* (1865). Bellett's interpretation of Babylon in Rev. 17-18 will be

³⁰⁹ Pickering, p. 156.

³¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

examined in all of the following archival chapters, demonstrating a highly complex and multifarious exegesis of the text, which Bellett uses as a tool to distinguish between those who are 'in' and those who are 'out' of the community. Bellett's most intriguing hermeneutical offering will be viewed in chapter eight, where, in an unusual and imaginative application of the biblical text he identified the Great Exhibition of 1851 as the Apocalyptic Whore.

W.T.P. Wolston (1840-1917)³¹¹ was trained as a lawyer and a doctor when he experienced conversion at the age of twenty years. For forty-five years he was editor of the magazine *God's Glad Tidings* later known as *The Gospel Messenger*, and composed a hymnbook which was reprinted at least seven times and reached at least 88,000 copies by 1933. He penned nine volumes on spiritual subjects, on the subjects of *Behold the Bridegroom* (1891), *Forty Days of Scripture* (1904), and *The Church: What is it?* (1945). Wolston has a complex compound understanding of Babylon which will be seen in all but one of the following archival chapters.³¹² Clearly Wolston, as an early member of the Exclusive sect of the Brethren community, is intent on defining strict boundaries between 'insider' and 'outsider', and by using the Whore of Babylon as a designation for those who are 'outside' of the Exclusive group, finds a useful scriptural designation for vilifying the 'other'.

Little biographical information is known Of Thomas B. Baines (dates unknown) and he is not mentioned in Pickering's *Chief Among Brethren*. His publications include *The Lord's Coming, Israel, and the Church* (1876), a series of three papers on the

³¹¹ Ibid., p. 141.

³¹² Wolston is not mentioned in chapter five, 'Babylon is Papal Rome', but in chapter six, 'Babylon is all of Corrupt Christendom', he does identify Catholicism as the Thyatiran Church of Rev. 2, in whom Jezebel is to be found, and then, later, connects Jezebel with Babylon, see pp. 186-190.

eschatological hope of the church and of Israel, and *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (1879) a series of three lectures by Baines based on an inaugurated futuristic reading of Revelation which will be examined in detail below. Baines is noted as taking part in the burial service of Wigram at Paddington Cemetery in 1879 along with Kelly and other noted Exclusive Brethren.³¹³ His exegesis of the Babylon texts is found in all but the final chapter of the archival section, chapter nine, 'Babylon' and the Secret Rapture of the Church, which demonstrates that for Baines, the interpretation of Babylon was an important activity in defining the enemy and the outsider and reinforcing the boundaries of the movement. Babylon represents the religious outsider, the epistemological outsider and the secular outsider. Although Baines does promote a typically Brethren two-stage rapture hypothesis,³¹⁴ he does not use Babylon as either the reason for leaving the earth, nor does he connect the judgment of Babylon with the first stage of events on the world after the true saints have left.

Yorkshire man, William Trotter (1818-1865),³¹⁵ was ordained as a Methodist minister at the age of nineteen, but by 1844 he had seceded and begun to attend regularly a Brethren congregation in Halifax. His *Plain Papers on Prophetic and Other Subjects* (1854) was a series of twenty essays on apocalyptic subjects, whereas his *Eight Lectures on Prophecy* (1852) was a series of papers predominantly concerned with the role of the Church and the Jews in the last days. His work was often included in Kelly's magazine *The Prospect*, and Edwin Cross, Kelly's biographer, identifies him as one of the 'notable

³¹³ Cross (2004), p. 132.

³¹⁴ TBB, 'The Glorious Coming and Kingdom of Christ', in *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 4th edn. (Broom, 1879), pp. 252-263. N.B. he remains silent as to the possibility of a 'rapture' but stresses the second stage: 'the coming of Christ back to the earth with His saints'.

³¹⁵ Pickering, p. 31.

prophetic authors of the day'.³¹⁶ The interpretation of the Babylon motif by Trotter will be seen in all but the first of the archival chapters below. He is absent from chapter five, 'Babylon is Papal Rome', although even here the situation is not completely clear since he does, by virtue of identifying Catholicism as the nominal Christianity of the Church in Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-27), which develops chronologically, or 'ripens', into the Church of Laodicea (Rev. 3), include Catholicism in the Apocalyptic judgments which are to come on Babylon. Clearly for Trotter, the strong supporter of Darby and early follower of the Exclusive schism of the Brethren, the question of who was in the group and who was out was of utmost importance. It will be seen in what follows that Trotter uses the Babylon motif to denigrate those who belong to other Christian denominations, believe other doctrines and enjoy 'worldly' pastimes. Such people, he says, will be left behind on the earth when the true church is secretly 'raptured', and according to Trotter's reading of Rev. 17-18 the unrighteous remnant will then be destroyed.

Frederick W. Grant (1834-1902) was born in London and ordained within the Church of England in Canada from which he seceded after reading Brethren literature.³¹⁷ In the Christian Brethren Archive there are a number of his publications but perhaps of most interest to this thesis are *A Divine Movement and our Path with God Today* (1973) and the last part of the *Open Letter to Mr. F.E. Raven* (c.1899) written by Grant on the 28th September 1897 concerning his exclusion in 1885 from the Exclusive Kelly faction for entertaining Open and Ravenite influences,³¹⁸ even though although only less than two decades previously Kelly had commended his exegesis as 'luminous'.³¹⁹ Yet it is also

³¹⁶ Cross (2004), p. 29.

³¹⁷ Pickering, p. 100-101.

³¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 67, 83 n. 86.

³¹⁹ WK, *Lectures on the Gospel of Matthew* (1868), rev edn. (Race, c.1923), p. 295.

to be noted that he was originally one of the thirty or forty that in 1847 had 'protested in vain [and] withdrew from fellowship with those meeting at Bethesda',³²⁰ along with Darby, Wigram and Trotter. Thus Grant had experience of both excluding and being excluded on account of doctrinal differences. Once again experience can be seen to lead to exegesis, since Grant's sectarian tendencies are apparent in the way he interpreted the Babylon motif, and, as will become clear in four of the five following chapters, he identified Babylon in such a way as to give scriptural authority to his efforts to exclude those who differed to him on a denominational, doctrinal and moral (i.e. 'worldly') level. His exegesis of the Babylon motif will not be seen in chapter nine, 'Babylon' and the Secret Rapture of the Church, since although he does follow a two-stage rapture hypothesis, he does not use the Babylon motif in working through this conclusion. Rather Grant uses the image of the Church in Philadelphia (Rev. 2-3), of which the Brethren are part, to argue for this doctrine.³²¹

Thomas Newberry (1811-1901)³²² was involved in the so-called 'Sufferings of Christ' controversy of c.1866 during which Darby had been accused of Christological errors identical to Newton's error some twenty years earlier. This controversy led to Newberry along with W. H. Dorman, Captain Percy Hall and Joseph Stancomb seceding from the Exclusive Darbyite group. Newberry was well known in Brethren circles for editing the Newberry Reference Bible which used a system of symbols to explain verb tenses. He, as an expert on biblical Hebrew and Greek, wrote many books on the typology of the OT tabernacle, Temple and offerings, and a popular short publication

³²⁰ Hamilton Smith, *The Open Brethren: Their Origins, Principles and Practice* (Weston Super Mare: H. Smith, 1930), p. 5.

³²¹ FWG, *A Divine Movement and our Path with God Today* (NY: Loizeaux Bros., n.d.), pp. 5-10. Proof that 'the Lord takes us to be with Himself above' is found in the Letters to the Churches Rev. 2-3.

³²² Pickering, p. 80.

titled *Brief Outline of the Book of the Revelation* (c.1891) which will be examined below. Newberry's exegesis of Babylon contributes to chapters six to nine of this thesis, and although he does not mention explicitly that Babylon is Roman Catholicism, and is hence not found in chapter five of the archival examination, he does identify Babylon, in religious terms, as superficial and external Christianity, and by virtue of this identifies all of the denominations of Christendom as Babylon. Newberry's highly schismatic tendencies, to secede from the Establishment to the Brethren movement, then to secede again to join Darby in the Exclusive Brethren schism, and then to secede yet again from the Exclusives in response to perceived doctrinal confusion in Darby's teaching, was fuelled to a certain extent by his exegesis of the Babylon motif. As will become clear in chapter seven below the doctrinal principle established during the first major schism in the Brethren community was that of a 'Doctrine of Contamination' whereby heresy could be transmitted like an infectious disease. Such a view was worked out exegetically in the context of Rev. 17-18.³²³ It could be argued then, that Newberry, Dorman, Hall and Stancomb, in seceding from the Darbyite Exclusives, were simply 'following the logic' of the principle of excommunication first established at Bethesda,³²⁴ to 'come out' of doctrinal confusion, so as not to 'receive her plagues' (Rev. 18:4). What is certain, is that for these Brethren, engaging with the text in the light of personal experience was central.

Brethren author F.C. Bland (1826-1894), was noted for his '*Twenty One Prophetic Subjects*' and was known as 'one of the ablest ministers of the word which Ireland has supplied'.³²⁵ He was converted to the Brethren by Mackintosh and promptly

³²³ See chapter seven below.

³²⁴ Coad (1976), p. 162.

³²⁵ Henry Pickering, *Chief Among Brethren: 100 Records and Photos*, 2nd edn. (Pickering & Inglis, 1931), p. 89.

moved from Dublin to Plymouth.³²⁶ He had a friendly connection with Sir Robert Anderson, Chief of Scotland Yard in London, and it was through this friendship that Anderson was influenced to some extent by Bland's Brethren premillennial dispensational futurism, which Anderson picked up on when he wrote the famously influential book *The Coming Prince: Or The Seventy Weeks of Daniel, with an Answer to Higher Criticism* (1895). As shall be seen in chapter five below, Bland identifies Babylon as the Roman Catholic church, yet he does not identify Babylon as any of the other denominations of Christianity, which suggests that he was not overly concerned with using the Babylon motif to define his own religious boundaries within the Brethren movement against the Babylonian outsider. This is surprising given that Pickering describes him as 'naturally haughty, intolerant of opposition, and quick to resent an injury or slight'.³²⁷ In the context of this thesis, Bland's significant contribution to this thesis comes in chapter seven, 'Babylon' is worldliness'; here it will be seen that he takes a highly literalistic exegesis of the text and concludes that there will be a literal and physical rebuilding of the ancient kingdom of Babylon somewhere in modern day Iran. Bland also uses the Babylon motif to argue for a physical rapture of the saints in order for them to be spared the tribulational dangers, of which the destruction of Babylon is the first. This will be seen in chapter nine.³²⁸

³²⁶ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

³²⁷ Ibid., p. 92.

³²⁸ It is believed that the survey of brethren writers listed above, which is based upon extensive use of archival material not heretofore examined in detail, is substantially comprehensive. Some very minor figures have been excluded as they add little to what has already been said. Such figures include H.R. Rossier (1835-1928), who argued, among other things, that in the last days a new physical kingdom of Babylon would literally reappear. See: *Le Livre du Prophete Habakuk* (Vevey: Bibles et Traités Chrétiens, 1979) & *Méditations sur le Seconde Livre de Chroniques* (Vevey: Bibles et Traités Chrétiens, 1979). Also a small number of anonymous authors who wrote in such periodicals as *BT*, *NW* and *ChW* have been omitted as they add nothing new to the thesis.

Theological Themes

The theology of the Christian Brethren movement is, in very general terms, that of the Reformed Protestant tradition, with prime importance placed upon the supreme authority and adequacy of Holy Scripture. The Brethren are moderate Calvinists, acknowledging the irresistible prevenient grace of God. They place utmost importance upon the personal justification of the individual believer and the total atonement of those who have been saved, an event followed by believers' baptism. Those from Established Catholic or Anglican traditions are re-baptised after their secessions. An ensuing life of purity and holiness must follow baptism. With regard to many doctrines the group have much in common with Dissenting and Non-conformist groups of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, for example the Wesleyan Methodists, the General Baptists, the Particular Baptists and the remnants of the Presbyterians and Independents. However, the Church of England and Roman Catholicism are generally regarded as corrupt forms of Christendom by the group. In particular the tendency to gloss over any distinction between true believers and unbelievers, through the indiscriminate use of rites and ceremonies, was seen to remove the need for personal salvation, by grace and through faith. This is reflected in the Brethren's polemical style of writing regarding the doctrines of such Established Churches. It will become clear in chapters five and six however, that regardless of what doctrines may or may not be shared in common with the above denominations, the Brethren still managed to identify all Christian groups around them as Babylon.

The two areas of doctrine where the Brethren movement can be seen to diverge most obviously from their Reformed Protestant, moderate Calvinistic and Puritan

heritage are in the areas of ecclesiology and eschatology. Brethren ecclesiology is based on the single underlying principle of the complete rejection of formal ministry. Such ecclesiology could be described as an extreme democracy whereby anyone may preach and no one should lead the meeting, except the Holy Spirit. Thus the meetings would be free from any type of formal authority which might lead to any clergy-laity divide. Instead the Brethren would look only to Christ as their head and the Holy Spirit as their guide. They rejected the idea of a clerical order believing in the Lutheran ideal of the priesthood of all believers which was combined with an underlying sense that the Established laity had become corrupt and complacent.

The early Brethren developed this democratic, free ecclesiology into a coherent doctrinal system often referred to as the 'Impulsive Theory of Ministry' whereby the 'Head of the Church', i.e. Christ, exercises authority over the church through the 'direct impulsive movement of the Spirit on the members of the Churches'³²⁹ rather than through authority delegated to human clergy. Thus Darby writes that the Church is to be a place where God might 'lead believers to more explicit reliance on the operations of the divine Spirit'.³³⁰ The church should be a place where 'men have their place . . . by virtue, not of their official situations, but of the gifts which God has given them'. The competency of the individuals to minister should be judged only by 'the gifts of God's Spirit which they may have'.³³¹ Indeed Darby was of the opinion that such beliefs gave the Brethren an ecclesiastical superiority over the Established Protestant churches and he did not hesitate to use the image of Babylon to argue this point.³³²

³²⁹ Coad (1976), p. 270.

³³⁰ JND, 'Considerations On The Nature And Unity Of The Church Of Christ' (1828-1834), *CW*, 1.31.

³³¹ JND, 'Thoughts on the Present Position of the Home Mission' (1833), *CW*, 1.81.

³³² *Ibid.*, pp. 78-102.

The ecclesiastical 'doctrine of separation' is undoubtedly the single most important doctrine that has defined the movement in the eyes of other Christians over the course of their history. In essence it is a sectarian doctrine that postulates that the true believer must be separate from the world and all its impurity, this is so since the Brethren believe that evil has a contaminating effect, sticking like dirt to the believer's soul. Their sectarian approach could be seen through the mission of the Brethren leaders in 'calling out Christians from the world and from churches that were under imminent judgement'.³³³

This kind of sectarian teaching is common within all sectarian groups but is taken to an extreme in Brethren circles through the suggestion that even impure doctrine or teaching has some kind of contaminating effect and can defile the true believer. Darby developed what would become known as a 'doctrine of contamination' whereby evil is transferred contagiously as miasma from assembly to assembly. This development was, in part, a reaction to what he deemed as heretical teaching, and the doctrine would play a part in the Open/Exclusive division of 1846 and the Bethesda Schism of 1848, the language of Babylon giving divine credence to the theory. The Open Brethren did not develop such a sectarian dogma, but rather it was primarily Darby, as leader of the Exclusive sect, who was responsible for this increasing movement to separation according to pioneer missionary and early Brethren member A.N. Groves. In his letter of 1836, Groves wrote to Darby to tell him that he had perceived a change in emphasis from inclusiveness and commonality of spirit to an emphasis on error in church order and of separating oneself from error. He warned Darby: 'you will be known more by what you witness *against* than what you witness for, and practically this will prove that you witness

³³³ Coad (1976), p. 67.

against all but yourselves'.³³⁴ However, as the rift began to open between the moderately conservative Open Brethren movement and Darby's more extreme and fundamental Exclusive Brethren movement 'Darby became increasingly suspicious of all outside his own circle, and [became] morbidly preoccupied with the 'evil' and 'worldliness' around him'.³³⁵ As we shall see in the remainder of this thesis such doctrines informed Brethren readings of much of scripture and Rev. 17-18 appealed to them in particular in this context.

Much of Darby's ecclesiastical writings focussed on a call to become separate from the world and to be pure from contamination. Purity was not only sought through adopting an *extra muros* stance with regard to the world, but care must be taking even *intra muros vis-à-vis* the broad Brethren movement not to be contaminated by heretical doctrine from within.

The excommunication program began when Newton's teaching in the Plymouth assembly was perceived as heretical in the area of Christological doctrine. He was excommunicated in 1847 for doctrinal errors,³³⁶ an event which set a precedent: from that point onwards any individual perceived to adhere to non-brethren doctrine would be put out of fellowship. Moreover any congregation receiving the excommunicated Brethren was seen as becoming miasmatically contaminated by their toxic teaching. For example, Brethren historian Coad has noted the presumed corrupting effects of 'wrong' understanding in Darby's ecclesiology:

³³⁴ Anthony N. Groves, *The letter from A.N. Groves to J.N. Darby*, March 10th, 1836 (Bristol: E.C.L., n.d.), p. 4.

³³⁵ Coad (1976), p. 211.

³³⁶ See chapter seven below.

Darby early developed a theory of the workings of heresy which coloured his actions for the whole of his life. Heresy was to him a real and evil thing, working secretly and deviously beneath the surface, until it broke out in its full development, to the ruin of churches . . . a subtle, hidden evil.³³⁷

Whole fellowships could be excommunicated. Darby began increasingly to insist that that new members adhered to a strict set of doctrinal statements as a prerequisite to admission into the fellowships. Kelly also maintained this dual concept of both separation from the dangers of the world without and separation from the dangers of doctrinal untruth and heresy within. Using the language Rev. 17-18 he wrote concerning the need for separation from both moral and worldly evil in the same paragraph as he talked about mental 'delusion' regarding the 'full pure truth' of doctrine.³³⁸

Separation from evil began to take on a new dimension within the Brethren movement that had been missing from other sectarian movements. Not only was a general separation from the unbelieving evil world required but also a separation from the believing yet deluded brother whose heresy could contaminate the believer, as well as separation from the Established yet corrupt Churches whose influence could lead to impurity.³³⁹ Inevitably this doctrinal stance was worked into the movement's understanding of the biblical text.

Turning now to the other highly distinctive area of Brethren doctrine, eschatology, it is important to note that the Brethren movement have always been highly interested in the study of prophecy and of apocalyptic scripture. The group are generally Futurists³⁴⁰ in their reading of prophetic texts, however, this is expressed as an

³³⁷ Coad (1976), p. 112.

³³⁸ WK (1897b), p. 355.

³³⁹ See chapter seven below.

³⁴⁰ See chapter one above.

inaugurated (already begun to take place) and partially realised Futurism rather than merely projecting the text into some remote age to come.

In the early nineteenth century the Futurist hermeneutic was a radical methodological stance to take. The accepted Protestant interpretive norm for reading prophetic scripture was to take a Historicist stance³⁴¹ as Futurist readings of Revelation were generally associated with the Catholic Jesuit Counter-Reformation approach of Ribera in the sixteenth century, and the counter-historicist approach of Cardinal Walmsley in the eighteenth century. The Tractarian movement in the early nineteenth century rejected Historicism in favour of Futurism as part of their Romanising trend, partly in order to disassociate the Pope from identification with the Antichrist. Thus the Brethren, as Reformed Protestants who rejected the authority of Rome, were taking a brave step in accepting the Futurist hermeneutic.

The Brethren were also a pre-millennial group believing in a literal personal reign of Jesus, with his advent before its commencement. However the Brethren developed a novel form of millennial eschatology insofar as it was they who were responsible for, if not inventing at least for massively popularising, what is known as the 'secret rapture of the saints' doctrine,³⁴² whereby the true believers leave the earth before the so-called tribulational events described between Rev. 4-19 and then return with Christ to inaugurate his millennial kingdom. With the meeting together of people with a common interest in prophecy at Albury Park and Powerscourt Estate this apparently previously

³⁴¹ See chapter one above.

³⁴² Coad (1976), p. 130. The influences on the Brethren development of the Secret Rapture of the Church theory will be studied further in chapter nine below.

unknown doctrine began to be formulated. Newton suggested in the Fry MSS³⁴³ that this theory was first introduced to the delegates by Irving, and was undoubtedly discussed among those there to study prophecy.³⁴⁴ This doctrine postulates that the Second Advent will take place in two stages, the first being a 'rapture' of the Church and the first resurrection at Christ's *parousia*. Of this event Darby writes 'I believe firmly that all true Christians will be preserved and caught up to heaven'.³⁴⁵ This will happen before the Great Tribulation. The true believers leave the earth and are engaged in post-rapture events in heaven, before any of the terrible apocalyptic post-rapture judgments occur on earth. This rapture will be in secret and the world will not be aware of it. The true believers will remain in the sky or in heaven for a period of time during Antichrist's reign. The second stage sees the visible return of Christ, or *epiphaneia*, with the saints after either three and a half or perhaps seven years to destroy Antichrist and set up the millennial kingdom on earth. Darby writes that the 'things which are' (Rev. 1:19) show the churches in their moral character on earth, but of the 'things which shall be hereafter' (Rev. 4:1) he writes 'we are necessarily caught up to the throne',³⁴⁶ at which point the tribulational period begins: 'the world, meanwhile, not the church, is the subject of the statements contained in these portions . . . the church is looked at, I apprehend, as in the heavens from the end of chapter 3'.³⁴⁷ Then the millennial kingdom will be established,

³⁴³ The Fry MSS here refers to the collection of handwritten letters and papers from early Brethren members such as JND and BWN contained in the JRULM.

³⁴⁴ F. Roy Coad, *Prophetic Developments: With Particular Reference to the Early Brethren Movement* (Pinner, 1966), p. 22. The theoretical antecedents to the secret rapture doctrine will be explored fully in chapter nine.

³⁴⁵ JND, 'What Is The Church, As It Was At The Beginning? And What Is Its Present State?' (1866), *CW*, 14.131.

³⁴⁶ JND, 'Notes on the Revelation' (1839), *CW*, 2.262.

³⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 280-282. n.*.

the post-millennial events described in Rev. 19-22 will take place, and the Brethren will enter the promised eternal state of bliss.³⁴⁸

This doctrine is fundamental to contemporary North American rapture culture, as seen for example in the *Left Behind* series of novels written by LaHaye and Jenkins. Its popularity in recent years can be traced directly back to the early Brethren movement. Kelly, it is noted, met the American dispensationalist Gaebelein in 1897 at the Brethren Blackheath assembly, and this meeting provided the earliest point of trajectory of Brethren dispensational two-stage 'secret rapture' eschatology over the Atlantic to America. Gaebelein is of course widely accepted as being an early and enthusiastic proponent of this doctrine.³⁴⁹ The itinerant preaching of many of the early Brethren leaders resulted in frequent tours of North America which further spread Brethren eschatology. Darby frequently travelled to North America where his teachings on premillennial dispensationalism gained great influence. The *Scofield Study Bible* (1917) was absolutely central to this development. This is so since Scofield added here for the first time a futuristic, premillennial commentary alongside the biblical text.³⁵⁰ His commentary did much to popularise 'rapture' theory in terms of Darby's hermeneutical schema throughout the Western world. Scofield's work had an enormous influence in shaping modern American prophetic beliefs and the influence that Darby had on him cannot be easily dismissed.

³⁴⁸ The view was quite widely accepted throughout the Exclusive Brethren movement and although rejected by the more moderate Open Brethren, had a lasting and enduring effect on the popular study of prophecy. It will be examined in more detail in chapter nine below.

³⁴⁹ Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Harvard: Belknap Press, 1992), p. 92. He notes that Gaebelein's, *Our Hope*, 'spread the millennial word far and wide'.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97. Boyer describes Scofield as, 'a towering figure in twentieth century premillennialism'.

Probably the most lasting and enduring legacy of Darby's biblical exegesis of eschatological scripture is his propagation and popularisation of the Dispensational theory, the broad outline of which, can be traced back to Joachim in the twelfth century. Darby, like Joachim, suggested that the history of the world is divided into different dispensations or epochs of time, yet Darby went further implying that as each epoch progresses mankind become increasingly sinful and the world slowly decays until a cataclysmic or apocalyptic event destroys the old world order and a new world order is established.

For Darby the key to understanding all of scripture, and indeed the key to understanding the whole world around him, was to be found in dividing correctly the history of the world up into the Jewish dispensation and the Gentile dispensation and appropriately assigning the promises and hopes of scripture to either epoch. It cannot be claimed that the dispensational world-view began with the Brethren movement, however up until the time of the Brethren this doctrine only existed on the fringes of the Christian community and was not widely known or accepted. In 1812 the Chilean Jesuit Manuel Lacunza secretly published *The Coming of Messiah in Glory and Majesty* in which he hinted at a dispensational division of world history. Edward Irving, founder of the Irvingite or Catholic Apostolic Church, translated Lacunza's work into English and added a significant 'preliminary discourse' by way of introduction. This sensational book, with its radical 'futurist' exegesis of the Apocalypse, found its way into Brethren hands. Irving regularly attended the Albury Park Conferences as well as the Powerscourt Conferences and it is entirely possible that at one of these events he met Darby and/or his translation of Lacunza's book reached Darby's hand. The 'Left Behind' series is again significant

here, since in addition to the doctrine of the secret rapture already noted above the series makes use of Darby's dispensationalist legacy. Boyer notes

Darby taught that God has dealt with mankind in a series of epochs, or dispensations- in each of which the means of salvation differed. While Bible prophecy reveals much about past and future dispensations it is silent on the present one, the Church Age. . . . Darby's system contained nothing new . . . but Darby wove these strands into a tight and cohesive system that he buttressed at every point by copious biblical proof texts, then tirelessly promoted through his writing and preaching tours.³⁵¹

The reason Boyer gives for the widespread growth and popularity of Brethren eschatology is primarily political. He writes 'No doubt the anti-institutional bias of the Plymouth Brethren, a major theme in Darby's prophecy writings, found fertile soil in nineteenth century America, where laissez-faire ideology abounded'.³⁵² Yet it must be the sum total of the new Brethren package, which included copious publication of coherent Brethren eschatological doctrine combined with the tireless preaching tours of America, in combination with a political and sociological climate ready to hear such an anti-establishment impulsive ecclesiology, that would prove to be the catalyst for what would become the predominant view of North American Christians in the twenty-first century.

Schism and Division

Unfortunately no history of the Brethren church would be complete without a section on the divisions and schism that has plagued the unity of the movement. Indeed a number of publications get so bogged down in these matters and the nuances of doctrinal differences that they inform the reader of little else. Brethren history simply becomes caricatured as a

³⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 87-88.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 88.

list of different schisms and divergences.³⁵³ It cannot be denied however that the history of the movement has been marred by heated division over a number of doctrinal issues. The first and most well known division was in Plymouth, 1846. Next came the 1848 division between so-called 'Open' and 'Exclusive' Brethren, in which Newton taught that Christ took on sinful flesh and Christ could have sinned. Brethren were divided as to whether to receive a member who came from Newton's gatherings. The schism began a famously antagonistic relationship between Newton and Darby. Darby here began on a path of increasingly moving towards separation.³⁵⁴ Darby, the leading influential charismatic 'founder' of the Exclusives, along with those Brethren loyal to him, became obsessed with separation: the logical outworking of such sectarian doctrine.

With the Plymouth and Bethesda schisms there began a long chain of division and segregation as time and time again individuals and congregations so obsessed with the corruptive danger of doctrinal untruth sought to separate themselves from the slightest hint of heresy. Numerous other divisions occurred which, when relevant, will be discussed below. It will be seen that at times the image of Babylon was used to further such sectarianism as the more Exclusive Brethren saw in that image a picture of their own enemies.

Conclusion

The movement began as a non-denominational and fully inclusive group who accepted all to share the Lord's Supper regardless of adherence to any particular creed or doctrine.

³⁵³ Coad (1976), p. 312. Coad describes Napoleon Noel's, *The History of the Brethren*, 2 vols. ed. by W.F. Knapp (Denver: Napp, 1851), as a 'Grossly misnamed' book, 'largely an almost incoherent account of 'exclusive' quarrels'.

³⁵⁴ Embley (1967a) pp 223-224, 226.

They grew both numerically and geographically through the tireless endeavours of charismatic and persuasive leaders who were energetic in their itinerant preaching and prolific in their publication. The movement's growth was also to a lesser extent a result of a number of wealthy and eminent individuals who gave of their finances into building and buying chapels, and who put their well-respected names behind the movement thereby increasing social acceptance.

Between 1830 and 1846 the movement began to crystallise into a distinct evangelical movement. The number of Brethren chapels were growing, as those who generally attended the breaking of bread service seceded from their denominational affiliations and the Brethren meetings became full time places of worship in their own right. Through the work of Groves, a missionary movement was born and through the work of Müller, a social enterprise scheme of orphanages was born. In those earliest years the movement was non-sectarian, yet after the first two schisms in the movement (1846 and 1848), and as the movement entered the twentieth century, it had become highly fragmented in nature. Brethrenism was a highly distinctive, exclusive and sectarian entity with well defined boundaries between insider and outsider. It was comprised of some ten sub-sects who each of which placed a fundamental stress on the importance of doctrinal purity yet were unable to agree on the details. Excluding and putting out of fellowship all who did not adhere became a frequent occurrence, a far cry from those early meetings in Augnier Street which were open to all who would come regardless of doctrine or denomination. As we arrive at 1900, the *terminus ad quem* of this thesis, Brethren historian Neatby's views sum up the place the Brethren had arrived at well: they 'began with the principle of universal communion, but ended with universal

excommunication'.³⁵⁵ As we shall see in the remainder of this thesis, these historical and sociological developments gave rise to varied and imaginative exegetical strategies.

³⁵⁵ William, B. Neatby, *A History of the Plymouth Brethren* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1901), p. 59.

Chapter Five

'Babylon' is Papal Rome

The preceding chapters of this thesis have been essential in setting the context for what is to follow. We turn now to examine the specific ways in which the Brethren movement have understood, used, and been influenced by the image of the Whore of Babylon found in Rev. 17-18. From this point on this thesis is based almost exclusively upon archival material which has not to this point been extensively researched in the particular context of the history of biblical interpretation. Following an exhaustive and detailed analysis of the Christian Brethren Archive it is possible to extrapolate a number of ways that the text has been received and used by the group. This chapter is devoted to the first explanation of the text that the archive yields, namely, that the Whore of Babylon in the Christian Brethren movement is understood as a religious entity. As we shall in this chapter that religious entity is specifically identified as the Roman Catholic Church.

For any new religious tradition it is important to define one's own identity over and against the identity of those from whom one has broken away or seceded. This was true for the earliest Christians, who, as originally Jews themselves, could be seen simply as just one more 'Palestinian Jewish Sectarian group',³⁵⁶ who, eventually came to separate from their religious parent and form an autonomous and independent 'new' religion. The same sectarian pattern can be seen in the time of the Reformation when the Reformers such as Luther, Calvin and Zwingli, who were themselves original Catholic, came to separate from Rome and form their own autonomous Christian communities.

³⁵⁶ George Macrae, S.J. 'Messiah and Gospel', in Jacob Neusner, William S. Green & Ernest Frerichs (eds), *Judaisms and their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987), p. 169.

When examining the concept of sectarian religion both the notion of *secare*, to cut off, and of *religare*, to bind together, are of equal importance. For a new religious tradition to be 'successful' one must both cut off any external ties to that from which one used to belong and also bind fast together and solidify internally the beliefs and practices of the new community. For nascent sectarian religious communities that hold the prophetic and apocalyptic in high esteem the wild and dangerous images in the book of Revelation prove to be ready tools to use in both defining one's own 'religious' identity and the identity of the outsider.³⁵⁷ For the Christian Brethren, to which we now turn, the image of the Whore of Babylon was a useful device in both the acts of *secare*, cutting off from the groups from which they seceded, and *religare*, or binding together like minded religious dissidents.

Anti-Papal or Anti-Pope Interpretations

It may be said at this juncture that the first identification of Babylon as Papal Rome is somewhat unimaginative and unoriginal, and to an extent this may be the case. It has been noted above that this passage has always been associated with 'Rome' in some way and the normative Protestant exegesis of the passage since the time of Luther in the sixteenth century has been to identify this passage as referring to the Pope. Of course the antecedents of this anti-papal and developing anti-pope³⁵⁸ interpretative tradition, it has been noted above, had begun forming in the work of Joachim in the thirteenth century.

³⁵⁷ See Collins, A.Y. 'Vilification and Self-Definition in the Book of Revelation', in *Harvard Theological Review*, Vol. 79, No. 1/3, Christians Among Jews and Gentiles: Essays in Honor of Krister Stendahl on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday (Jan. - Jul., 1986), pp. 308-320.

³⁵⁸ It is important to distinguish here between 'anti-papal' interpreters who identified Babylon quite broadly as a papal 'system', and interpreters who were specifically 'anti-pope' in their understanding of Babylon as an 'individual' pope. This difference has not been stressed before in the secondary literature with authors using the phrase 'anti-papal' as a very broad brushstroke to identify the exegesis of Babylon (see for

What will become clear is that the Brethren exegesis of this passage is truly anti-papal, unlike many of the interpreters before them who had a much narrower 'anti-pope' explanation.³⁵⁹ That is, the Brethren authors identified the Whore as the whole system of Roman Catholicism throughout time rather than as a specific Pope confined to a specific period. Some reasons for this are suggested here.

It is possible, through an insufficient reading of those prophetic interpreters that have been engaged in the act of biblical exegesis of Rev. 17-18, to assume that those who identified Babylon as in some way pertaining to the Catholic Church were anti-papal in their exegesis. For example, From notes that Nicholas Bernerd (d.1661) chaplain to Oliver Cromwell 'summons the testimony of the English Bishops Jewel, Abbot, Whitgift and Andrewes to testify of Papal Rome as Babylon . . . [as] a successive dynasty not an individual pope'.³⁶⁰ Whereas Boxall (2001) uses the term 'Anti-Papal Tradition' to refer to the 'clear identification of the Bishop of Rome, and the papacy as an institution',³⁶¹ as the standard Reformation exegesis of Rev. 17-18, but then goes on to state that Olivi, Joachim and Fulke specifically identify the Bishop of Rome as the Antichrist with the Roman Church being the Whore.³⁶² Whilst such statements are arguably true, many interpreters, exercising a predominantly Historicist hermeneutical framework, actually

example Boxall, 2001). The reasons for making such a distinction are explained below. Please note that such usage of the term 'anti-pope', although linguistically similar to 'antipope', is not used here in the same way 'antipope' is used by Catholic theologians to specifically refer to a false claimant to the Holy See.

³⁵⁹ This is, to a certain extent, only to be expected. It has been demonstrated above that the predominant Protestant hermeneutical approach from 1550-1800 was the historicist method which sought to identify specific individuals at specific periods of time as the fulfilment of specific images in the Apocalypse. A Futurist hermeneutic, like that held by Brethren authors, is not predisposed to identifying specific individuals as being the actual fulfilment of Revelation's motifs.

³⁶⁰ From, 2.562.

³⁶¹ Boxall, p. 63.

³⁶² Ibid., p. 63.

identified Babylon as a specific Pope, a specifically 'individual' interpretation of the motif, in order to best fit into their diachronic reading.

Although most Protestant Reformers were indeed anti-papal, insofar as they rejected, even abhorred, the whole system of Catholicism, for many their exegesis of the Whore of Babylon was not anti-papal but anti-pope. Their exegesis of the scarlet coloured beast (Rev. 17:3) upon which the individual pope rides should be, more correctly, termed 'anti-papal'.³⁶³ Alternatively, when the Whore of Babylon is described as a woman (Rev. 17), this is understood by some to refer to a pope and is thus an 'anti-pope' interpretation, whereas when the Whore of Babylon is described as a city (Rev. 18), this is understood to refer to the Papal system³⁶⁴ and is thus anti-papal. Thus at this stage we must differentiate between such individual and corporate identifications of Babylon.

The first author that identifies the Whore not just as a papal system but also as an individual pope (a 'pseudo-pope' or 'anti-pope' exegesis) is the Calabrian Abbott Joachim of Fiore who, believing the rule of St Francis to be divinely inerrant, suggested that any pontiff who tried to change it must be a pseudo-pope or 'anti-pope' riding on the carnal church of Babylon.³⁶⁵ For Joachim the 'scarlet multitude' of Rome represented the beast of Rev. 17:3³⁶⁶ and the pseudo-pope represented the Whore. However at the time of Joachim's writing, because of the future prophetic nature of this identification, Joachim

³⁶³ In the Reformation Era Nicholas Ridley, John Hooper, Thomas Cranmer, John Bale, John Jewel and John Foxe all specifically identified the Scarlet Beast of Rev. 17:3 as referring to the Papal System, see From, 2.530-531.

³⁶⁴ A very common interpretation in the Reformation era, see Luther, Melanchthon, Osiander, von Amsdorf, Solis, Flacius, Conradus, Nigrinus, Chytraeus, Bullinger, Funck, Tyndale, Ridley, Hooper, Cranmer, Bale, Jewel, Foxe and Napier, who were all 'anti-papal' in their exegesis of the city of Babylon in Rev. 18, i.e. Babylon as a 'system' rather than as an 'individual'. See From, 2.530-531.

³⁶⁵ Reeves, pp. 72-73.

³⁶⁶ Joachim, 'Letter to the Faithful', in McGinn (1979), pp. 115-116.

refrained from identifying Babylon as a specific, real, historical pope. Nevertheless, for Joachim the Whore was, on this level at least, an individual and not a system.

Only a century after Joachim the identification of the Whore of Babylon, not so much with the Papal system but with more specifically an individual Pope, in this case Pope Clement V (1305-1314), was made by the renowned prophetess Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373). Bridget wrote a letter to Pope Clement V urging him to break the bonds of the Babylonian captivity in which he held the church. In this letter she explicitly identifies Clement V as the Great Whore: 'Now I wail over you, head of my church, who sits on my throne . . . you who should release the souls and present them to me, you are in reality a murderer of souls'.³⁶⁷

Writing around about the same time as Bridget, Gerard of Borgo San Domino, professor of theology at the University of Paris, in *Introduction to the Eternal Gospel*, predicted a simoniacal pope shortly to come but, unlike Joachim, who believed that this pope would be the Whore, Gerard suggested that he would be the Abomination of Desolation.³⁶⁸ The Minorite poet Jacopone da Todi in the thirteenth century CE 'commented on the appearance of a new Lucifer in the papal chair'.³⁶⁹ These writers, although not identifying a specific pope as Babylon, used individualistic language. Such personal language would pave the way for other expositors to identify individual popes as the Great Whore.

In 1513, immediately before the major events of the Reformation, Leo X began his Papal reign. He had engraved on the marble portico entrance to his Bishopric 'Holy

³⁶⁷ Bridget of Sweden, trans. From German, *Leben und Offenbarung en der heiligen Brigitta*, pp. 239-230, in Froom, 2.68-69.

³⁶⁸ Gerard of Borgo San Donnino, 'Introduction to the Eternal Gospel' (c.1255), in Froom, 2.25 n.31

³⁶⁹ Froom, 2.74.

Lateran Church, the mother and head of all the churches of the city [Rome] and of the world'. It was noted that his inaugural procession involved 'the pope riding on a white horse and wearing a tiara . . . Various paintings adorned the scene. One showed kings kneeling before the pope'. Such events were highly reminiscent of the Whore of Babylon to those versed in the language of the Revelation, and as Froom notes, these scenes were 'powerfully used' by the coming Reformers.³⁷⁰ Only a matter of months before Luther nailed his famous decree at Wittenberg, Leo X effectively silenced the Piedmontese, Waldensians and Bohemian Hussites (all of whom as has been noted above found in Revelation a picture of Papal Rome). This event caused Antonius Puccius to confess to Leo X: 'Now all Christendom sees that it is subjected to one head, that is to thee'. Such a confession was understood by many at the time as being the fulfilment of Rev. 18:7, with Pope Leo X fulfilling the words of the Whore: 'I sit a queen . . . and shall see no sorrow'.³⁷¹ The bloodshed of those so-called heretics by Leo X inspired John Milton (1608-1674) to write *On the Late Massacre in Piedmont* in which he identified the Piedmontese as 'slaughtered saints'. Their 'martyred blood' at the hand of the 'Triple Tyrant' was a 'Babylonian Woe'.³⁷² Protestants were not only identifying Babylon as the Papal system but some were, it is clear, identifying an individual, pope Leo X, as the Whore. This placing of oneself within the context of history is a noticeable characteristic of the historicist method of exegesis. The Brethren, however, as futurists, did not engage in it but found other ways of identifying themselves with the biblical text.

³⁷⁰ Froom, 2.179.

³⁷¹ Oration of Antonius Puccius, in ninth session, in Mansi, J.D. (ed.) *Sacrorum conciliorum nova, et applissima collectio*, 1902-27, vol. 32, col. 892, in Froom, 2.180-181.

³⁷² John Milton, Sonnet XV, 'On The Late Massacre in Piemont', in John Carey & Alastair Fowler (eds), *The Poems of John Milton* (Longmans, 1968), pp. 411-412.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556), Archbishop of Canterbury, writing in the mid-sixteenth century identified the Whore of Babylon as an individual pope. He writes 'in the seventeenth chapter he [John] lively setteth forth the pope in his own colours, under the person of the whore of Babylon being drunken with the blood of saints'.³⁷³ Such personalised language was perhaps referring to Paul III (1534-1549), Julius III (1550-1555), Marcellus II (1555) or Paul IV (1555-1559), all of whom sat on the papal throne during Cranmer's lifetime. Of the details one cannot be certain, but it is clear that here Cranmer identified a Pope as the Whore rather than the whole system of Catholicism.

The individualistic anti-pope exegesis can also be seen in the writings of John Calvin (1509-1564), Cranmer's French contemporary, who stated of the individual pontiff reigning as he wrote: 'We regard the Roman Pontiff as the leader and standard-bearer of that wicked and abominable kingdom'.³⁷⁴ Such language was clearly pertaining to an individual pope rather than Catholicism as a system.

Diplomat of the French Huguenots and follower of Calvin Philippe de Mornay (1549-1623) placed all prophetic negative epithets on Rome and as such can be defined as an 'anti-papal' interpreter. In particular, however, de Mornay suggested that the individual Pope Paul V was personally fulfilling these motifs.³⁷⁵ In England, at a similar time, the Parliamentarian Sir Edwin Sandys (1561-1629) noted that the Protestant cry was quite individualistic in character: 'The Lord of Rome was none other than that imperious bewitching Lady of Babylon'.³⁷⁶ As to which 'Lord of Rome' Sandys was referring we cannot be certain; Clement VIII (1592-1605), Leo XI (1605), Paul V (1605-

³⁷³ Cranmer, 'The Works of Thomas Cranmer', Vol. 1, 'Writings and Disputations', pp. 62-63. in Froom, 2.393.

³⁷⁴ Calvin, 3.55.

³⁷⁵ Froom, 2.635

³⁷⁶ Sir Edwin Sandys, 'A Survey of the State of Religion in the Westerne Parts of the World' (1638), p. 164 in Froom, 2.549.

21), Gregory XV (1621-23), Urban VIII (1623-44), would all have been 'Lords of Rome' during Sandys lifetime. The exegesis of Andreas Prolaeus was clearer on this matter. In a lecture on July 10th 1631 titled *30 lectures on Babylon in Revelation 17, 18 and 19* Prolaeus referred to Scandinavian King Gustav Adolf's distaste for Pope Urban VIII: 'your majesty, being from such a noble pope-hating house . . . you do not only hate the whore, but even much more love the lamb'.³⁷⁷ Again an individual rather than corporate exegesis is taking place.

Perhaps the most significant identification of an individual pope as the Apocalyptic Whore occurred in 1798 just two years before the birth of arguably the most famous of the Brethren authors, Darby. According to Richard Duppa (1770-1831) the events of 1798, during which Bonaparte and his army of French Revolutionaries in their attempts to bring democracy and nationalism to the Italian people removed Pius VI (1755-1798) from the Papal throne, were understood by many onlookers to be the literal fulfilment of Rev. 17-18

Napoleon . . . on his way to overthrow the pope . . . the hour of vengeance had struck. [Napoleon] routed the papal army, and made new overtures to the pope [Pius VI] . . . the mob proceeded to make public harangues, and pretended to shew clearly, by several texts of scripture, that the time was at hand to overthrow the existing government.³⁷⁸

It was not simply those in 'the mob' who understood Pius VI's demise to be the literal fulfilment of the Whore's fall. The leader of the revolutionary army General Haller understood his own role to be one of fulfilling Rev. 18:2

³⁷⁷ Andreas Prolaeus, 'Babylon. Das ist' in Froom, 2.602.

³⁷⁸ Duppa, 'A Brief Account of the Subversion of the Papal Government' (1798), p. 9. in Froom, 2.749-751.

February 15th 1798 . . . Pius VI repaired to the Sistine Chapel . . . when in the midst of the ceremony, shouts penetrated the conclave, intermingled with the strokes of axes at the doors. Soon General Haller, a Swiss Calvinist, with a band of soldiers broke into the chapel and declared that the Pope's reign was at an end . . . the glory, honour and power had vanished.³⁷⁹

Among the contemporary authors that believed that the removal of Pius VI from Rome was the fulfilment of the destruction of the Whore was Edward King (1735-1807) who in *Remarks on the Signs of the Times* (1800) suggested 'Is not the Papal power, at Rome, which was once so terrible, and so domineering, at an end? . . . If these things are so: then truly that Great City Babylon is fallen'.³⁸⁰ These very lines were quoted in the Millerite periodical *Signs of the Times and Expositor of Prophecy*³⁸¹ as evidence for the fulfilment of Rev. 18:2. The removal of Pius VI from the Papal throne was also interpreted as the fulfilment of the fall of Babylon by Richard Valpy (1754-1836),³⁸² Francis Wrangham (1769-1842),³⁸³ Charles Daubney (1745-1827),³⁸⁴ and C. G. Thube (fl. 1796).³⁸⁵

Thus, we may conclude already that although Boxall has noted there was developing from the time of the Reformation onwards a strong 'anti-papal' tradition in the interpretation of the Whore of Babylon, that there was also simultaneously developing as strong 'anti-pope' tradition. Clement V, Leo X, Paul V, Paul III, Julius III, Marcellus II or Paul IV, and most notably Pius VI, whose 'fall' would have been fresh in the memory of many of the early Brethren, were all specifically identified in some pre-

³⁷⁹ Duppa, pp. 43-47. *The European Magazine*, July, 1798, vol. 34, p. 7. in Froom, 2.753.

³⁸⁰ Edward King, 'Remarks on the Signs of the Times' (1800), pp. 18-21, in Froom, 2.767-769.

³⁸¹ 'The 1260 Years of Papal Triumph', in *Signs of the Times, and Expositor of Prophecy*, Feb 22, 1843, vol. 4, no. 23, p. 177. In, Froom, 2.769.

³⁸² Richard Valpy, 'Sermons Preached on Public Occasions', vol. 1, pp. 143ff in Froom, 2.770.

³⁸³ Francis Wrangham, 'Rome is Fallen' (June 5, 1798), in Froom, 2.773.

³⁸⁴ Charles Daubney, 'The Fall of Papal Rome' (1798), in Froom, 2.774.

³⁸⁵ C. G. Thube, *Ueber die nächstkommenden vierzig Jahre* (c. 1798), in Froom, 2.777.

Brethren sources as being the Great Whore of the Apocalypse. Nevertheless, as will become apparent, Brethren writers themselves did not adopt such an interpretation. It is argued here that the reason for this is that in Brethren exegesis a more open-ended futurism has replaced a more finely focussed historicist reading of the text.

Darby

It may be suggested then that the Christian Brethren exegesis of the Whore of Babylon motif as 'Papal Rome' is neither new nor original (though as will be seen in later chapters of this thesis there are aspects of Brethren interpretation which concerning such suggestions of a lack of exegetical imagination could not be made). However, even in the context of the 'Papal Rome' interpretation of the Whore motif, it is not the case that the Brethren were simply caught up in the flow or going along with the historicist crowd. It is true that this group did have a standard Protestant understanding of this text; such an understanding was important and enabled them to identify with the broader Protestant interpretive community's normative hermeneutical schema. It will be shown, however, that a particularly nuanced variation of this form of interpretation developed.

It has been noted above that Fish's social reader-response theory has identified that readers belong to 'Interpretive Communities'. As such this 'anti-papal' interpretation, although not original, is still important as such an interpretation holds and binds the Brethren into the Protestant hermeneutical circle. When the group began meeting together in 1829 and began interpreting religious texts, the reader's membership of this particular new 'Protestant' religious institution called the Brethren and, perhaps more importantly, the reader's rejection of membership of the alternative religious

institutions from which that they have seceded, became essential in determining how they understood texts. Such social affiliation predisposes the reader to a shared interpretation rather than facilitating the imposition of an individual subjective and idiosyncratic reading of the text. The Brethren read not only as part of the Brethren interpretive community but also as part of the wider Non-conformist, Dissenting, Protestant interpretive community. Thus, turning now to the exegesis of this passage in the work of Darby, and beginning with his previously un-transcribed and unpublished handwritten notes on this passage from his personal commentary on the Greek NT we find his understanding of Babylon as follows

the Romano-Christian body . . . The Pope [crossed out and replaced with] Papal . . . Satan's usurped religious authority in the world . . . Babylon seems to be the Roman Church ['as a body political' is crossed out and replaced with] as a religiopolitical body- Roman Christendom.³⁸⁶

Thus it is clear from these handwritten notes that Darby placed himself within the normative Protestant hermeneutic circle in his identification of Babylon as Papal Rome. This exegesis continued into his other published works and letters. There are altogether fifty-three of Darby's publications where he makes a link between Babylon and the Papacy. In particular, Roman Catholicism as an institution or system of Babylon features heavily in Darby's exegesis of Rev. 17-18, for example: 'How different the spirit of Popery! It was glad to get the world's capital for its own. But it is a city of confusion; Rome is Babylon thus viewed'.³⁸⁷ Also Darby writes 'I believe what you call the Catholic

³⁸⁶JND, *Commentary on Greek New Testament*, 4 vols. MSS, 4.532-603. The pages of *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. by Griesbach (1818) are interleaved with pages containing pages with copious handwritten notes on the text.

³⁸⁷ JND, 'Sketch of Joshua, Chapter 11', *CW* 19.512.

Church to be Babylon'³⁸⁸ and 'Corrupt Rome, Babylon, the idolatrous harlot'.³⁸⁹ Darby also describes Babylon as a 'system . . . of Papal Idolatry'.³⁹⁰ Thus it is very clear that Darby identifies the Great Whore of Revelation as the Roman Catholic system and not as an individual pope.

There are just two occasions when Darby uses the word 'Pope' in a singular individualistic way, when interpreting Rev. 17-18, to refer to a specific Pope. The first is when he comments upon Babylon's fornication with the 'kings of the earth' in Rev. 17:2, which he interprets in light of the events of 1798: 'This in a hidden way we may find going on now. The departure of the pope from Rome was the beginning of it. The kings of the earth are allying with the pope in order to keep down radicalism, which is an enemy to him'.³⁹¹ The only other occasion that we read of Darby identifying Babylon as an individual Pope and not as the Papal system reads as follows: 'I find rather the majority of Christians condemning your sect, and the pope's claims as corrupt, false and unfounded, and by a vast majority of Christians held to be the corrupt Babylon of

³⁸⁸ JND, 'Romanism', *CW*, 2nd edn. 18.49. For explicit identifications of Babylon as Papal Rome see also p. 92 of this work.

³⁸⁹ JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* vol. 1, 1832-1836 (Kingston on Thames, Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.), p. 427.

³⁹⁰ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation' 34.328, also, p. 340-341, 348, 352. See also, JND, 'Progress of Democratic Power and its Effects on the Moral State of England', *CW* 32.510; JND, 'A Brief Outline of the Books of the Bible', *CW*, 19.78; JND, 'Outline of the Revelation', *CW*, 5.384; JND, 'Readings on the Seven Churches', in *NJ*, p. 367; JND, 'Considerations On The Nature And Unity Of The Church Of Christ' (1828-1834), 1.33; JND, 'Presbyterianism: A Reply to, 'The Church and the Pulpit'' (1868), *CW*, 14.509; JND, 'Analysis of Dr. Newman's, 'Apologia Pro Vita Sua: With a Glance at the History of Popes, Councils and the Church' *CW*, 2nd edn. 18.156; JND, 'Second Address to his Roman Catholic Brethren by a Minister of the Gospel', *CW*, 2nd edn. 18.22; JND, 'Further Notes on the Revelation', in *NJ*, pp. 135-157; JND, 'Edinburgh Meeting: Address, Titus 2:11-15', in *NJ*, pp. 69-70; JND, 'Reading on 1 Peter' (1879) *CW*, 28.238-255; JND, 'Notes of a Lecture on Revelation 3:7-13, 1863' in *Words in Season*, Vol. 6, 1892, p. 264; JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* Vol. 1, 'August 29th 1851', pp. 191-195. All link the Church in Thyatira with Popery, which is in turn identified as Babylon in JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* vol. 3, 1879-1882 (Kingston on Thames, Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.) 'April 15th 1880', pp. 79-80. 'January 25th 1882', p. 211.

³⁹¹ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.342.

Scripture'.³⁹² It is important to note here that the Pope is referred to individually as the one with whom fornication is committed and thus is personally identified as Babylon, not just corporately, the second is that Darby sees the verse being fulfilled 'now', that is, in his own time.

There are in addition to the two publications above, where a personal identification of Babylon is made with an individual pope, three occasions where a specific 'Catholic' movement is identified as being the Apocalyptic Whore. The publication of these three pamphlets reflects particular circumstances in which Darby found himself challenged by the immediate 'threat' of increasing Catholicism. The Oxford Movement, a nineteenth century movement within the Church of England seeking to move back towards a more Roman or Catholic form of worship, led by Pusey and Newman, is singled out specifically as being Babylonian in character. Darby writes with regards to the angelic call of separation in Rev. 18:4 to 'come out' of Puseyism and Popery for to be found there is to be found in Babylon: 'come out . . . Puseyism is heathenism . . . Popery slurs over sin; no matter how they sin, an indulgence will atone for it. It is a shame for His people to be there, but still He remembers them'.³⁹³

Thus predominantly we can conclude that Darby, standing in the stream of tradition of Protestant exegesis, did identify the Roman Catholic Church as the Whore of Babylon; however this was overwhelmingly a corporate, denominational identification of the whole system and not specifically referring to an individual pope at a particular time. Babylon, in Darby's exegesis, refers to a false and evil Papal system not specifically a

³⁹² JND, 'Familiar Conversations on Romanism', *CW*, 22.272.

³⁹³ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation' 34.347-348. For further identifications of Puseyism as Babylon see also, JND, 'The Claims of the Church of England Considered; Being the Close of a Correspondence Between the Rev. James Kelly, of Stillogan, Ireland, and J. N. Darby' (1842), *CW* 14.314; and as the mystery of iniquity in JND, 'Analysis of Dr. Newman's Apologia Pro Vita Sua', *CW*, 2nd edn. 18.136.

particular discrete individual Pope. In the handwritten commentary quoted above Darby originally writes 'The Pope' which he then subsequently deletes and replaces with the non-individual word 'Papal'. There are two reasons for this phenomenon. Firstly, the normative Protestant identification of Babylon as a Pope fits well with the normative Protestant Historicist or 'Church Historical' timescale. This approach (explained above) suggests that specific passages of the Revelation act as historical signposts or identifiers helping the reader ascertain where they stand diachronically in the history of the Church. The Brethren hermeneutical approach, as identified in chapters one and four above, is best described as Futurist, albeit an inaugurated or partially realised futurism. Such an approach of projecting a passage like Rev. 17-18 into the future presents a problem in identifying the apocalyptic motif in the present. If Babylon's arrival is future (and according to the majority of Brethren authors it is) then Babylon cannot refer to the 'current' Pope, whoever that might be. If the identification of Babylon is bound in time to the rule of a specific Pope then when that Pope dies and his authority is passed on with the events of Rev. 17-18 still unfulfilled then the interpreter is left with the problem of unfulfilled prophecy. If, on the other hand, the interpreter identifies Babylon as something that is in a sense timeless, or at least has been around and will be around longer than that interpreter, then the problem of unfulfilled prophecy is removed. Thus Darby writes

We may discern the elements of all that evil which will hereafter be ripened - the principles now, but not the accomplishment till by-and-by. The spirit of Babylon is in Popery: but Popery exclusively is not Babylon.³⁹⁴

³⁹⁴ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.304. For further similar religious identifications of Babylon see also, JND, 'The Irrationalism of Infidelity: Being a reply to "Phases of Faith", by F.W'. (1853), *CW*, 6.109-110, 334-336, 382-384; JND, 'Scriptural Criticisms, No. 2' (1834), *CW*, 13.18, 20; JND, 'Ryde', in *NJ*, p. 59; JND, 'Reading on the Fifth Book of Psalms', in *NJ*, pp. 203-204; JND, 'The

There is for Darby a distinction between different forms of Babylon in different dispensations or epochs of the history of the world. For example, Darby differentiates between 'Babylon in its mystical character at the end' and 'Babylon proper in Isaiah',³⁹⁵ presumably differentiating between the Apocalyptic Whore and the geographical historical nation and city in Mesopotamia. He also draws a distinction between the 'Babylonish captivity . . . in our present condition'³⁹⁶ and the future 'fall of Babylon . . . announced as the day of Jehovah . . . all the world has to look for . . . plainly here a question of God's ways in times to come . . . the last days',³⁹⁷ which suggests a distinguishing between the Roman Catholic Church in Darby's own time and the Roman Catholic Church in the future.

Secondly, Darby had begun to take a much more sectarian and exclusive approach to interpreting the passage than the Protestant Reformers before him. As shall be seen below Darby placed quite an emphasis on Babylon as the 'mother' of harlots and deduced from this that being a mother must mean she had 'her daughters'. If the interpreter identifies Babylon simply on an institutional level as the group from which he himself has 'come out of' then it is unproblematic enough, through an application of Rev. 17-18 to one's own *Sitz im Leben*, for the interpreter to understand that group as Babylon. But, if the interpreter belongs to a group like the Brethren that have 'come out of' a number of

Psalms', in *NC*, 3.130-131; JND, 'Further Note on Isaiah', in *NC*, 4.83-84; JND, 'Some Further Development Of The Principles Set Forth In The Pamphlet, Entitled 'On The Formation Of Churches' And Reply To Some Objections Made To Those Principles' (1841), *CW*, 1.272-273; JND, 'What has Been Acknowledged? Or, The State Of The Controversy About Elders, Followed By A Short Answer To An Article of Mons. de Gasparin' (1852), *CW*, 4.452; JND, 'The Counsel of Peace, Zechariah 6:13', *CW*, 12.308-309; JND, 'Reply to an Article in the 'Zionsbote' upon 'Darbyism'' *CW*, 33.28, 20-21, 25-26; JND, 'An Introduction to the Bible', *CW*, 34.36; JND, 'Thoughts on Isaiah the Prophet', *CW*, 30.296-299, 308-310, 339-340, 356-357.

³⁹⁵ JND, 'Further Note on Isaiah', in *NC*, 4.83.

³⁹⁶ JND, 'What has Been Acknowledged?' (1852), *CW*, 4.452.

³⁹⁷ JND, 'Thoughts on Isaiah the Prophet', *CW*, 30.297.

different denominations, then every group that the new sect have 'come out of' must be identified as Babylon. Darby writes: 'Question. What is Babylon? Popery. But it may have daughters. As a Romish priest once answered one who told him Rome was Babylon, "But who are her daughters, then?"'³⁹⁸ The answer is found clearly in another publication where we read 'Question. Would you say that Babylon is confined to Rome? She has her daughters; strictly speaking, it is Rome, she is mother of them all'.³⁹⁹ Thus the 'daughters of Babylon' concept became a useful terminology for Darby to identify all of corrupt Christendom as being included 'in' the Great Whore. This then represents a new development and a paradigmatic movement away from the standard Protestant understanding of the text and will be examined more fully towards the end of this chapter. Not only is the Whore of Babylon the whole religious system of Papal Rome but, by using this 'mother-daughter' idiom, the Brethren authors were able to increase their exclusivity and sectarianism by identifying many other denominations as Babylonian.

Thus while Darby and the Brethren more generally did not identify the Whore of Babylon as a particular Pope, and hence one would think were less able to precisely identify themselves within the details of the text, this was not the case, for although they did not have chronological precision in their exegesis, they did have a very clear sense of their ecclesiological status. This is reflected in their reading of Rev. 17-18.

Although highlighting that Babylon is referred to as a mother in the Apocalypse and then deducing that this means she must have children was not completely new before the time Darby was writing it was by no means common. The maternal dimension of Babylon's nature was an area of exegesis that was somewhat under explored. Perhaps the

³⁹⁸ JND, 'Further Notes on Revelation', in *NJ*, p. 152.

³⁹⁹ JND, 'Readings on the Seven Churches', in *NJ*, p. 362.

earliest example of exegesis which uses the maternal aspect of Babylon to postulate that she must have ecclesial progeny is to be found in the exegesis of Martin Luther who used the image of Babylon as a mother with daughters to suggest that the Mother referred to literal and historical Babylon who gave birth to a daughter; Pagan Rome:

The second Babylon is similar to the first, and what the mother has done, that is also practiced by the daughter. The first Babylon defended her faith by fire and burnt the ancestors of Christ. See Genesis 11:9. This Babylon, in Rome, burns the children of Christ.⁴⁰⁰

Papal Rome at the time of Luther had not, according to contemporary exegesis, given birth to Babylonian progeny or, to push the 'mother-daughter' idiom further, to Pagan Rome's 'grandchildren'.

A remarkably similar method of exegesis is to be found in the futurist counter-reformation exegesis of the sixteenth century Jesuit author Ribera mentioned above. Like Luther Ribera understood that Babylon was Rome. Rome pagan in the past was the mother but she had not given birth to her daughter yet. In the present experience of Ribera she was still only pregnant. Rome apostate in the future will be the daughter. The daughter of Babylon will be born only after she has fallen away from the Pope's authority and rule. The Rome of Ribera's own day had no part in Babylon, rather, she was 'the mother of piety' and the 'mistress of sanctity'.⁴⁰¹

Towards the end of the sixteenth century, writing at a similar time to Ribera, English clergyman Robert Browne (1550-1631), leader of a Separatist movement known as the Brownists and regarded as the founder of Congregationalism, seceded from the

⁴⁰⁰ Luther, in Froom, 2.277.

⁴⁰¹ Ribera, *In sacrum Beati Ioannis Apostoli, & Evangelistae Apocalypsin Commentarij* (Lugundi: Ex Officina Iuntarum, 1593), pp. 282-283, in Froom, 2.493.

Anglican church through a principle of separation which identified Roman Catholicism as the Mother of Harlots. Browne identified Anglicanism along with any Christians who were such in name only and who did not live Christian lives as the daughters of Babylon.⁴⁰² Thus he continued the distinction between Babylon as 'Mother' and Babylon as 'Daughter'. However, it is here for the first time that Papal Rome has given birth, as for Luther historical Babylon was the mother of Pagan Rome and for Ribera the pregnancy had not yet reached its full term.

Browne's separatist views were carried across the Atlantic, via Holland, to North America in the first quarter of the seventeenth century by the Pilgrim Fathers where the American Congregationalist Increase Mather (1639-1723), who, like a number of the Brethren authors who were to appear on the scene over a century after him, graduated from Trinity College Dublin. Increase wrote comprehensively on the subject of eschatology. In *Ichabod, or . . . the Glory of the Lord, is Departing From New England* (1702) he continued the 'mother-daughter' exegesis of the Babylon motif, identifying the Church of Rome as the mother of harlots and the churches of New England, like the churches of Africa and Europe centuries before that had once been glorious but in submitting to Rome had lost their glory, as the harlot daughters of Babylon.⁴⁰³ Thus it appears that on this level at least Mather understood the relationship between Papal Rome and the Congregational churches of New England as a 'mother-daughter' relationship.

Likewise, New England preacher Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766) used the Lisbon earthquake in 1755 as an occasion to deliver a sermon entitled *Discourse . . . Occasioned*

⁴⁰²Champlin Burrage, *The True Story of Robert Browne (1550-1603), Father of Congregationalism* (Oxford: 1906), pp. 11-25, 32-35, 46-47.

⁴⁰³Increase Mather, 'Ichabod, or . . . the Glory of the Lord, is Departing From New England' (1702), in *Froom*, 3.129.

by the Earthquakes in November 1755 during which he referred to the earthquake as a portent of God's judgment on Papal Rome as 'Babylon the Great, Mother of Harlots'. He urged his listeners to 'refrain from all conformity with the corruptions of Babylon' lest they should be found guilty of being her children by association.⁴⁰⁴ Some ten years later, without explicitly using the Mother-daughter idiom, Mayhew, in a lecture entitled *Popish Idolatry*, used Rev. 18 as a call for his listeners to 'come out of a church, whether Rome or any other, to which the characters of Babylon actually agree' and thus identified Babylon's daughters as any church who conforms to Papal doctrine or practice.⁴⁰⁵

At approximately the same time as Mayhew, fellow Congregationalist Isaac Backus (1724-1806) developed the Babylonian 'mother-daughter' idiom further in his publication *The Infinite Importance of the Obedience of Faith, and of Separation from the World*. Here he expressed the notion that any church which loved worldly or secular pursuits was to be identified as Babylonian Rome's progeny. He wrote of the Papal Church: 'She is the mother of harlots, and all churches who go after any lovers but Christ, for a temporal living, are guilty of playing the harlot'.⁴⁰⁶

However, in Darby's time and in Darby's country although a number of authors were simultaneously beginning to use this 'mother-daughter' idiom more frequently, such as Charlotte Elizabeth editor of the Protestant Magazine during the mid-nineteenth century,⁴⁰⁷ few were to develop this interpretation as fully as the Brethren authors would.

The closest a non-Brethren author got to using the Babylonian progeny motif in anywhere near the way that the seventeenth and eighteenth century American

⁴⁰⁴ Jonathan Mayhew, 'Discourse . . . Occasioned by the Earthquakes in November 1755', pp. 7-9. In Froom, 3.192-193.

⁴⁰⁵ Jonathan Mayhew, 'Popish Idolatry' (1765), in Froom, 3.193.

⁴⁰⁶ I. Backus, 'The Infinite Importance of the Obedience of Faith, and of Separation from the World' (1767), in Froom, 3.213.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 643-645.

Congregationalists did was from an anonymous writer who, upon reading about the Oxford Movements efforts to re-catholicise the Protestant church and their belief that those who seceded from Rome 'are prodigal sons who have left the Father's house', responded by using the 'mother-daughter' idiom. The writer suggests that any movement of Anglicanism back to Rome was a movement back to a Babylonian mother and that the true believers should, in the words of Rev. 18:4 'come out and be separate'.⁴⁰⁸ It is entirely possible however that in 1842 a Brethren author could have been the anonymous source of the submission to the Christian Observer.

Kelly

The next Brethren author to which we turn our attention is William Kelly. Kelly clearly stands within the same interpretive tradition as Darby and the Protestant Reformers before him in that he makes a link between Babylon and the papacy in sixty-five of his publications. The most obvious place to begin is with his publication *Babylon and the Beast* (1872). In this work Kelly predominantly and overwhelmingly identifies Babylon as Roman Catholicism. He writes in no uncertain terms that 'Rome and no other is the city aimed at by the woman Babylon in Revelation 17'.⁴⁰⁹ Yet to make sure that his reader is left with no uncertainty he reiterates this view with the qualifier that he is not just simply speaking about Rome Pagan, Imperial or geographical but that Babylon is 'Rome not pagan but ecclesiastical, on Rome professedly Christian'.⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ Anon, *Christian Observer*, April 1842, Vol. 5, No. 25, pp. 198-199., in Fromm, 3.296.

⁴⁰⁹ WK, *Babylon and the Beast* (Broom, 1872a), p. 7.

⁴¹⁰ WK (1872a), p. 8. See also, WK, 'Revelation 14:19', in *CA*, Vol. 6, (1856), p. 51; WK, 'Daniel 7', in *CA*, Vol. 6, (1856), p. 335; WK, 'Matthew 16:28', in *CA*, Vol. 6, (1856), p. 337; WK, 'Amos' in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), pp. 127-128; WK, 'Obadiah' in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), p. 189; WK, 'Micah' in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), p. 257; WK, *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Ephesians, with a New Translation* (Morrish, n.d.), p. 116; WK, *The Unity Of The Spirit; And What It Is To Keep It, Being Notes*

The evidence he uses to come to this conclusion involves an examination of the word 'mystery' that appears in Rev. 17:5 and 17:7. He writes that the inscription 'Mystery . . . well suits Rome nominally Christian'.⁴¹¹ Kelly then examines the geographical location of Babylon in Rev.17:9 concluding

Who in the world could doubt where the seven-hilled city is? Still less could it have been doubted in the time of St. John. There was but one such city, and that one rose up before every person's mind instinctively. It was Rome, and none other.⁴¹²

Then Kelly looks at Rev. 17:10 which informs that the Great Whore ruled over the kings of the earth. He takes this as further evidence of Babylon being Papal Rome:

There was only one city which had reigned over kings. There can be no question therefore that Rome exclusively is the city intended here . . . This is so true that a great many learned persons of the Roman Catholic communion have acknowledged the fact . . . Bishop of Meaux, J. B. Bossuet, Baronius and Bellarmin. These officials, of high distinction in the Romish system, acknowledge Rome to be intended.⁴¹³

Thus, not only using the text as evidence but also, in a traditional Catholic hermeneutical style, Kelly uses the authority of tradition as evidence to identify Babylon as the Papal System.

Of A Lecture, by W. K. (Horner, 1882), pp. 6-7; WK, 'Philadelphia and Laodicea: Revelation 3:7-22', in BT, Vol. 16, 1886-1887, p. 286; WK, The Purpose of God for His Sons and Heirs (Weston, 1906b), pp. 15-16; WK, The Righteousness of God: What is it? (Broom, 1865c), p. 46; WK, 'The Scripture of Truth: Daniel 11 and 12', in BT, New Series, Vol. 1, Feb 1896-Oct 1897, p. 6; WK, Lectures on the Church of God (1890), reprinted (Bible Truth pubs., n.d.), p. 73, n; WK, A Letter on the Church of the Scriptures (Broom, n.d.), pp. 7-8; WK, Eleven Lectures on the Book of Job Delivered at Blackheath in 1903, reprinted (Bible Truth pubs., 1976), p. 63; WK, Two Lectures on the Song of Solomon (Race, 1917), p. 52; WK, Lectures on Ezra and Nehemiah (1921), reprint (Bible Truth pubs., n.d.), p. 22; WK, Notes on Ezekiel (Morrish, 1876), pp. 56-57.*

⁴¹¹ WK (1872a), p. 4.

⁴¹² Ibid., p. 7.

⁴¹³ Ibid., p. 7.

The first twelve pages of this publication make the point over and over again. For Kelly Babylon is clearly and irrefutably Papal Rome. However, Kelly, like Darby, because of his futuristic hermeneutical approach to the timescale of the Apocalypse, does not identify Babylon as an individual Pope, but as the Papal system of Roman Catholicism. Thus he writes of 'the Pope of Rome. Although we regard his system as a frightful delusion, even Babylon, how can people believe that 'the Apostasy' has arrived yet?'⁴¹⁴ It is important to note here that if, like Kelly, one adheres to a futurist hermeneutic then it is too problematic to identify Babylon as a specific Pope at a specific time in history. Rather all that remains possible is to identify Babylon as the papal or Roman Catholic system. For this reason Kelly writes

I have no doubt . . . it is Rome that is the peculiar object of God's judgment. Not that Rome is all that is meant by Babylon, but that Rome is at the centre of it . . . Not Rome in the pagan form; not merely Rome in our own days, bad as it is, and becoming increasingly wicked. But I think that the Babylon of the Apocalypse is not merely that system which is now opposed to Christianity, but Babylon when it will have opposed the last testimony that God will send.⁴¹⁵

The inaugurated nature of this futurism can be seen in the following passage in which Kelly states that the Rome of the past and present can be identified as Babylon, but that it is only in the future that Papal Rome will be fully Babylonian. We read: 'God has hedged his own draft of Babylon so as to make it quite clear that Rome, city and system, figures in the scene . . . Though the full result will not be until the end of the age'.⁴¹⁶ Thus, for

⁴¹⁴ WK, 'The Coming and the Day of the Lord', in *Three Prophetic Gems* (1903-1904) repub. (Sunbury, PA: Believer's Bookshelf, 1970), p. 48.

⁴¹⁵ WK (1897b), p. 61.

⁴¹⁶ WK (1897b), p. 48. For further examples of the future arrival and judgment of Babylon in Kelly's work see WK, 'Answers To Questions', in *BT*, Vol.18, June 1891, p. 286; WK, 'Answers To Questions', in *BT*, Vol. N1, June 1897, p. 288; WK, *CA*, Vol. 4, 15th July, 1854, p. 187; WK, *CA*, Vol. 5, 3rd November, 1855, p. 342; WK, *God's Inspiration Of The Scriptures* (1903), reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1966), pp.

Kelly, Babylon cannot be an individual Pope, as the time is not right for the final fulfilment of Rev. 17-18. Their fulfilment will be in the future and any identification of Babylon in the Papacy or in Roman Catholicism in the past or present is only an antecedent, a precursor, of what will come.

Kelly, like Darby, was originally a Church of England man. The original sixteenth century Reformers sought both to define themselves through seceding from the 'Babylonian' Catholic Church, and through internally reinforcing the boundaries between insider and outsider. They did this through using the Babylon motif to vilify the 'other' in order to define the 'self'. Kelly agreed wholeheartedly with their use of vituperative rhetoric and their identification of the Church in Rome as the Great Whore.⁴¹⁷ Yet he had 'come out' of Rome already, in that the tradition to which he had originally adhered had originally protested against her. Thus the problem arose that if Catholicism alone was the Apocalyptic Whore, how could he 'come out' of a group that had already once 'come out' of Babylon? The answer becomes clear as he writes

Nor would one question that God honoured the German reformer's testimony against Babylon, founded on a later portion of Revelation. Does this prove

250-251, 261; WK, 'Zechariah', in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), p. 443; WK, 'The Second Advent Before, Not After, The Millennium', in *BT*, vol. 17, 1888-1889, pp. 4, 9; WK, 'The Christian Hope Consistent With Events Revealed In Prophecy', in *BT*, Vol. 9, 1872-1873, p. 2; WK, 'The Early Chapters Of Genesis' in *BT*, Vol. N1-2, 1896-1899, p. 192; WK, *The Known Isaiah: A Defence of its Unity* (Cheverton, 1874a), p. 7; WK, *The Hope Of Christ, Compatible With Prophecy* (Weston, 1898), p. 11; WK, *Lectures on the Second Coming and Kingdom of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (Broom, 1865b), pp. 242-243; WK, *Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles with a new Version of a Corrected Text*, 2nd edn. (Race, 1914a), pp. 647-648; WK, *The Offerings Of Leviticus: An Exposition Of Leviticus 1 — 7* (Weston, 1899), pp. 82-83; WK, *Notes on the Book of Daniel: With an Introduction in Review of Dean Farrar's Work on the Prophet in the 'Expositor's Bible'* (Carter, 1897c), p. xxvii; WK, *Isaiah* (1897a), 4th edn., reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1975), pp. 31, 49-50, 75.

⁴¹⁷ WK, 'Nebuchadnezzar's Dream and Daniel's Vision: Daniel 2:7', in *BT*, Vol. N1, 1896-1897, p. 7. See also WK (1870) reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1970), p. 425. 'Neither he [Calvin] nor any of the Reformers had any real understanding of the book as a whole, though they were not wrong in applying Babylon to Rome'.

that Luther knew, or that he ought not to learn, a fuller development of the great whore, for which no room is left in the ordinary interpretation?⁴¹⁸

This belief that Kelly held, of coming out of that which had already come out of Babylon, led him, in agreement with Darby, to emphasise the idea of Babylon as having many daughters, that is, of Roman Catholicism giving birth to the Church of England and then the Church of England giving birth to a third generation of Babylon, the Nonconformists and Dissenters. Kelly informs us that Babylon is

a corrupt system, which plainly has its centre in Rome, though taking a larger compass, so as to embrace every religious institution . . . Babylon is not only herself 'the great harlot', but 'the mother of the harlots and the abominations of the earth'. There are more of kindred corruptions in religion, though Rome is pre-eminent.⁴¹⁹

Kelly goes on to make a distinction between Babylon in the 'High' churches and Babylon in the 'Low' churches. Such a distinction may perhaps be a differentiation between the Established and un-established churches, or between High and Low forms of Anglicanism, or between Catholicism and Protestant traditions. Regardless of exactly to whom he was referring, Kelly informs that both high and low churches are still

Babylonian:

Babylon is . . . accompanied by the greatest unholiness and the greatest laxity of doctrine when pretending to be the orthodox, the holy Catholic, Apostolic, and I know not what else. Well, that is Babylon, but that is only high Babylon; there is low Babylon too; and all Babylon, no matter whether high or low — all will be the greatest object of God's fury.⁴²⁰

⁴¹⁸ WK, 'Elements of Prophecy: Answers to Historicism', in *BT*, vol. 11, 1876-1877, p. 72.

⁴¹⁹ WK (1897b), p. 387. See also, WK, 'The Coming' in *Three Prophetic Gems* (1970), pp. 48-49.

⁴²⁰ WK, *Eleven Lectures on the Book of Job Delivered at Blackheath in 1903*, reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1976), p. 63.

Thus Kelly, along with Darby, begins to use the phrase 'daughters of Babylon' to refer to the corrupt nature of the whole of Christendom and the Babylonian character of all denominations except their own. Here, for the first time, a new uniquely Brethren 'community interpretation' (to use the words of Fish) of Rev. 17-18 has developed, rather than just a continuation of a general Protestant community interpretation, which is becoming increasingly sectarian and exclusive as to who is in and who is out of Babylon. Both Kelly and Darby have used Babylon as a tool to define the 'extreme outsider', that is Papal Rome, just as the earliest Christians used the same text to define the 'extreme outsider', in their case the Roman Empire.⁴²¹ We shall see Kelly's understanding of Babylon as being found in all churches, as he uses the same text to vilify the 'nearest outsiders'⁴²² below.

Other Authors

DENNETT

Turning now to the writings of Edward Dennett, who identifies Babylon as Papal Rome in two of his publications, it becomes apparent that other Brethren authors continued in the hermeneutical tradition of the Protestant interpretive community. Dennett writes that 'Babylon represents the religious corruptress of the earth- [she] is in fact what Rome has ever been and what Babylon will yet more manifestly be'.⁴²³ To make sure that no mistake is made, that it is Rome Papal and religious to which he refers not simply Rome pagan, imperial or geographical he writes of the woman shown in Rev. 17:18: 'The

⁴²¹ Adela Yabro Collins, 'Insiders and Outsiders in the Book of Revelation', in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us*, ed. by Jacob Neusner & Ernest S. Frerichs (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1985), pp. 204, 216.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, p. 204.

⁴²³ ED, *The Visions of John in Patmos: Being Notes on the Apocalypse* (Rouse, 1892), p. 201.

Romish system, what we understand by the Papal religion – is presented under the form of this woman'.⁴²⁴

Dennett, like Kelly, appeals to the past interpretation of this passage by the Protestant Reformers as authority for his own identification of the Roman Catholic Church as being the Great Whore:

It would be a waste of time to show, what has been indisputably proved a thousand times, that Rome was ever known as the seven-hilled city . . . claiming to be Christ's vicegerents on earth, the popes always avowed their title to sovereignty over the kingdoms of the world.⁴²⁵

Babylon is not a specific Pope in Dennett's exegesis but rather the whole system of Catholicism. Thus, Dennett is continuing in the unfolding hermeneutical tradition of the Brethren interpretive community as identifying the 'extreme outsider' as the wider Papal system. He writes of the Great Whore that 'a woman is a well known symbol in scripture for the expression of a system . . . as for example . . . the daughter of Babylon . . . in the Apocalypse, setting forth a religious organization'.⁴²⁶ This is because Dennett believes that her arrival has not fully occurred yet, it is still a future event, and thus to identify Babylon as a specific individual Pope would be to limit the interpretation of the passage to the present. Thus he writes of the future events of Rev. 17:3: 'she is seen 'sitting upon' the beast; that is, what the woman represents, Popery in its full-blown form after the rapture of the saints, is allied with and upheld by the world-power'.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ ED, *Zechariah The Prophet: Being An Exposition* (Broom & Rouse, 1988), p. 54.

⁴²⁵ ED (1892), pp. 222-223.

⁴²⁶ ED (1888), pp. 53-54. See also, ED (1892), p. 226. When Babylon is, 'identified with the system, 'woman' is used . . . all other systems that derive their parentage from her'.

⁴²⁷ ED (1892), p. 225. See also, Edward Dennett, *The House of God- Traced Through the Scriptures*, reprinted from, 'The Christian Friend and Instructor' (Morganville, NJ: Present Truth, 1991), p. 37.

Dennett continues in the interpretive tradition of Darby and Kelly by drawing attention to the fact that Babylon is called a 'mother' and therefore must have children. For Dennett the 'mother' may be a distant threat, since he himself is distanced from the Church of Rome, but the harlots children, the 'nearest outsider', are potentially much closer to home. Thus he writes

This wicked 'woman' is also a mother, a mother of other systems, as false to Christ as herself. It is thus not only Popery, but all other systems that derive their parentage from her and partake of her character. Are there not such already in existence?⁴²⁸

Dennett develops this idea of Babylonian Catholicism giving birth to daughters in quite an interesting way when he suggests that the Apocalyptic Harlot has at least two daughters who are two united but distinct systems, both birthed by the wicked woman.

We read

And what are these? . . . little doubt that they are twin sisters, superstition and infidelity . . . they are conjoined in their baleful work at this moment in the professing church, and nowhere more apparently than in Romanism.⁴²⁹

It will become clear, in what follows, that Dennett used this concept of the 'daughters' of Babylon as a way of identifying all of the groups and denominations of Christendom as being Babylonian. He thereby used the text as a vituperative tool to enable the Brethren community to become more sectarian and exclusive on an ecclesiological level by accusing both the 'extreme outsider', Papal Rome, and the 'nearest outsider', that is Protestantism and of her offshoots, as being Babylon.

⁴²⁸ ED (1892), p. 226.

⁴²⁹ ED (1888), p. 56.

BAINES

The next Brethren author to which this thesis turns is T.B. Baines. Just like his companions, Baines identifies Babylon as Rome papal. He writes: 'Babylon the great . . . has not her seat at Jerusalem, but at Rome; is not a Jewish but a Christian apostacy'.⁴³⁰ Here he links Babylon with Rome Christian but further on he makes the link between Babylon and Rome specifically Catholic. Of the relationship between Babylon and the kings of the earth in Rev. 18:9-10 Baines comments: 'A corrupt alliance with the secular power, which she upheld as a tool of her own ambition, has always been a favourite policy of the Roman See'.⁴³¹ Thus it becomes clear that Baines is located within the hermeneutic circle of the Protestant interpretive community in his understanding of Babylon.

Baines does not identify the Whore of Babylon as a specific Pope riding on the beast of Catholicism like some of the Reformers and Protestors before him, neither does he distinguish between the woman of Rev. 17 as an individual Pope with the city of Rev. 18 as the Papal city and system, but rather, he identifies Babylon as a system or institution. In this way he avoids the problem of unfulfilled prophecy that occurs in the identification of an individual pope as Babylon. When that individual pope dies and is replaced by another pope with the prophecies of Rev. 17-18 still unfulfilled, the exegesis has to be modified as it has failed. If, however, the fulfillment of the prophecy is both future and institutional not present and individual, then the prophecy cannot be proven to be unfulfilled. As such Babylon is, for Baines, clearly a 'system' and not an individual.⁴³²

⁴³⁰ TBB (1879), p. 226.

⁴³¹ Ibid., p. 235.

⁴³² Ibid., pp. 221, 225, 233.

Such a view contrasts strongly with the exegesis occurring less than a century earlier, of Pius VI as religious leader, a corrupt individual who was being judged in 1798.

Baines continues in the new Brethren community interpretation which projects the final and complete fulfillment of Babylon's arrival and destruction into the future. He makes a clear distinction between Babylon as Roman Catholicism in the past and present and, in language reminiscent of Ribera and Joachim, Babylon as the Roman Catholicism of the future:

Is it, then, Romanism in the past and present or Romanism in the future, that is here portrayed? The scene itself is, of course, future . . . But much of the description given is true of the past and present, belonging to the system itself. . . . She has had time given her to repent, and has not repented. . . . There is grace for individuals connected with her if they repent, but none for the system itself, which has refused repentance.⁴³³

Thus the key, for Baines, as to when Babylon will fully arrive on the scene and be judged and destroyed is that it is a future event. He informs his brethren that for as long as the Holy Spirit is active on the earth Catholicism is in some way held back or prevented from becoming fully Babylonian in nature, however, in the coming dispensation during which the Holy Spirit leaves the earth, Catholicism and indeed all who are Christian in name only and not in practice, will, in the future, become part of the Apocalyptic Whore.⁴³⁴

Baines also takes the references to Babylon being a 'mother' to mean that she must have 'daughters' and uses this concept of the Babylonian 'mother-daughter' idiom to suggest that Catholicism has given 'birth' to denominational daughters. By doing so he is able to develop a more sectarian and exclusive community interpretation of the text

⁴³³ Ibid., pp. 226-227.

⁴³⁴ Ibid., pp. 221-241.

than would be possible if only Rome papal was understood as being Babylon, extending the vituperative rhetoric not only to the distant outsider but also to the near outsider.

Baines writes of Roman Catholicism 'giving birth' with such language as 'for not merely is she an idolatrous system herself, but she has given birth to other idolatrous systems scattered over the world'.⁴³⁵ He then goes on to identify to whom the mother, namely Roman Catholicism, has given birth. Papal Rome's daughters, as in the exegesis of Browne some two and a half centuries earlier, are all of those Christians who are worldly and idolatrous:

As 'the mother of harlots', she may have children walking in her own evil ways, not directly connected with Rome. The principles of idolatry, and of worldly traffic unbecoming the bride of Christ, have eaten into a large portion of Christendom that is not professedly Romanist. But the harlot herself is the religious corruption that has its seat in the seven-hilled city.⁴³⁶

Thus we can see already that the Brethren are using the Babylon motif to define themselves on a religious level by vilifying the 'other', that is primarily Catholicism, as being Babylon. A distinctive and nuanced version of the established Protestant understanding of the text is emerging from within the Brethren community, as the biblical text is once again read in the light of new experience. Babylon is, in the anti-papal tradition that developed in the sixteenth century, Rome ecclesiastical. As such this movement stands within the Reformation stream of tradition and is located firmly within the Protestant interpretive community. However, the Brethren authors are quite careful to not associate the exegesis of the text with a particular individual pope bound to a particular period of time. To do so would involve the risk of unfulfilled prophecy. Instead

⁴³⁵ Ibid., p. 225.

⁴³⁶ Ibid., p. 226.

Babylon is interpreted as a system or institution rather than an individual Pope and the fulfillment of this text is projected into the future.

MILLER

Andrew Miller, in his three-volume publication '*Short Papers on Church History*' traces the development of the Roman Catholic Church and the reign of individual Popes throughout history. He is absolutely clear in his identification of Babylon as ecclesiastical Rome:

There can be no question, we think, as to what is meant by the symbol used here. Not only a woman, but a licentious woman, and enthroned amidst the corruptions of the seven hilled city . . . here we have a material point- that which has always characterized Rome . . . Rome is clearly indicated, and her religious corruptions are symbolized by 'the mother of harlots.'⁴³⁷

He makes the identification of Babylon as Rome, not just geographical but distinctly Papal, clearer as he writes 'These points being fairly disposed of, and Rome being fully identified, we accept Revelation 17 and 18 as descriptive of the papacy'.⁴³⁸ The text is used once again to castigate the distant outsider.

Yet Miller too understands Babylon as referring to the Papal System, rather than an individual Pope, and this binds his exegesis firmly into the conceptual sphere of the Brethren community interpretation of the text. He refers to Rome ecclesiastical with such non-individualistic language as 'this false woman, or the corrupt religious system of Rome'⁴³⁹ further reinforcing his anti-papal and not anti-pope exegesis.

⁴³⁷ AM, CH, 2.190-191.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., 2.191.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

He understands the word 'fornication', used to describe Babylon's sexual relations with the kings of the world, as a way of describing Rome as a religious system. Rome uses her power to seduce believers away from a true love of Christ. He writes that such fornication 'we have no doubt means the seducing power of the Romish system in drawing affections away from Christ'.⁴⁴⁰ Thus he reiterates the views of Darby, Kelly, Dennett and Baines in identifying the woman, not as an individual pope but rather as a 'strange sight- a woman- a religious community, professing to be the true spouse of Christ'.⁴⁴¹

Miller continues in the Brethren tradition of identifying Babylon as a 'mother', one who gives birth to daughters, as a tool for identifying other denominations as being Babylonian. He does this in order to develop a more sectarian and exclusive understanding of the text than is possible by simply suggesting that Babylon is Papal Rome. He continues with the Brethren community exegesis as he writes

She is a mother — the mother of harlots, she has many daughters. Every religious system in Christendom, that tends in any measure to lead souls away from Christ, to engage their affections with objects that come between the heart and the Man in the glory, is related to this great parent of spiritual iniquity.⁴⁴²

Miller does not specifically link Babylon's arrival and destruction with a specific period of time in any of his publications, unlike the above authors who clearly project her fulfillment, judgment and destruction into the future, rather, he traces the whole history of the Catholic Church in a historicist way through Rev. 17-18, thereby linking the whole of Catholicism historically with Babylon.

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 2.192.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid., 2.194.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

In his publication on the history of the Brethren movement Miller clearly rejects all Catholic doctrines concluding that even the ‘most important doctrines of the word of God . . . the vital truth of salvation through faith in the sacrifice of Christ, without the merit of good works’, came as ‘startling’ and ‘overwhelming’ surprises to those who had been ‘educated in the superstitions of Romanism’.⁴⁴³ As an official chronicler of Brethren history⁴⁴⁴ it is reasonable to postulate that, although Miller remains silent regarding a possible future arrival, reign and eventual destruction of Babylon, he stands so clearly within the Brethren interpretive community that he would understand the text as being fulfilled according to the same time scale as others in the movement such as Darby, Kelly, Dennett and Baines.

BELLETT

Turning now to the work of Brethren author Bellett it may be noted that although he does not specifically refer to Babylon as ‘Rome’ either papal or pagan, on a number of occasions he does refer to Babylon as ‘the eternal city’. Such a term would have been well known by all his readers as referring to the seat of the Papacy in Rome. He writes an entry in the magazine *The Christian Friend* in which he states: ‘This boast of being the ‘eternal city’ so far identifies her with the Babylon that says ‘I sit a queen, and am no widow’.⁴⁴⁵ In another entry to *The Christian Friend* Bellett uses the same language: ‘We live in a moment when Babylon is filling itself afresh with this boast . . . The boast of ‘the eternal city’ only the more distinctly marks it for the judgment of God’.⁴⁴⁶ Thus whilst

⁴⁴³ AM, *The Brethren: A Brief Sketch Of Their Origin, Progress And Testimony* (Morrish, 1879), p. 1.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., *passim*

⁴⁴⁵ JGB, ‘The Potter's Broken Vessel, Jeremiah 18, 19’, in *CF* (1880), 7.32.

⁴⁴⁶ JGB, ‘A Letter- Jeremiah’, in *CF* (1887), 14.29.

not as explicit in his exegesis of Rev. 17-18 as Darby, Kelly and Dennett, the connection between Papal Rome (as a city and not an individual) and Babylon, is still made. Bellett does not develop the above authors' concept of Babylon as Rome papal being a mother with daughters, but he does, along with Darby, Kelly, Dennett and Baines, understand the passage to be fully fulfilled only in the future.

In *The Potter's Broken Vessel* (1880), Bellett highlights Babylon's future judgment, an event that although is being prepared in the present has not yet happened. In like manner, in *A Letter – Jeremiah* (1887), the 'doom' and destruction of Babylon is spoken of in the future tense rather than the present.⁴⁴⁷ This can be seen in further writings from Bellett, for example he writes 'The woman, mystically Babylon, is removed by the ten kings . . . this is the closing crowning feature in the picture of the world's apostasy. But we have not reached it yet'.⁴⁴⁸

The three key dimensions of the developing Brethren hermeneutic, of the use of the Babylon motif to define the self by identifying Catholicism, the 'extreme outsider' as Babylon, of refraining from identifying Babylon as a specific Pope but rather projecting the fulfilment of the text into the future, and of using a 'mother-daughter' idiom to apply the designation of Babylon in a more sectarian way to the 'nearer outsider' can be seen in many other Brethren publications of nineteenth century.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 14.29.

⁴⁴⁸ JGB, 'Babylon', in *Musings on Scripture*, 3 vols. (Walters, 1885-7), 1.26. For further example of the future application of the Babylon motif in Bellett's writings see also, JGB, 'Obadiah', in *The Minor Prophets*, Section 4, ed. WK (Allan, 1870), pp. 34-35; JGB, 'Ruth', in *Musings on Scripture*, 4vols. (Walters, 1885-1887), 3.117-118.

⁴⁴⁹ E.A. Bland, *Babylon, Past and Future, with Remarks on Babylon, the Metropolis of Satan* by A.R. Habershon, taken from, Papers read at the Women's Branch of the Prophecy Investigation Society, The Dispensational Series, no.5 (Holness, n.d.), pp. 6-7; S.B. 'Revelation', in *NW*, Vol. XV, p. 142; JLH, 'On the Increase in Popery', in *ChW*, Vol. IV, No. 1, pp. 1-16; Bergin, F. 'Babylon to be Rebuilt and Destroyed' (Bristol: 1893), reprinted in *Watching and Waiting*, Vol. X, No. 209, August 1937, p. 163; FWG, *A Divine Movement*, pp. 6-7.

Conclusion

In this chapter significant attention has been given to Brethren archival material which has heretofore received only slight attention, at least from a biblical interpretation perspective. Throughout, it has been shown that the Brethren authors were using the Whore of Babylon motif to achieve two ends: to define the self on a religious level, and to vilify the religious 'other', in this case Roman Catholicism. The Brethren use of the text is in no way different to the original use of the text by the earliest Christians for whom the text was written. They too, more than seventeen hundred years before the Brethren, used the text to define themselves and determine boundaries between the self and other social groups.⁴⁵⁰ For both Brethren and early Christians the text expressed a struggle over values, for: 'the supporters of Rome saw the emperor as the primary link between the divine and human, whereas the Christians viewed Jesus Christ in that role',⁴⁵¹ and as such they launched a vituperative attack on Rome. The Brethren believed that the Pope had merely taken over from the emperor as *pontifex maximus* and found themselves in an analogous struggle against idolatrous worship in which the same vituperative rhetoric could easily be applied, this time to Papal Rome.

The Brethren authors are clearly aware of the stream of exegesis that had gone on before them, in particular the specifically 'anti-pope' individualistic interpretation of the Whore of Babylon over and against the 'anti-papal' system interpretation of the scarlet coloured beast on which the whore rides. Specifically individualistic language of Babylon as 'a pope' or 'the pope' riding on the back of the Catholic system, the beast of Rev. 17:3, is rejected, in favour of identifying the Woman as the Roman Catholic system. By

⁴⁵⁰ Collins (1986), p. 310.

⁴⁵¹ Ibid., p. 315.

depersonalising the identity of the whore in conjunction with a rejection of the Historicist framework and a development of the Futurist framework, which enables them to project Babylon's arrival, reign and judgment into the future, the community are protected from the danger of unfulfilled prophecy.

The Brethren community, as a result of seceding from many different denominations, unlike the Protestant Reformers before them who seceded from only the Catholic church, make the interpretation of the text more exclusive and sectarian by applying it to denominations beyond the Catholic church. The danger is both distant, in the case of Rome, and near, in the case of other denominations. They do this by using the angelic call 'come out of her my people' (Rev. 18:4) as a way of giving scriptural authority to their sectarianism and exclusivity, and by suggesting that because Babylon is designated 'Mother of harlots' then she must, by inference, have daughters who are harlots. These daughters are all the churches that the Brethren themselves have 'come out of', and will be examined in the following chapter.

In the broader context of biblical hermeneutics it may be noted that once again the reading of a biblical text, in this case Rev. 17-18, is largely parasitic upon the perspective of the one who reads it, in this case the Brethren community. The Brethren authors, to a certain extent, take it for granted that Babylon is Papal Rome. They do not, however, remain with such an identification for long but rather they use this as a spring-board to make other, more individualistic interpretations. They are hence both inheritors of a hermeneutical tradition and co-creators of it. This will become apparent in the remainder of this thesis.

Chapter Six

'Babylon' is All of Corrupt Christendom

As has been shown in chapter five, a number of Brethren authors identify Babylon as a religious entity. Whilst, like the sixteenth-century Reformers before them, these authors began this identification with Papal Rome (as a system not as an individual Pope) the paradigm quickly developed, through the use of the 'mother-daughter' idiom, to suggest that as Babylon is the Mother of Harlots she must by virtue of this have her daughters. According to the Brethren writers, Papal Rome too had 'daughters'.

In the present chapter this investigation is taken further and seeks to address the question of the perceived identity of these so-called 'daughters of Babylon'. Who, for the Brethren writers, are they and where can they be found? The answer to this question will enable a better understanding of how the Brethren perceived themselves as a religious community as the identification of the Whore of Babylon as Papal Rome and then as every denomination of Christendom is used as a form of vituperative rhetoric: to vilify the 'religious other' in order to define the 'self'.

During and before the time of the Reformation, specifically religious interpretations of the Whore of Babylon motif were severely limited through the obvious lack of denominational variety. This was seen in the previous chapter and also in chapter three, both of which demonstrated that the primary religious identification of Babylon was that of Papal Rome.⁴⁵² There was little variation on this theme among Protestant writers. So, for example, Fromm identifies some thirty-seven major biblical expositors of this epoch who all identified either the Pope individually, or Roman Catholicism

⁴⁵² I stress 'religious' here because, as chapter three has shown, there has been a variety of non-religious identifications of Babylon throughout the history of the Christian Church.

corporately, as the Great Whore.⁴⁵³ The lack of variety in the identification of 'Babylon' among Protestant interpreters during the period c. 1600-1798 is a little surprising given the variety of religious traditions that emerged during this period. Whereas the previous chapter has shown that the Brethren authors are located within the Protestant community paradigm (albeit with some distinctive elements) the present chapter shows that the Brethren had something substantially new, at least within the English tradition, to add to the exegesis of the Babylon motif.

Brethren historian Andrew Miller for example, quite clearly identified Babylon as Papal Rome, yet he would not limit his exegesis to such a narrow interpretation as that held by the Reformers before him. Rather Miller used the 'mother-daughter' motif from Rev. 17:5 to suggest that Papal Rome had given birth to Babylonian daughters. Miller, however, refrained from specifically identifying exactly who these daughters were other than in vague terms.⁴⁵⁴ A number of other Brethren authors, however, were much more definite about the identity of the daughters of Babylon and rather than using such broad-brush strokes as Miller, they positively levelled the charge of being a 'daughter of Babylon' at a number of Protestant, Dissenting and Non-conformist groups. This significant development shows once again how the text of the book of Revelation, replete as it is with its images, may be used by new interpreters who are working in new contexts. The *Sitz im Leben* of the Brethren was in some ways similar but in some ways

⁴⁵³ Froom, 2.528-531. It has been noted in chapter three that Froom has an obvious bias to such interpretations due to his Adventist beliefs, however, his rigorous and exhaustive research cannot be dismissed and is, on the whole reliable. He includes James I of England (1566-1625), Joseph Mede (1586-1638), Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), Sir Isaac Newton (1642-1727), John Gill (1697-1771), Joseph Priestly (1733-1804), and Joseph Galloway (c.1730-1803) among the many.

⁴⁵⁴ See above p. 163.

different to that of those who had gone before them thus the exegesis changes to suit the new situation.

Dennett

It was noted in the previous chapter that Dennett used the Babylonian 'mother-daughter' idiom on a number of occasions in his exegesis of Rev. 17-18 where he identifies the daughters of Babylon very vaguely as 'systems false to Christ'. This is in part two of his work *The Visions Of John In Patmos: Being Notes On The Apocalypse* (1892). In his other work, *Zechariah The Prophet: Being An Exposition* (1888), Dennett uses terms such as 'twin sisters of superstition and infidelity' in relation to the image of Babylon and her daughters. However Dennett, like Miller, remains quite indistinct about who such daughters actually are and fails positively to identify the 'daughters of Babylon' as any actual Christian denominations. The closest he gets to doing this is in part two of *The Visions Of John In Patmos: Being Notes On The Apocalypse* (1892). Here he identifies the principles of Babylon as being found in 'all State Churches . . . the professing church on earth'.⁴⁵⁵ This is an interesting development, for Dennett here identifies Babylon as those churches sanctioned and supported by civil, political and monarchical institutions. The most notable example at the time Dennett was writing was the Church of England, which after 1534 identified the Monarch as the Supreme Governor of the church. The State and the Church have a relationship in which the State identifies and supports a role for the Church of England to perform on a civil, legal and social level. The term 'all State Churches' in this context may also have included for Dennett the Church of Scotland as Dennett was writing some twenty-nine years before the Church of Scotland Act of 1921

⁴⁵⁵ ED (1892), p. 224.

when the Scottish Church was given freedom from Parliamentary interference in spiritual matters. Additionally he included Catholicism in this designation as full civic rights in England had been restored to the Catholic church by the parliamentary act of 1829 some sixty-three years before Dennett was writing. Historically, Catholics perceived the Pope to be not only the head of the Church, but since the time of Innocent III and his decree *Sicut universitatis conditor* (1198),⁴⁵⁶ as having political authority even over kings. For Dennett such churches were ‘professing’ churches not ‘true’ churches, responsible for ‘keeping the word of Christ ecclesiastically, and at the same time refusing it in walk and conversation’.⁴⁵⁷ Christ was not the head of these churches but man was.

In part three of the same publication on the Apocalypse (an interpretation of Rev. 18-22) Dennett goes back to a more vague identification of who Babylon’s daughters are suggesting that they are the true saints who remain in spiritual Babylon and are ‘mixed up’ in that system. Babylon’s corruptions were to be found the ‘length and breadth of Christendom’ and Dennett believed that the call to ‘come out of her’ was more urgent than ever at the time he was writing.⁴⁵⁸

Dennett also links the spiritual system of Babylon in this publication with the Church in Laodicea spoken of in Rev. 3:14-20, those ‘lukewarm’ Christians who believed they were rich and needed for nothing but really were poor, pitiful, blind and naked.⁴⁵⁹ He uses this link between Babylon and Laodicea as another way of exhorting his readers to ‘come out of her’.

⁴⁵⁶ Innocent III, *Sicut universitatis conditor* (1198) in *The Christian Theology Reader*, 2nd edn., ed. by Alister E. McGrath (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), p. 470. Note: ‘the power of the king derives from the authority of the pope’.

⁴⁵⁷ ED, ‘Expository Jottings 1, Keeping the Word of Christ’, in *The Christian Friend and Instructor. Papers for the Comfort and Edification of the Children of God* (Broom, 1882), 9.205.

⁴⁵⁸ ED (1892), p. 232.

⁴⁵⁹ See also, ED, ‘Revelation’, in *The Christian Friend and Instructor. Papers for the Comfort and Edification of the Children of God* (Broom, 1891), 18.10-14.

In one of his numerous entries to the Brethren Periodical the *Christian Friend* Dennett compares Eph. 2:22, which speaks of the Christian being a dwelling place for God's spirit, with Rev. 18:2 which castigates Babylon for being a dwelling place for demons and evil spirits. He writes 'now Babylon is that which the professing church of God on earth has become . . . It is for the spiritual mind to discern how far Christendom has already become morally the home and dwelling-place of demons'.⁴⁶⁰ Here Dennett identifies Babylon not simply as the Roman Catholic system but as an entity encompassing something that is far wider and much more extensive than one mere denomination, namely, all those on earth who profess to be the true church of God but are morally and spiritually demonic. Christendom is, in other words, a church of worldly Christians, those 'mixed up with all this frightful formality, self-complacency, and indifference . . . empty profession'.⁴⁶¹

In *Blessed Hope* (1879) Dennett continues this theme and uses the image to draw a distinction between the worldly churches and his own community. In the process he discusses apostasy and the antichrist. The final form of Laodicean apathy will be Babylon the Great, a place where the

Church in its outward form, i.e. the profession of Christianity, will still remain . . . There will therefore be thousands (not to say millions) of mere nominal believers left behind . . . the churches and chapels, and other places where professing Christians meet, will carry on as before their religious services. The bells will ring, and the congregations, though thinned by the absence of those who were the children of God, will assemble; and hymns will be sung, prayers repeated or made, and sermons delivered.⁴⁶²

⁴⁶⁰ ED, 'Scripture Notes' in *The Christian Friend and Instructor. Papers for the Comfort and edification of the Children of God* (Broom, 1891), 18.24.

⁴⁶¹ ED, *Revelation* (1891), 18.14.

⁴⁶² ED, *The Blessed Hope: Being Papers on the Lord's Coming and Connected Events* (Broom, 1879), p. 62.

This is a major development, for Dennett here touches on one of the really substantial Brethren contributions to end-time thinking, and one that was to have a massive and continued influence, namely, the doctrine of the 'Secret Rapture of the Church'. This will be discussed in detail in chapter nine below and we note it here only in passing. Suffice to say, Dennett paints a picture of a corrupt 'left behind' Church from which the true believers have been translated to the heavens. What remains on earth is a church made up of mere professors of the faith, not true believers. In this context it is important to note the distinction Dennett makes between 'real Christians' and 'mere nominal believers'. The Brethren compose the church of real Christians but nominal Christians are found throughout the many churches and chapels in the land. The use of the phrase 'churches and chapels and other places where professing Christians meet' gives us an insight into where Dennett believes the daughters of Babylon may be found. The apocalyptic Whore is not limited to the great cathedrals of Roman Catholicism, or even the old, Established Churches of Anglicanism. Rather, through her progeny she may be found also in the chapels where the Non-Established Protestant denominations such as the Unitarians, Methodists, Baptists and the Non-conformists and Dissenters meet to worship. Dennett also adds 'other places' to the list so as to be fully comprehensive in his charge against all denominations: to involve the Quaker Friend's and the Puritan Meeting Houses, Catholic shrines, and the meeting of Independent groups in private homes or schoolrooms as daughters of Babylon. Such groups, for Dennett, represent the 'near outsider' and as such the threat is closer to home.

It would be easy to list further evidence of Dennett's evolving views, but such is not necessary. Already the broad outline of this thinking is plain. For him a distinction

needs to be made between the true church (the Brethren) and the false one (Babylon). The former is the church built by God and the latter, Babylon, is the church built by man.⁴⁶³ The former is the church where God is inside and the latter, Babylon, is the church inhabited by demons.⁴⁶⁴ Terrible judgment awaits those who remain inside such Babylonian churches, yet there is hope for it is not too late, according to the futurist hermeneutic of Dennett, to 'come out of her' and enjoy 'complete separation'.⁴⁶⁵ Thus for Dennett 'Babylon' may be used as a tool with which to both launch a vilifying attack on both the near (Protestant) and distant (Catholic) outsider and also used as a warning of impending danger to the uncommitted insider. The broad paradigm remains operative, but within it the details are changing.

Kelly

As we have seen in the previous chapter Exclusive division leader Kelly began his exegesis of Rev. 17-18 on a religious level by identifying Papal Rome, in no uncertain terms, as the Great Whore.⁴⁶⁶ Unlike the vast majority of Protestant Reformers before him, however, Kelly was to move beyond this designation and he quickly became much wider-ranging in his exegesis, for although for Kelly Babylon was clearly Rome she was also 'the parent of ecclesiastical corruptions outside herself yet akin to her'.⁴⁶⁷

Kelly sees Babylon in the churches all around him and describes her influences in numerous ways but above all Babylon is deceptive. She deceives the church attendee by her pleasant outward appearance but underneath she is something foul and evil, for under

⁴⁶³ ED, *The House of God* (1991), p. 37.

⁴⁶⁴ ED (1891), 18.26.

⁴⁶⁵ ED, *The Blessed Hope: Being Papers on the Lord's Coming and Connected Events* (Broom, 1879), p. 62.

⁴⁶⁶ See above 5.3. pp. 150-151.

⁴⁶⁷ WK (1872a), p.4.

'the fair guise of Christendom the woman was . . . most corrupt and hateful to God'.⁴⁶⁸ She has deceived religious men in cunning and wily ways, for 'the delusion of Satan [is] not alas! outside, but in Christendom . . . the subtlest snare for man. It is Babylon . . . All Christendom . . . How blinding is worldly religion!'⁴⁶⁹ This demonstrates Kelly's belief that Babylon is ubiquitous throughout all of Christendom, an institution he defines as 'professing man, without life in Christ'.⁴⁷⁰ Yet Christendom cannot have always been Babylonian, as Kelly understands that Babylon is the 'corruptness of Christendom',⁴⁷¹ implying that at one time the church was not corrupt. Thus for Kelly Babylon is a church, but a church that has lost its true nature and calling, going back to that well worn OT link between religious apostasy and harlotry: 'having the profession of being espoused to Christ, but really setting up to be mistress of all before the marriage to the deep dishonour of the future absent Bridegroom'.⁴⁷² How then did Kelly believe that a once true and pure church had been corrupted by Babylon and become a hollow shell of faithless, professing Christendom? It was through religious idolatry:

The unclean spirit of idolatry . . . [the] cause of the captivity in Babylon . . . will surely return . . . the nations of Christendom will be no better. . . . They have not continued in God's goodness and must also be cut off. They are largely idolatrous already, and this will grow to greater ungodliness.⁴⁷³

⁴⁶⁸ WK, *An Exposition on Revelation* (Weston, 1901), p. 199.

⁴⁶⁹ WK, 'Jesus The Son Of God: John 1: 29-43', in *BT*, Vol. N11, 1917, p. 197. See also WK, 'The Judgment of Babylon- Apostate Christianity' in *BT*, Vol. 11, 1876-1877, p. 224. W.R. writes in to ask Kelly to help in, 'clearing up one or two of my difficulties', Kelly responds by identifying Babylon as all of Christendom.

⁴⁷⁰ WK, 'What Is God's Kingdom Like?' in *BT*, Vol. N1, 1896-1897, pp. 356-357.

⁴⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

⁴⁷² WK (1872a), p. 3.

⁴⁷³ WK, 'The Blasphemy Of God's Power In Christ: Luke 11: 14-26', in *BT*, Vol. N1, 1896-1897, pp. 263-264.

Such idolatry has left the church as a broken, ruined institution. As well as her deceptive appearance she is useless in functioning as a true church because she has lost her effectiveness, or to use the Matthean analogy, 'saltiness', and can no longer act as salt and light to the nations as Jesus commanded in Matt. 5:13: 'When Christianity vanishes and only a savourless Christendom remains . . . so it will be when the final blows come for Babylon'.⁴⁷⁴ Such an analogy implies that at one time she may have been the true salt of the earth but now the salt has lost its savour. Instead the church is in a similar state to that of Israel when captive in Babylon: 'the present broken state of the church' is 'morally ruined . . . Nehemiah was just as truly raised up of God for the return from Babylon . . . in this evil day . . . no boast is more vain than that of possessing all the outward apparatus of the church of God'.⁴⁷⁵

Thus although Kelly clearly goes beyond just identifying the Catholic Church alone as Babylon he remains vague regarding just who it is that corrupt Christendom actually includes, other than that it includes 'all'. This entirely comprehensive charge includes the Irvingites who in Kelly's work *The Catholic Apostolic Body, or Irvingites* (1890-1891) are linked with Christendom, which is then, in turn, linked with Babylon. He writes that Drummond and Irving are guilty of 'leading away the society into more fatal depths . . . than was found in any other sect . . . [it] is confessedly Babylon'.⁴⁷⁶

This is an example of the book or Revelation being used in a highly individual way. The entirely comprehensive charge of 'all' even includes other Brethren outside of Darby and Kelly's Exclusive division such as the excommunicated congregation at Bethesda in Bristol who in 1848 were accused of supporting Newton's Christological

⁴⁷⁴ WK, 'The Salt Of The Earth', in *BT*, Vol. N5, 1904, pp. 86-87.

⁴⁷⁵ WK (1870), reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1970), pp. 113-114.

⁴⁷⁶ WK, 'The Catholic Apostolic Body, Or Irvingites', in *BT*, Vol. 18, 1890-1891, pp. 57-73.

heresies.⁴⁷⁷ Those who were originally insiders became, through a vituperative attack using the language of Babylon, near outsiders. Kelly was seeking to erect some very clear boundaries to define his own group, not just with regard to the wider Protestant and Catholic churches in general (the extreme outsider), but also with those who were actually quite close to Kelly's faction. This latter group, who would go on to become known as the Open Brethren, were exhorted to 'come out' of Babylon by Kelly: 'Scripture is not silent to their great sin. "Come out therefore, brother, that you partake not of the sins, and so not receive God's strokes"'.⁴⁷⁸ The members of the Bethesda assembly had allowed Babylon to creep into their meetings unawares in the form of confused and corrupt doctrines carried like a germ or virus from Newton's Ebrington Street assembly in Plymouth to their assembly. Bethesda chapel had been contaminated by heretical doctrine simply through supporting members of Ebrington Street and thus they had allowed themselves to be taken into Babylonian captivity.⁴⁷⁹

Kelly, then, represents a further development of the Babylon interpretative paradigm within the Brethren. The image is being used now even to sharpen the focus of ecclesiological self-identification further and to distance the 'Exclusives' from those who would later become the 'Open' faction. Intriguingly however Kelly never builds on the 'mother-daughter' of Babylon idiom to describe the relationship between the corrupt denominations of Christendom and Papal Rome but, rather, Rome is the source of the corruption of a once true church, not of the genesis of an originally Babylonian daughter.

⁴⁷⁷ JND, 'The Bethesda Circular', *CW* 15.253-258.

⁴⁷⁸ WK, *The Doctrine of Christ and Bethesdaism* (Bristol, 1848), p. 16.

⁴⁷⁹ The Link between Babylon and Doctrinal Contamination will be taken up in much more detail in chapter six below.

Trotter

The next Brethren author considered here is the renowned Brethren author on prophetic subjects, William Trotter. Some brief biographical details on Trotter have been given in chapter four above, but his biblical interpretation has never before been critically examined to this point. Trotter draws a sharp distinction and differentiation between the two entities he sees around him that confess to be that institution known as 'the Church' and, like Dennett and Kelly before him, makes a comparison between 'The true church' and 'the false professing body'.⁴⁸⁰ This false church, or false professing body, is described by Trotter as 'Nominally Christian . . . [an] outward adoption of Christianity . . . presented to us in the Apocalyptic vision- Babylon the Great. . . . this vast system of worldly Christians, of a Christian profession'.⁴⁸¹

Thus the superficially external and extensive worldly nature of the fake church in Trotter's understanding can be seen. He continues to depict this hypocritical institution in such terms as: 'Ecclesiastical corruption . . . the Gentile professing body . . . Christendom . . . nothing remains for it but to be cut off'.⁴⁸² Babylon is also portrayed as 'the fallen church . . . professing Christians . . . the nominal professing body'.⁴⁸³ In using such terms Trotter is reiterating his views that the false church is made up of Christians who are merely professors of faith and not truly regenerate. His use of the verbs 'fallen' and 'corruption' to describe the false church suggests however that it once occupied a place higher and a status purer than it does now.

⁴⁸⁰ WT, 'A Recapitulation- or, Outline of Prophetic Truth', Paper 22 of 24 in *PPPS*, p. 428. See also, WT, 'Christ and the Church', Paper 5 of 24 in *PPPS*, p. 81. 'The doom of Christendom . . . the Church of God . . . Christendom has assumed this place, and pretends to be nothing less than this Church of God.' WT, 'The Coming Crisis and Its Results', Paper 3 of 24, in *PPPS*, p. 60. Professing Christendom is contrasted with the true church.

⁴⁸¹ WT, 'A Recapitulation', p. 428.

⁴⁸² WT, 'Ecclesiastical Corruption and Apostacy', Paper 13 of 24 in *PPPS*, p. 243.

⁴⁸³ WT, 'The Doom of Christendom, or, Why are the Judgments Coming?' Paper 4 of 24, in *PPPS*, p. 63.

Trotter is very clear that scripture predicts a 'false church'. She is Babylon the Great: 'The mystic Babylonish woman . . . profession of Christianity'.⁴⁸⁴ She is 'Babylon . . . the false church'.⁴⁸⁵ Again, then, we can see the use of Revelation's Babylon image being used among key Brethren writers and being used primarily in a way that reinforces the group's own sense of purity and faithfulness to God through vilifying the outsider, in this case both near and far, as Babylon.

For Trotter, the false Babylonian church has replaced the true church on the earth: 'the one Church, existing as Christ's witness on earth, [has] been set aside, and some other body taken its place . . . [it will] be spued out of Christ's mouth'.⁴⁸⁶ Here Trotter is using the language of Rev. 3 and the rebuke brought against the lukewarm church of Laodicea, a church which God will ultimately spit out of his mouth, to condemn the church he sees around him.

Harking back rather to the views of Roger Williams (c. 1603-1683)⁴⁸⁷ Trotter identifies the Established Church in England, with its civil relationship, as being the church in Pergamos, described in Rev. 2:12-17, a church which has been enticed into immoral practices and teachings. The church of Thyatira described in Rev. 2:18-27, on the other hand, is the 'Popery of the Dark Ages'.⁴⁸⁸ Such a sequential reading of the Seven Churches was an unusual development in Brethren hermeneutics and as such

⁴⁸⁴ WT, 'The Times of The Gentiles: The Character and Doom of the Great Gentile Powers', Lecture 7 of 8 in *LP*, pp. 210-211.

⁴⁸⁵ WT, 'The Last Days of the Gentile Supremacy', Paper 14 of 24 in *PPPS*, p. 278.

⁴⁸⁶ WT, 'Apocalyptic Interpretation', p. 349.

⁴⁸⁷ Fromm, 3.51. Fromm identifies Williams as the first author to identify the Church of England as Revelation's church of Pergamos.

⁴⁸⁸ WT, 'Ecclesiastical Corruption' p. 255.

represents a movement outside of the futurist Brethren interpretative community on these issues for Trotter.⁴⁸⁹

Trotter specifically condemns the Protestant Church of his own day but rather than criticising the Protestants for being lukewarm, like the charge levelled against the Laodiceans in Rev. 3, he identifies them as the church in Sardis described in Rev. 3:1-6, who, although a few true believers remain in that church and although they have a reputation for being alive are in fact really dead.⁴⁹⁰ Trotter levels the same charge against Protestantism as the apostle Paul levelled against the Church of Galatia, that of allowing 'false brothers infiltrating their ranks' (Gal. 2:3-5). The infiltration is that of allowing Roman ordinances, or Catholic law and rules, into the Protestant church: 'Romanism is avowedly a system of ordinances . . . but what of the multitude on their way to Romanism, who lay full as much stress on ordinances as Romanists themselves?'⁴⁹¹ Here he is undoubtedly referring to the Oxford Movement, or Tractarian Movement, led by John Henry Newman and E.B. Pusey, among others. They sought to reabsorb all the various English denominations back into the Roman Church in a kind of 'anti-reformation' process, undoing the work of the Reformers who had already, in the words of the Babylon motif, 'come out' of Rome.

Trotter is very clear that the exegesis of Babylon should not be confined or limited simply to the Reformation interpretation of Papal Rome. He states that Babylon is

⁴⁸⁹ See Robert Surrige, 'Seventh-day Adventism: Self Appointed Laodicea' in Moyise (2001), pp. 24-29. Surrige notes that most historicists understood the first four churches to exist sequentially throughout the past and the last three: Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea, to coexist at the same time in the present. Outside Adventist exegesis a truly sequential reading of the Seven Churches was not very common before 1856 and the work of James White.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 253, 255-256.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., p. 248.

more than just Catholicism, it includes other Christian religions also: 'The doom of Babylon the Great . . . I do not confine it to the Church of Rome'.⁴⁹²

Obviously aware of the Protestant stream of exegesis that has gone before him, Trotter enters into a dialogue with his reader concerning the identity of the false Babylonian church

'Ah, but it is of Rome that you are speaking; and what has Rome or Romanism, to do with Christ and the Church?' . . . no doubt Romanism is the principle part of that which mystic Babylon represents. But it is not the whole . . . does not Romanism embrace the greater part of what professes to be the Church?⁴⁹³

Thus whilst it is clear that Rome Papal is the starting place for his interpretation of the Babylon motif, Trotter does not remain there but quickly moves on to use the image of the Great Whore to describe the wider, nominal church, using Babylon to vilify not just the extreme outsider but using Babylon to vilify the nearest outsider, who perhaps, being closer to home poses a greater threat.

His wider understanding of who Babylon is, enables him to identify churches as Babylonian in countries where geographical and territorially Catholicism had not spread or at least had only an insignificant influence, thus he states: 'I speak not now of Romanism, but of what bears the name and sustains the responsibilities of the Church in countries where Romanism is not predominant'.⁴⁹⁴ Trotter goes on to question exactly

⁴⁹² WT, 'The Last Days of the Gentile Supremacy', in *PPPS*, p. 278. See also in this publication, 'It has been the habit to interpret all these things of Popery . . . Babylon doubtless symbolises Popery; not Popery alone, but chiefly . . . Popery with every other form of ecclesiastical corruption'. Also, WT, 'Christ and the Church', p. 118. 'the great professing body, including Romanism, and all else that ostensibly bears the name of Christ', and, WT, 'Ecclesiastical Corruption', p. 255. 'Leaving Rome aside, and looking at the national churches of Christendom, and the great professing bodies which have branched off from them . . . the Protestant part of Christendom . . . what is it but the world under a Christian name and profession'.

⁴⁹³ WT, 'Christ and the Church', p. 117.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

what it is that 'holds together the very framework of society in these so-called Christian countries?'⁴⁹⁵ Rather than being a true light and converting the world 'those countries where Christ is nominally owned'⁴⁹⁶ have instead been converted by the world, forming a union with the world, and it is for this reason that professing Christianity will be judged for she has become 'nominal, national Christianity . . . a vast and monstrous world system as is said in the 18th of Revelation'.⁴⁹⁷ National Christianity here, as for Dennett, is perhaps referring to the civil, established and state sanctioned denominations.

The real identity of these false, nominal, national churches can be found in his prophetic paper *The Doom of Christendom* (1854) in which he lists Romanism, the Reformed Christianity of England, Europe and America, the Established Dissenting, Protestant and Greek churches as the recipients of the indictment against Babylon. Through their union with the world they shall be judged during Babylon's overthrow.⁴⁹⁸ Yet Trotter goes even further than simply to present a list of the false churches he believes to be Babylonian. He challenges all who listen to his sermon or read his paper to judge whether they are in any way guilty of association with Babylon for 'it becomes every one of us to consider how far he may be in anywise associated with it'.⁴⁹⁹

At this point one may begin to see a trend, and indeed a new paradigm, arising within the specifically Brethren movement when compared with wider exegesis. For this community were not only concerned with defining themselves over and against Rome, the preoccupation of the wider Protestant movement, but with defining their own place on the map Christendom. The Whore of Babylon motif is used to spell out very precisely

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁶ WT, 'Approaching Judgments', p. 35.

⁴⁹⁷ WT, 'The Second Coming of Christ Pre-millennial' Lecture 2 of 8 in *LP*, p. 45.

⁴⁹⁸ WT, 'The Doom of Christendom', p. 76.

⁴⁹⁹ WT, 'The Predicted Corruption of Christianity and its Final Results', Lecture 6 of 8 in *LP*, pp. 204-205.

where the Brethren are: both 'spatially' (i.e. where the movement is relative to other Christian groups, both near and far in terms of the threat of boundary transgression) and temporally (i.e. where the movement comes in the history of the world). This latter point will come more clearly to the fore in chapters eight and nine below.

Bellett

For Bellett Christendom is an entity that has 'corrupted itself' and thus will be judged according to the judgments foretold in the Apocalypse that befall Babylon.⁵⁰⁰ Christendom attempts to 'regulate the world' and is 'full of the falsest thoughts', a place of 'strange alliance' between 'ease and indulgence and self-pleasing'.⁵⁰¹ Such a church is worldly, fleshly, sensual and decadent. Bellett further describes Christendom as a place of 'strangely inconsistent elements . . . [of] anomalous materials' a mixture of 'clean and unclean vessels'.⁵⁰² Thus it is a place of confusion of thought and doctrine. This harks back to the older use of 'Babylon' to mean confusion as seen above, and is an important development which is explored in detail in chapter seven below where it is shown that the Babylon image is used also to argue that the other churches are in 'Doctrinal Confusion'. This again brings the Brethren into sharp relief against their perceived ecclesiological background.

Christendom is, according to Bellett, on its way to a place of apostasy, that is, the professing church is in a position of falling away from the truth.⁵⁰³ Bellett is clear, the church of the last days will deny the Lord and become corrupt to such an extent that it

⁵⁰⁰ JGB, 'An Introduction to Isaiah', in *BT*, Vol. 4. 1863, pp. 229-232, 243-245.

⁵⁰¹ JGB, *Woollen and Linen* (Morrish, n.d.), p. 31.

⁵⁰² JGB, *Witnesses for God, In Dark and Evil Times, Being studies and Meditations on the Books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther* (Kilmarnock: Ritchie, n.d.), pp. 18-19.

⁵⁰³ JGB, *Notes from Meditations on Luke* (Crocker & Cooper, c.1870), p. 106.

should not even really be called a church, for 'the Christendom that we see around us is . . . far from the church'.⁵⁰⁴ Rather, Bellett describes this false church in dichotomous terms as a 'victorious corruption'.⁵⁰⁵ Perhaps referring to how this ecclesiastical impostor has formed a civil and ecclesiastical unity⁵⁰⁶ in which the church controls and subjugates the world which supports it.

To be overly religious or to be enticed with the external traditions of the Church is a sure sign that the believer has gone back into Babylonian captivity. Thus Bellett writes: 'not that we are to go back to Babylon . . . we may be beguiled into moral relaxation through satisfaction in our ecclesiastical accuracies'.⁵⁰⁷ He then goes on to quote one of the woes to the Scribes and Pharisees found in Matt. 23:23 which criticises the hypocrisy of being religious in action only and neglecting to act out of justice, love and faithfulness.

In his exegesis of the Babylon motif Bellett differs somewhat from the other authors in this chapter and also from the Reformers before him in that he never openly identifies Babylon as something papal or Catholic. This is rather surprising given the entrenched tradition and suggests to some extent that Bellett was more concerned with the threat from the near outsider rather than the threat from the extreme outsider, that is, the danger on his own doorstep rather than the distant danger from Rome. Bellett does, however, identify Babylon as a religious entity and he specifically identifies Babylon as Christendom: 'this was Babylon, and in spirit this is Christendom'.⁵⁰⁸ Thus corrupt, false, fleshly, inconsistent and civil religion is for Bellett the Christianity of Babylon the Great. This view is just as clear in *The Potter's Broken Vessel* (1880) where Bellett

⁵⁰⁴ JGB, *Witnesses for God*, p. 49.

⁵⁰⁵ JGB, 'Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth', in *Miscellaneous Papers* (Allan, n.d.), p. 87.

⁵⁰⁶ JGB (1880), p. 32.

⁵⁰⁷ JGB, *Witnesses for God*, p. 37.

⁵⁰⁸ JGB, 'Babylon' (1885-7), 1.26.

unequivocally understands Babylon and Christendom as straightforward synonyms meaning exactly the same thing.⁵⁰⁹

However Bellett does not become any more specific than this in his designation of who is actually in Babylon and of which churches make up Christendom. What he is clear on, unlike Dennett and Trotter, is that the Established Church, formed through its union between the religious and the civil, is not necessarily Babylonian. He states that

The Establishment is not a Church ruin; it is an important thing in the earth . . . [it] has linked His name with the government and men of the world, but God's dear people are there . . . it may not be a Church ruin . . . Christendom is not to be mistaken for Church ruins . . . [a few] call on the Lord out of a pure heart from the Church ruins . . . Ruins are weak things, but still they tell of the original building.⁵¹⁰

Thus Bellett's interpretation here is somewhat at odds with the growing Brethren exegesis which understands an established link between the church and the state, such as the held by the Church of England, as being a principle of Babylon.

Bellett does not highlight any one particular denomination or tradition as being Babylonian but rather perceives Babylon as being indicative of the whole of professing Christianity in which true and vital Christians reside like wheat among the tares of nominal Christianity. Alluding to the parable of Matt. 13 they must, according to Bellett, be allowed to grow together until harvest and judgment.⁵¹¹

Simply 'coming out' of Papal Rome like the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century did is not enough to escape Babylon. The Reformation alone was not enough, for

⁵⁰⁹ JGB (1880), p. 32. See also JGB, 'Rightly Dividing' (n.d.), pp. 83-92. Bellett links Babylon with the corruption of the 'Great House'. Also JGB, 'Zechariah', in *The Minor Prophets* (Allan, 1870), p. 104. Bellett links the vision of the woman with the ephah in Zech. 5, with Babylon and states 'This 'wickedness' is hidden . . . under a profession . . . or the name of Christendom. But it is really Babylon at the end'. Also JGB (c.1870), p. 57. Christendom linked to Babylon.

⁵¹⁰ JGB, 'Extracts from Letters', in *CF* (1885), 12.166. Letter dated December 18th, 1849.

⁵¹¹ JGB, *Woollen and Linen*, p. 7.

as Bellett states: 'Reformation will not do. So it is with Christendom . . . mere Protestantism will not do'.⁵¹² Although he admits that the Reformation was 'a kind of return from Babylon',⁵¹³ the act of reformation itself did not restore the churches glory.⁵¹⁴

Finally, he reiterates his view that Babylon is in all of Christendom. The church is compared to Israel during her Babylonian captivity where some retained their purity but others were corrupted by Babylon's pernicious influence. The true church at the end of the age is, in a dispensational and recapitulatory way, an image of OT Israel: 'captive in the dungeons of Babylon'. Bellett uses the judgments of Rev. 17-18 as a warning to those true believers inside Babylon of the imminent 'waning, fading, evening shades of Christendom, which are soon to close in the midnight of Apocalyptic judgments'.⁵¹⁵

Wolston

Wolston refrains from limiting his religious identification of Babylon simply and singularly on the Roman Catholic Church but rather identifies Babylon as a 'false church'. He writes of this fake ecclesial entity's destruction as 'the fall of Babylon . . . the judgment of the false Church'.⁵¹⁶

In the style of the emerging Brethren hermeneutical pattern Wolston sets his identification of Babylon on a much broader level than the Reformers before him, for Rome was not the only threat to him; the danger was much closer. Unlike Kelly, Trotter and Bellett discussed above, but in line with Darby, Dennett and Miller, Wolston makes

⁵¹² JGB (c.1870), p. 57.

⁵¹³ JGB, *Witness for God*, p. 32.

⁵¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47, n.*.

⁵¹⁵ JGB, 'The Mornings of Scripture', in *Short Meditations* (Dublin: Cavenagh, 1866), p. 8.

⁵¹⁶ WTPW, 'The Stone Cut Out Without Hands', Lecture 6 of 10, in *SC*, p. 126. See also WTPW, 'The Candlestick and the Bride', Lecture 8 of 10 in *CNT*, p. 213. 'The false church system of the world, Babylon'.

use of the Babylonian 'mother-daughter idiom in working out his views. The key difference between these two exegetical lines is that of whether the Protestant denominations were 'born' corrupt and thus were always Babylonian by virtue of their mother being corrupt, or, were the Protestant denominations born pure but at some point experienced an apostasy after corruption by Babylon thus becoming Babylonian. Wolston is to be found in the former camp. Thus we read of the Babylonian family: 'the time has come when the whore with all her children are cast into the fire. That is her judgment. Babylon falls, in the 18th chapter'.⁵¹⁷ Such a warning is levelled to the outsider, both near (Protestant) and far (Catholic).

Yet Wolston also uses the Babylon motif to warn the insider for apostasy, or falling into Babylonian captivity, is still a possible risk *intra muros*. The true church becomes false by its association with the world. When the church becomes mixed up in the affairs of the world then it becomes Babylon and it is with regards to such a relationship that Wolston writes

It is therefore a very serious thing if God's people be mixed up with the world, even though it be religious . . . 'Come out of her, my people . . .' What is Babylon? It is the world-church. And you and I must not forget that while there is the Church of God, the real thing, there is also the world-church. And therefore we should see what it is. It is a serious thing if the saints of God get mixed up with the world or the world-church, which is Babylon.⁵¹⁸

The call of Rev. 18:4 is thus not only a call to 'come out' of the world but also to 'come out' of the world church, a view which will be explored in more detail in chapter eight below. Thus for Wolston Babylon is a tool used in vituperative attack, both *extra muros*

⁵¹⁷ WTPW, 'The Stone Cut Out Without Hands', p. 131.

⁵¹⁸ WTPW, 'King David's New Cart', Lecture 9 of 10 in *CNT*, p. 226.

as the charge of being a 'false church' by birth is directed to the near (Protestant)⁵¹⁹ and extreme (Catholic)⁵²⁰ outsider (for which Wolston uses the 'mother-daughter' idiom), and *intra muros* as the danger of being corrupted by Babylon by association may lead to the insider falling away.⁵²¹

Whilst Dennett associates the corrupt Babylonian world church of his own day with the lukewarm church of Laodicea in Rev. 3, Wolston, along with Baines, identifies the church they see around them as the church of Thyatira in Rev. 2 who is seduced by Jezebel's corrupt doctrines:

In Thyatira the Church ruled the world . . . Rome as the ecclesiastical mistress of the nations of Europe, could excommunicate monarchs, and go the length of compelling a king to go and kiss the Pope's toe. Thyatira runs on to the Lord's return . . . and the papacy will continue till then without doubt.⁵²²

The Roman Catholic Church has historically been, according to Wolston, the Thyatiran church who ruled and exercised authority over the world yet the seducer Jezebel has infiltrated other churches in the present time of Wolston's writings with her pernicious and deadly doctrines and as such has caused other churches to fall away into Babylonian captivity in particular through church-state relationships.⁵²³

Wolston, like Dennett, uses the image of the church in Laodicea but whereas Dennett identifies this passage as referring to his own day Wolston understands the Laodicea motif as describing the latter-day corrupt church. The empty, lifeless Laodicean church is destined to become, in the future, Babylon the Great:

⁵¹⁹ WTPW, 'Established and Endowed', Lecture 4 of 10 in *CNT*, p. 96.

⁵²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 95-99.

⁵²² *Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁵²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 98-99.

when the Lord takes away the candlestick, with every mark of detestation as to the state it has fallen into, as in Laodicea, Satan will take up what is left of the profession, then become his fitting tool for the development of that frightful church-world system afterwards portrayed in Babylon.⁵²⁴

The true church must 'come out' of the false house of God for the evil of Jezebel's seductive doctrines entered the house God clandestinely and the risk of falling into Babylon is high. The Church is now like Thyatira; full of seduction, it is heading towards becoming like Laodicea: full of 'lukewarm' persons who are not accepted by God. For those who remain in such a church the judgments of Rev. 17-18 are ripening. This is a powerful composite image and would have given those who adopted it a powerful sense of the importance both of their own community and the work they had to do in calling people out of the Jezebel-corrupted, lukewarm Babylon that was now nothing short of a 'hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird' (Rev. 18:2). For Wolston the Brethren were like the captive Israel in the time of Nehemiah; the faithful must leave Babylonian captivity behind.⁵²⁵

It would be easy to extend this list of Brethren interpreters who saw in the Babylon image a picture of not just Rome but of the wider Christian community too. Such views are embedded in the literature which has been investigated in this thesis, much of it for the first time from this perspective. However, the presentation of further extensive detail on this point seems hardly necessary. In what follows, therefore, only the key points where the emerging exegetical paradigm seems to undergo further modification will be discussed in any detail. As we shall see, among Brethren writers this

⁵²⁴ WTPW, 'The Candlestick and the Bride', p. 197.

⁵²⁵ WTPW, *'Handfuls of Purpose' Let Fall for Eager Gleaners: Thirty Addresses on Various Scripture Truths and Incidents* (1899), 2nd edn. (Edinburgh: Gospel Messenger Office, 1914), pp. 272-273.

image of the Whore of Babylon and her daughters was a very useful and indeed powerful one. As the movement struggled to its feet and sought a clear sense of its own identity it was to the biblical text that they turned to seek out their own identity before God and the text, in the hands of these imaginative readers, did not disappoint.

Wigram

Wigram identifies Babylon as a religious institution or system but never explicitly narrows down his identification to singularly Catholicism, rather, like others in the tradition, he identifies Babylon in much broader terms as the 'professing Church'.⁵²⁶ For Wigram such professing churches were not 'born' Babylonian, but became such through an apostasy or falling away.⁵²⁷

Wigram makes a further contribution to Brethren exegesis of Rev. 17-18 when he compares the image of the Bride of Christ found in 2 Cor. 11:2 and Rev. 19 with the image of Babylon the mother of Harlots. The Great Whore is 'filled by Satan for the world, with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life', whereas the bride is the dwelling place of God, the home of God's children, a place of unity in fellowship, doctrine, and action, here he emphasises the vast difference between the two and concludes: 'What a difference between all this and a modern "Independent church!"'⁵²⁸ By 'Independent church' Wigram seems to have either the post 1874 independent Open Brethren group in view or the 1876 independent Kelly Division, rather

⁵²⁶ GVW, 'The Corruption of Christianity', in *Memorials of the Ministry of G. V. Wigram*, 2nd edn. 3 vols (Broom, 1881), 1.127-132. He does however say, 'The Holy Catholic Church . . . dishonoured and Ichabod (where is the Glory) became stamped on the company professing to be the church'. Thus identifying Catholicism as part of his umbrella designation of Babylon as the 'professing church', in GVW, 'The Church: Its Present State and Prospects', in *Selections From the Writings and Ministry of G.V. Wigram* (Horner, 1874), p. 103.

⁵²⁷ GVW, 'The Corruption of Christianity', pp. 127-132.

⁵²⁸ GVW, *To The Christians in New Zealand* (Christchurch: W.C. Nation, 1874), p. 10.

than the Independents, that is, as in the Congregationalist denomination.⁵²⁹ This again shows how in the hands of a determined interpreter the image can be used to bring great clarity to the question of precisely which group is God's true community. Wigram, it seems, is more concerned with using Babylon to vilify the near outsider, those who pose an immediate threat to the boundaries of the nascent Brethren movement, than the extreme outsider such as Rome, yet he also uses the text to vilify the insider, or at least those who were once inside, and perhaps were even at one time held in high esteem (such as Kelly) but now have been 'put out' or excommunicated.

Baines

As we have seen in the previous chapter Baines identifies the Harlot of Rev. 17-18 as a future Roman Catholic system. He does not, however, limit the designation to Papal Rome alone but rather uses the 'mother-daughter' idiom to broaden the charge. He notes that 'she is also called "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" for not merely is she an idolatrous system herself, but she has given birth to other idolatrous systems scattered over the world'.⁵³⁰ Her daughters, though not named by Baines at this point, are ubiquitous in their presence. He also develops the identification of the church around him as the church of Thyatira: a church seduced by the harlot Jezebel.⁵³¹ His exegesis is in keeping with what others in the movement were now saying and the use

⁵²⁹ The 'independence' of the Open Brethren in terms of autonomy to decide on matters of doctrine and fellowship is attested to in Burnham (2005), p. 208. Of the Kelly Division Wigram states: 'of this I am sure, that the so-called religion of 1876 is part of Christendom, and is not Christianity', in GVW, 'The Coming Kingdom: Being an Outline on Revelation', in *Notes of Three Lectures, Delivered in Georgetown, Demerara, 11th, 18th & 25th Jan. 1876* (Morrish, 1876), p. 61. Either group would fit the charge but the important thing to note is that Wigram is now using the Babylon motif not to 'vilify' the outsider but to castigate *intra muros* within the group.

⁵³⁰ TBB (1879), p. 225.

⁵³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 197-198.

within the group to which the image was in general being put. There is little in Baines' work that adds much to the paradigm, though it is apparent from that work that he was able to synthesize a good deal of what had gone before and was going on all around him. Not only is the Babylon image used, but so too are the themes of 'Laodicea', 'Thyatira' and the 'mother-daughter' idiom as the group become more and more comprehensive in their designation of who 'Babylon' is. Not only is the distant outsider, Papal Rome, Babylon, but now like the tightening rings of concentric circles, the near insider, Protestantism and all of its denominations is also being identified as 'Babylon'. Furthermore the use of the text as a form of vituperative rhetoric to attack the outsider has become internalised and it is starting to be used *intra muros* to attack the Babylon within the Brethren.

Other Authors

The authors mentioned above were perhaps among the most significant standing authors in the Brethren movement but some lesser known, or at least less prolific, figures from within the tradition also had something to say on the issue.

NEWTON

The figure of Newton needs brief mention here too. Newton did not have much to add to the paradigm, though his status within the movement may well have helped to recommend it to others. According to this interpreter, Babylon consisted of all corrupt Christendom and not the Papal system only.⁵³² For him such churches are Babylonian not because they were 'born' that way from a Babylonian mother but because they had been

⁵³² BWN, 'The Prophecy of Habakkuk', in *PS*, No. 21, pp. 5-7.

corrupted and tainted; mainly by ritualism.⁵³³ The Churches of Rome and England as well as the Non-conformists are all identified as Babylon.⁵³⁴ These views, as we have seen, he shared with many other Brethren writers. It was of course towards both Newton and Kelly after the 1874 and 1876 schisms that the Darbyite Exclusives such as Wigram used the language of Rev. 17-18 to launch a vituperative attack on those once well loved and highly respected insiders.

TWEEDIE AND GRANT

Thomas Tweedie, a former clergyman who after seceding from the Church of England, joined the Brethren movement and became a missionary to British Guiana, argued that the identification of Babylon is much broader than some have thought. Tweedie was in line with his more prolific fellow believers when he wrote of Babylon that she is: 'The professing church, loving the world and seeking a portion in it, is in all this opposed to the bride'.⁵³⁵ Similarly F.W. Grant, the English Brethren author, who was instrumental in guiding the 1885 schism of the Exclusive Grant division in North America from the Exclusives led by Darby in England, through linking the 'strange woman' of Prov. 5, with the Great Whore of Rev. 17-18 concluded that:

The enemy is well versed in this terrible warfare . . . Nothing is more common than to see him in the clothing of religion . . . In the battle with him, we should always keep in mind what Proverbs 5: 6 says of the strange woman; 'lest you should ponder the path of life, her ways are changeable that you should not know them'.⁵³⁶

⁵³³ BWN, 'The Olive Tree and Its Branches: The Doom of Israel and Christendom', in *PS*, No. 7, pp. 6-7. Also, BWN, 'God and the Heathen', in *PS*, No. 35, pp. 2-3, 9-10.

⁵³⁴ BWN, 'The Probable Course of Events up to the Time of the End', in *PS*, No. 2, p. 5.

⁵³⁵ Thomas Tweedie, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great', in *NW*, Vol. IX, pp. 94-95.

⁵³⁶ FWG, *A Divine Movement*, p. 46.

Thus for Grant we see that it is religion in general that is Babylonian; religion is the clothing of Babylon, the superficial façade that hides the truly satanic character that lies underneath. A similar interpretation is taken by Thomas Newberry in his commentary on Revelation.⁵³⁷

LINCOLN

Little biographical information is known of brethren author William Lincoln, although we do know that he was an ordained Anglican minister who, on November 23rd 1862, seceded from the Church of England to become part of the Brethren movement.⁵³⁸ Writing between 1861 and 1916 he produced some twenty-six publications and of these six were primarily on the subject of the book of Revelation and the end times. The majority of his publications appear to be in the form of lectures and sermons, thus it is highly probable that his views on such matters were widely disseminated as they were not only read but also heard preached from the pulpit. At some unknown period of the late nineteenth century, Lincoln published a series of pamphlets on the book of Revelation titled under the series title *Lincoln's Leaflets*.

In pamphlet ten, Lincoln speaks of an entity he calls simply 'Christendom', a term he uses like many of those above, to describe the union of the professing church with the world. He is critical of the way that the clergy of nominal Christianity have shown no

⁵³⁷ For Newberry, Babylon represents the whole of 'apostate Christianity', outwardly bearing the name Christ as a cloak or covering of respectability which hides something much more sinister and devilish underneath. Thomas Newberry, *Notes on the Book of Revelation, Taking up Each Chapter in Order* (Kilmarnock: Ritchie, c.1890), pp. 97-98.

⁵³⁸ William Lincoln, *Address of the Rev. W. Lincoln, to the Congregation of Beresford Episcopal Chapel on November 23rd, 1862, On the Occasion of his Quitting the Communion of the Established Church* (Paul, c.1862), *passim*.

signs of Christian regeneration but rather have not only tolerated worldliness but actively looked to the world for help and support rather than looking to Christ:

as then Jericho fell, so now Babylon falls. As the literal Babylon perished by the drying up of its great river; so the Peoples of Christendom finally and deliberately reject every vestige of Christianity, and its unregenerate clerics and professors receive no more countenance or help from the world on which it had leaned for support.⁵³⁹

Lincoln goes on to use the 'mother-daughter' idiom in ways not dissimilar to those noted in other authors above. Indeed, he specifically identifies the daughters of the Great Whore as the 'world's churches', and, continuing in the developing tradition of understanding Babylon on a systemic rather than a personal level, identifies the daughters of Babylon as luxurious religious systems, which he in turn links with the church of Laodicea:

In the former chapter we behold the harlot of Babylon and her daughters, i.e. the world's churches, in all their luxury . . . and their religious systems extirpated violently by the newly elected emperor and his ten kings . . . In 18 God's hand is seen in these judgements on the ecclesiastical apostacies of Christendom. In 3 Christ had warned he was about to vomit the professing Church, in her last or Laodicean phase, out of His mouth.⁵⁴⁰

Thus Lincoln continues in the newly emerging tradition as for him Babylon and 'lukewarm' Laodicea are the same thing.

⁵³⁹ William Lincoln, *Lincoln's Leaflets*, no.10, 1st Series, 'The Book of the Revelation: Some Clues to its Principles and an Outline of its Contents' (London, Yapp & Hawkins, n.d.), p. 3.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid.

POWERSCOURT

In a letter to a certain Mr Howells dated 1829, Lady Theodosia Powerscourt identified Babylon as all of those professing Christians who remain silent on important social and political matters. This is a slight variation on the general theme in favour of the importance that, from the author's perspective, God places on social witness and is somewhat at odds with the underlying premillennial pessimism of the Brethren, particularly those who held more Exclusive views. However, such matters were an important part of the Albury Park prophetic conferences, of which Lady Powerscourt had attended on a number of occasions.⁵⁴¹ Lady Powerscourt believed that to be 'in Babylon' was for the church to be silent on such political matters as emancipation. To act in such a way is to 'take our lot with Babylon'.⁵⁴² When she discusses emancipation in this letter she is probably referring to the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, the overwhelming response to this Act was one of despair at the socio-political situation.⁵⁴³ Powerscourt also uses the analogy put forward by Grant and Newberry of wearing 'religious' clothing as a way of describing those who confess Christ with their lips but deny him by their actions. Here she identifies Babylon as all of the professing Christians who indulge themselves in immoral religion through their lack of social action: such people wear Christianity as a fake veneer. We read

Christianity is so much more profession than confession. We strive to live our doctrines, instead of confounding the world by the contradiction of our walk and our belief . . . We wear Christ too like a loose garment, to be put on and taken off as convenience offers — denying him, by not confessing him.⁵⁴⁴

⁵⁴¹ Burnham (2004), p. 115.

⁵⁴² TAWP, *Letters and Papers* (1872), Letter 23, 1829, p. 62.

⁵⁴³ William H. Oliver, *Prophets and Millennialists. The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s* (Auckland, NZ: Auckland University Press, 1978), pp.140-142.

⁵⁴⁴ TAWP, *Letters and Papers* (1872), Letter 23, 1829, p. 62.

SNELL

Very little biographical information can be gleaned about the life of the Brethren author Hugh Henry Snell (1815-1891) who authored some eighteen publications, of which three were on the subject of prophecy and the end-times.⁵⁴⁵ Like all of the Brethren authors that have been examined in this chapter Snell broadens the identification of Babylon on a religious level to include all of corrupt Christianity, drawing a sharp distinction between the false church and the true church and stating that 'We do violence to truth to limit Babylon to Romanism'.⁵⁴⁶ He thus uses Babylon to castigate, not just the distant outsider, but the near outsider too; the enemy on his own doorstep. However his description of the Babylonian church as the 'false and corrupt one'⁵⁴⁷ suggests that Snell believed the outsider had 'become' Babylon rather than being 'born' Babylon, a view reiterated by the absence of the 'mother-daughter idiom in his exegesis. The apostasy comes through any connection between the church and the world.⁵⁴⁸ Such a union leads the church into Babylon.⁵⁴⁹ Snell however does not go as far as Dennett and others to say that any formal arrangement between the church and the world, such as in the civil-religious relationship of the Established Church of England, is specifically Babylonian, yet he does clearly identify both Catholics, who were 'supported by the world' in the Roman Catholic Relief Act of 1829, and Anglicans, who were 'supported by the world' when the monarch was pronounced as their head in 1534, as being Babylonian. He writes that 'Romanism is certainly a large example of Babylon . . . be assured that Babylon the Great abounds also

⁵⁴⁵ Henry Pickering, *Chief Among Brethren: One Hundred Records and Photos*, 2nd edn. (Pickering & Inglis, 1931), p. 119.

⁵⁴⁶ HHS, *Notes on the Revelation: With Practical Reflections* (Broom, 1866), p. 161.

⁵⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁵⁴⁹ The concept of worldliness will be examined later on in chapter eight.

in Protestantism, or wherever the world's support is resorted to in connection with the name and work of the Lord'.⁵⁵⁰

MACKINTOSH

The exegesis of the Babylon motif by Brethren author C.H. Mackintosh is important as it has been noted above that it was through Mackintosh that Brethren, particularly Darbyite, hermeneutics and doctrine was spread throughout North America. In essence Mackintosh took on board the Brethren views on Revelation, views which he took with him to America, enabling American Brethren to set them within that new context.

Mackintosh follows closely the emerging outline of exegesis traced above. He too broadens the designation of Babylon to include more than just the Roman Catholic Church. Babylon is found throughout the 'professing church'⁵⁵¹, both in 'popery, and in every section of Protestant profession'.⁵⁵² He even applies the text to the Irvingites of his own day,⁵⁵³ a group who attended the same prophetic conferences as many notable Brethren and had much in common with regards to their premillennial outlook. Thus the language of Babylon is being used closer and closer to home with the progression of time, to denigrate ever nearer threats from outsiders.

⁵⁵⁰ HHS (1866), p. 165.

⁵⁵¹ CHM, 'Letters to a Friend on the Present Condition of Things', in *Things New and Old: A Monthly Magazine* (Morrish, 1874), 17.201. See also CHM, *The Assembly of God; or, the All-sufficiency of the Name of Jesus*, 2nd edn. (Morrish, 1868), pp. 27-28; CHM, 'The Church: Ephesians 1 and 2' in *Occasional Papers*, 2nd edn. (Broom, 1877), p. 48; CHM, *The Remnant: Past & Present* (Morrish, n.d.), p. 14. 'the professing Church is a hopeless wreck'.

⁵⁵² CHM, 'A Fifth Letters to a Friend' in *Things New and Old: A Monthly Magazine* (Morrish, 1874), 17.320.

⁵⁵³ CHM, *Fifteenth Letter to a Friend*. Reprinted from 'Things New and Old', Vol. 18 (San Mateo: Nichols, n.d.), p. 14. 'Do I want to see the church restored to its Pentecostal glory? By no means. This was the delusion of poor Edward Irving. I never expect to see the church restored'. See also CHM, *Notes on the Book of Numbers* (Morrish, 1869), p. 187.

Mackintosh also continued the emerging Brethren tradition of interpreting Babylon in light of the Letters to the Churches pericopae found in Rev. 2-3. He does not do this in a historicist way, which would suggest that each of the churches in Revelation exist in different periods of Christianity's history, but rather in a simultaneous way suggesting:

[In] Thyatira, we find Romanism . . . Sardis, Protestantism . . . Laodicea is loathsome to the heart of Christ . . . He will spew out of His mouth, and Satan will take it up and make it a cage of every unclean and hateful bird — Babylon! Wherever you find pretension, assumption, self-assertion or self-complacency, there you have, in spirit and principle, Laodicea.⁵⁵⁴

This development is significant insofar as Mackintosh clearly identifies Roman Catholicism as Babylon, thus a link is made with Thyatira and Papal Rome. Also Mackintosh here clearly identifies Protestantism as Babylon, thus a link is made with the church in Sardis. Both Babylonian churches exist simultaneously rather than sequentially. In some way Laodicea is seen by Mackintosh as the combined total of the churches of Thyatira and Sardis. Here Mackintosh seems to be weaving together the combined exegesis of Dennett, Lincoln, Wolston, Trotter and Baines, on Rev. 2-3, all of which are in some way Babylonian, but for Mackintosh they are combined together in Laodicea, the final corrupt religious system of which Rev. 17-18 describes.

Conclusion

It is clear that here in this chapter, just as in the previous chapter, the Brethren have been using the Babylon motif as a form of vituperative rhetoric, to vilify the religious outsider

⁵⁵⁴ CHM, 'God's Fullness for an Empty Vessel', in *The Miscellaneous Writings of C.H.M.* 7 vols (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1898), 5.10.

in order to define the self. The major difference in this present chapter is in the spatial location of that vilification. Whereas in the previous chapter the text was used polemically against Papal Rome: the extreme outsider, here in this chapter we have seen how the Brethren used the text to malign those closer to home, that is, Protestantism and all of her denominations. Even other non-denominational sects, the nearest outsiders, are identified as Babylon. In both cases the text is used *extra muros*, that is, against the outsider.

The work related here perhaps gives a further insight to the inner workings of a new religions group in the period during which they emerge from a parent body. Such movements are naturally concerned with the question of their own ecclesiological status and it is often the case that they will perceive themselves as uniquely significant in the history of God's dealings with humankind. Given this fundamental understanding the competition for such status must be undermined. We see that clearly with the Brethren but it has been noted before. For example, one reason that Collins gives for the historical vilification of the Jews by Christians in Revelation is that 'insofar as Christian messianism appeared to be a new and separate phenomenon, it had no status. Thus the two groups competed for status'.⁵⁵⁵ This is surely what was happening with the newly formed Brethren movement. They too, as a new phenomenon, had no status and had to compete for it with the vast number of Protestant denominations around them. Such a struggle is seen reflected in the Brethren interpretation of the biblical text.

There have been a number of new developments highlighted above in the use of the text, the first being from the pen of the Exclusive Brethren writer Wigram, who,

⁵⁵⁵ Collins (1986), p. 314.

following the lead of Kelly and Darby,⁵⁵⁶ turned the direction of attack from the outside to the inside using Babylon *intra muros* to castigate other Brethren. As Collins notes, the original 'use' of Revelation was not only to vilify the extreme and near outsider but also 'Christian rivals' inside.⁵⁵⁷ More specifically she suggests the specific text used by the Christians to whom John wrote Revelation to vilify their own Christian rivals was the Letters to the Churches in Rev. 2-3, and in particular the image of Jezebel in the church in Thyatira.⁵⁵⁸ It is perhaps not surprising then that the other new development in Brethren exegesis seen in this chapter is that of the interpretation of Babylon in conjunction with the Letters to the Churches pericopae in Rev. 2-3. Just as the first Christians used the image of Jezebel the prostitute to vilify their own Christian rivals so too the Brethren used this image, in conjunction with the Babylon motif, to vilify their own Christian rivals.

After the split between Open and Exclusives (1848) and the split between the Darbyite Exclusives and the Kelly faction (1879), the Brethren were no longer only concerned with the extreme and near outsider but also the 'otherness within'.⁵⁵⁹ As such the vituperative rhetoric of 'Babylon' began to be applied not just to Papal Rome and the Protestant denominations outside but to other Brethren within. Green has noted that for any 'textual community', a category into which the Brethren fit, 'the most threatening kind of otherness [is] the otherness within'.⁵⁶⁰ This is indeed true for the Brethren whose own history has been one marked with schism and sectarianism and it is of no real

⁵⁵⁶ See above p. 177.

⁵⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 316.

⁵⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁹ William S. Green, 'Otherness Within: Towards a Theory of Difference in Rabbinic Judaism', in Neusner et. al (1985), p. 49.

⁵⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 69.

surprise that the Babylon motif begins to be used *intra muros* in order to vilify the otherness within.

Collins notes that a primary factor in the composition of Revelation was 'the experience of trauma'.⁵⁶¹ It would not be unreasonable to describe the Plymouth dispute of 1846, the Bethesda schism of 1848 or the numerous other schisms of the 1880's and 1890's as traumatic events for the Brethren movement. The example of trauma that Collins gives is the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem at the hand of Rome in seventy-one CE. She suggests that it was this experience of social and religious trauma that led the author of Revelation to speak of Rome as Babylon, the Great Whore.⁵⁶² The experience of trauma within the Brethren movement also led to using the vitriolic language of Babylon against those who had been perceived to destroy the unity of the early Brethren movement. Thus in many ways the similar use of the text by the earliest Christians and the nineteenth century Brethren grows out of a shared *Sitz im Leben*. Both groups experienced trauma, thus, both groups sought to reinforce their own identity by using the texts to denigrate the other. As Simmel has noted in his work on conflict: 'the unifying power of the principle of conflict nowhere emerges more strongly than when it manages to carve a temporal or contentual [*sic*] area out of competitive and hostile relationships'.⁵⁶³ The language of Babylon provided a deadly arsenal for attack in such a competitive and hostile religious environment. It was used primarily for the extreme outsider: Papal Rome, then for the near outsider: Protestantism and her offshoots. Finally it was used for the insider: the enemy within, the Open and Kelly Brethren factions. In each case, just as was the case for the Christians who first received the text, Babylon was

⁵⁶¹ Adela Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, p. 99.

⁵⁶² *Ibid.*

⁵⁶³ Georg Simmel, *Conflict*, trans. by Kurt H. Wolff (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1955), p. 102.

the perfect tool to assail the other and thus 'carve out' a corner in nineteenth century British premillennial millenarianism.

Chapter Seven

‘Babylon’ is Doctrinal Confusion

In the previous two chapters it has been demonstrated that the Brethren identify Babylon as either Papal Rome or all of what they believe to be the corrupt churches around them, thus defining the difference between the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ on a religious level. The Whore of Babylon motif was used by the group to reinforce ‘self’ identification by denigrating the ‘religious other’. In this chapter an account is given of how the Whore of Babylon motif is used by the Brethren commentators to distinguish on an epistemological level between the ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’, that is, between those that have the truth (themselves) and those who do not (outsiders).

It has also been noted above that a number of Brethren authors link the exegesis of the Babylon motif with the exegesis of the Letters to the Churches (Rev. 2-3). Wolston and Baines, for example, identified the Babylonian church as the same as the church of Thyatira (Rev. 2:18-29), a church which allowed in a woman called Jezebel to teach and beguile the believers with corrupt Satanic mysteries.⁵⁶⁴ Thus already it is becoming apparent that some link was made by the Brethren between Babylon and some type of confusion or deception concerning matters of truth and correct teaching. This is perhaps unsurprising given the linguistic competence and biblical literacy of many of the Brethren writers who were quick to spot a potential link between the story of the tower of Babel and the descent into ‘confusion’. Such commentators included even such major figures as S.P. Tregelles (1813-1875) who joined the Brethren movement in 1835, married into Newton’s family and was employed by Wigram to carry out Biblical textual criticism, an employment that resulted in the publication of *Heads of Hebrew Grammar* (1852) and a

⁵⁶⁴ See further above p. 188.

translation of *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (1881).⁵⁶⁵ Tregelles notes that Babel means 'confusion' particularly 'confusion of speech, stammering'.⁵⁶⁶ This becomes extended in Brethren exegesis to mean 'confusion' more generally, including doctrinal error and is linked not only to Gen. 11, but to the Whore of Babylon from Revelation as well.

The ancient story of the tower of Babel also acts as a picture of human rejection of the word of God and rebellion against the divine will. The Brethren writers picked up on this theme using Babylon to symbolise not only doctrinal confusion, but also rejection of, and rebellion against, their own understanding of the word of God in scripture. Of course they were not the first expositors to link the Babylon of the Apocalypse with the tower of Babel story in Gen. 11⁵⁶⁷ but, as we note in this chapter, they do appear to have been among those who made the most of this potential link; and they did so to great effect. Perhaps the most important Brethren author in this context is Darby himself who not only understood Babylon to be linked to Babel, and hence symbolic of confusion, but also developed a coherent and systematic doctrine based around this idea. This is developed further below.

Darby, 'Babylon' and the Roots of Theological Discord

It is not important here to develop at length the detail of doctrinal dispute that entered into the Brethren movement. We note only in passing that such disputes were initially focused upon events that took place in the late 1840s during what became known as the

⁵⁶⁵ Other notable publications by Tregelles in the area of biblical textual criticism include, *Hebrew Reading Lessons*, 14th edn. (1906), *A Collation of the Text of Griesbach and Others* (1854) and *Fragments of St. Luke* (Codex Zacynthius), *Improved textual Renderings of the English New Testament* (1910).

⁵⁶⁶ Tregelles, S.P. *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1881), p. 101.

⁵⁶⁷ See chapter three above.

'Erbrington Street' controversy in Plymouth and the 'Bethesda' controversy in Bristol.⁵⁶⁸

An examination of those controversies, which in the end led to the split between 'open' and 'exclusive' Brethren parties, indicates that they had as much to do with issues of authority as they did with scriptural interpretation but, as is common, it was ostensibly over the interpretation of scripture that the battle was fought. In short, Christological, ecclesiological and eschatological differences arose, particularly between the leading figures of Darby and Newton. The majority of publications on the Brethren, and in particular from those authors who have made use of the archival material at the JRULM, tend to focus in detail on the minutiae of such disagreements.⁵⁶⁹

What is more important than this doctrinal detail, however, is the way in which the participants in the dispute sought to 'read into' the Bible their understanding of what was happening and to 'use' the Bible in their account of it. For example, Darby, believing Newton's error to have had a confusing and polluting effect on the whole of the Erbrington Street assembly, used the call of Rev. 18:4 'come out' as a tool for excommunication. Darby's sectarian use of Rev. 18:4 is clear

Come out from among them . . . There is evil unconfessed and unjudged; evil (I judge) of the very worst kind, speaking of evil in a Christian assembly; and I suppose there must be scriptures for leaving it, or we should never have been gathered at all.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁸ A complex issue explored in detail in Jonathan D. Burnham, *A Story of Conflict: The Controversial Relationship Between Benjamin Wills Newton and John Nelson Darby* (Bletchley, Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), *passim*.

⁵⁶⁹ See, in particular Burnham (2004). Also Coad (1968). W.G. Turner, *John Nelson Darby: A Biography*, ed. by E.N. Cross (Chapter Two, 1990). AM, *The Brethren* (c.1880). Noel (1851). Neil T.R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland, 1838-2000: A Social study of an Evangelical Movement* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2002).

⁵⁷⁰ JND (1846), 20.106.

The perceived Christological heresy taught at Ebrington Street, Plymouth caused Darby to declare that the Bethesda assembly in Bristol should also be excommunicated. Why, then, did Darby think that this assembly too needed casting out for heretical belief, since Newton had not taught his doctrinal 'errors' there? The answer is perhaps to be found in Darby's evolving understanding of doctrinal corruption and heretical teachings. Darby began to develop a system of belief that understood confused truth as something contagious, something infectious, something that could be passed on from one person to another - and from one assembly to another - almost through a kind of miasma, or germ, or virus of corruption. This frightening possibility of almost a doctrinal plague that Darby saw infecting some of those even within the broad Brethren movement, itself has apocalyptic overtones and it is hence unsurprising that it is the Apocalypse that provided Darby with some of his language to describe it.⁵⁷¹

Darby was deeply committed to the exegesis of scripture and in particular the correct understanding its prophetic sections. It was, primarily, Darby's exegesis of the Whore of Babylon motif in Rev. 17-18 that provided for Darby a divinely sanctioned basis for this doctrine of the nature of heresy. This can be seen easily enough. For example, immediately prior to his description and exegesis of the fall of Babylon in Rev. 14:8, in his *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible* (1877), Darby comments on the remnant described in Rev. 14:3-6, the 144,000, who 'have not defiled themselves with women' and who 'in their mouth no lie was found; they are blameless'. Darby informs us that

⁵⁷¹ Brethren historian Coad has noted the underlying fear of heresy held by Darby. Darby believed that heresy was a real, tangible thing, not just an abstract notion which expresses a divergent opinion. Coad (1968), p. 122. Burnham has more recently drawn attention to how such heresy was, in Darby's thought, in some way contagious or transmittable from person to person and congregation to congregation Burnham (2004), p. 208. Embley notes that 'The Exclusive idea of "contamination" developed until it became something like the early Old Testament idea of holiness - almost a physical contagion. "Evil" could be transferred *ad infinitum* from assembly to assembly throughout the world' Embley (1967b), p. 116, 190.

they were 'characterised by purity from surrounding contamination' and that 'Corruption and falsehood they had been kept free from, openly confessing the truth'.⁵⁷² He then goes on to describe Babylon, the city of corruption's fall. Although for Darby, these pure ones were undoubtedly Jewish and not of the church, we can determine a link here between how Darby understood purity and contamination in terms of truthfulness and the contagious spread of impurity.

In a letter written to J.G. Deck, the date of the composition of which is uncertain but was received by Deck on August 29th 1851, Darby writes that scripture gives divine warrant to the excommunication of whole assemblies on account of evil and not just individuals, for 'Babylon' is a place 'from which I am called to come', and the appropriate response to such evil is 'separation', to 'put them out – unless recovered by and to the truth'.⁵⁷³ Darby is clearly linking not only individuals but also whole congregations that hold corrupted understandings of the truth as Babylonian.

Similarly, in a letter written to R.T. Grant⁵⁷⁴ composed in Glasgow in 1865, Darby describes Babylon as Church corruption and then informs Grant that there is 'a recrudescence on the Bethesda question', that is, Darby uses a medical term for a reoccurrence of symptoms, and urges Grant to break with the evil in order to 'keep it out'.⁵⁷⁵ To allow such a reinfection of the evil of corrupt doctrine to recontaminate the believers there would be to 'put a positive sanction upon the evil which man has brought in', extreme separation was the only way out of Babylon.

⁵⁷² JND, 'Revelation' in *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, 5 vols. 2nd edn., (Morrish, n.d.), 5.574.

⁵⁷³ JND, *Letters*, Vol. 1, No. 98, pp. 190-195.

⁵⁷⁴ This is not the same person as FWG who led the Grant division in North America. Little biographical information is known about RT Grant.

⁵⁷⁵ JND, *Letters*, Vol. 1: No. 255, p. 414.

The place that such confused Brethren were going, Babylon, was a place where the truth had been corrupted. It was 'the city of confusion, or Babylon, which are synonymous terms . . . the city of confusion, or Babel'.⁵⁷⁶ It was ruled and governed by 'The king of Babylon . . . the virtual headship of confusion'.⁵⁷⁷ Thus for Darby there is a very strong link between the Babylon of the Apocalypse and Babel, the place known as 'confusion': a place inhabited by believers who have been contaminated by corrupt and evil doctrine and teaching.⁵⁷⁸ Babylon is responsible for 'chaining men's minds',⁵⁷⁹ for she is the source of seductive heresy⁵⁸⁰ and of 'unfaithfulness to a known truth': truth prostituted, corrupted and tarnished.⁵⁸¹

For Darby, the spirit of Babylon was responsible for the corruption and confusion of Christian teaching in general. As we have seen in chapter five above, Catholicism is the place that Darby primarily locates Babylon. Yet it is Catholic doctrine in particular that is, for Darby, especially Babylonian with Catholic teaching on absolution, the priesthood and Mariology being highlighted as significantly Babylonian.⁵⁸² Such doctrines represent for Darby the very contents of Babylon's golden cup of abomination and filthiness.⁵⁸³ However 'Babylon' does not stop there. To the list of Babylonian corruptions he includes also Judaism, heathenism, Puseyism, and Latitudinariansim.⁵⁸⁴

For Darby, one of the greatest ways that Babylon seduces believers away from the truth is with regards to confusing the Brethren over the true status and position of the

⁵⁷⁶ JND, 'The Living Water, John 7: 37-39, Notes of Sermons' (1838), *CW*, 12.29-30.

⁵⁷⁷ JND, 'Jeremiah', in *NC*, 4.91, 93.

⁵⁷⁸ JND, 'A Third Dialogue on the Essays and Reviews', *CW*, 9.295. See also JND (1844), 1.500, 512. n.*

⁵⁷⁹ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.351.

⁵⁸⁰ JND, 'Reading at Notting Hill on 1 Corinthians 1', in *NJ*, p. 123.

⁵⁸¹ JND, 'Dialogues', *CW*, 9.69-71.

⁵⁸² JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.339, 340, 346-347.

⁵⁸³ JND, 'What is the World, and What is its End? A Serious Question For Those Who Are Of It' (1862), *CW*, 34.182-183.

⁵⁸⁴ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.347-348.

church. Undoubtedly the doctrine of the ruin of the church is central to Darby's ecclesiology and to a certain extent an incorrect understanding of the church is perceived by Darby as being a symptom of Babylonian confusion. Thus with reference to an incorrect understanding of the church held by a 'Romish Priest', Darby described that person as: 'being delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon'.⁵⁸⁵ Elsewhere Darby goes on to castigate, using language clearly drawn from the Apocalypse, all who do not share his own understanding of what constitutes the true Church and what is true doctrine.⁵⁸⁶ Targets included not only the Roman Church itself but the Oxford Movement and many more besides.⁵⁸⁷ What is more, as we have seen above, as fear of the 'doctrinal plague' took root in his mind Darby turned his pen, *intra muros*, even against those from within the Brethren movement. His undiplomatic language mirrored that of the biblical text as he sought to name the enemy that was once without, but had now, in the person of Newton, entered within.

What we see in Darby here is the way in which texts can be used both to provide the language of expression and also to imply divine sanction to views that are always evolving. As the Brethren movement matured a little and became secure enough to be able to engage in a power struggle from within, the very tools that were used to draw a dividing line between 'us' and 'them' (where 'them' means 'other Christians') were

⁵⁸⁵ JND (1870), 18.51, 64. A similar view is expressed in JND, 'Christianity not Christendom' (1874), *CW*, 2nd edn. 18.271.

⁵⁸⁶ Darby links Babylon with confusion of doctrine in the following documents: JND, *Commentary on Greek New Testament*, MSS, 4.589. JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.339. JND, *Synopsis of the Bible*, 5.581. JND, 'The Mystery', in *NC*, 2.108.

⁵⁸⁷ Darby identifies both individuals and denominations as Babylon in the following documents: JND, 'Examination of the Book Entitled "The Restitution of all Things"', *CW*, 31.132. Jukes: an Anglican clergyman. JND, 'Analysis of Dr. Newman's, "Apologia Pro Vita Sua: With a Glance at the History of Popes, Councils and the Church"', *CW*, 2nd edn. 18.185. Newman and the Oxford movement. JND, 'A Letter to a Clergyman on the Claims and Doctrines of Newman Street', *CW*, 15.24-28. Newman St. linked explicitly with Babylon. JND, 'Remarks on the Pamphlet of Mr. F. Olivier Entitled, "An Essay on the Kingdom of God; Followed by a Rapid Examination of the Views of Mr. John Darby"' (1843), *CW* 1.430, 434-435, 454. Here an individual, Mr Olivier, is described as Babylonian in his exegesis.

redeployed. 'Babylon' is now not just 'Rome' but 'doctrinal confusion', even where that confusion is found *intra muros* among those once thought to be fellow Brethren.

Kelly

Kelly continues Darby's exegesis of the Babylon motif linking Babylon with doctrinal confusion and the corruption of truth in over fifty of his publications. He clearly identifies the Babylon of the Apocalypse using the language of Gen. 11: 'God . . . allowed Babel to come forth once more. It was that same system of confusion; but now in a new form'.⁵⁸⁸ For Kelly, then, in a recapitulatory sense, the same principle of bewilderment that first caused misunderstanding on the plain of Shinar is at work in confusing the church in his own day. He further reiterates this point by saying: 'The origin of the application of Babylon seems to be this; the essence of the name consisting in confusion, the meaning is a system of confusion'.⁵⁸⁹ Further links are made between Apocalyptic Babylon and the tower of Babel in, for example, Kelly's lecture on Zechariah, where the point is made that Babylonian confusion is a source of great hidden evil for the Brethren.⁵⁹⁰ It is found also in his lectures on the book of Revelation where he describes Babylon as the 'special corruptress of the truth'.⁵⁹¹

But for Kelly, Babylon is not only a symbol of 'Gentile confusion',⁵⁹² that is the confusion of the *ethna* or nations, Babylon is also in herself confusion personified; 'confusion being here the characteristic element'. She is both the source of 'every kind of confusion of truth and error, of good and evil, intoxicating, corrupting and seducing', and

⁵⁸⁸ WK (1865b), p. 2.

⁵⁸⁹ WK, 'Amos' in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), p. 128.

⁵⁹⁰ WK, 'Zechariah', in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), pp. 460-461.

⁵⁹¹ WK (1897b), p. 348.

⁵⁹² WK, 'Answers To Questions', in *BT*, Vol. 11, 1877, p. 239.

the one responsible for blurring the lines between what is true and what is false, perplexing people over matters of doctrine, through her ability to make drunk. She is the place of confusion, the 'city of man's confusion'.⁵⁹³

Babylon is the fountain of corruption where 'the streams of professedly Christian doctrine that spring up from Babylonish principles'. They constitute the main corruption of Christianity.⁵⁹⁴ Yet Kelly insists that such a corruption of the true teachings and doctrine of the church is not in itself a falsehood or lie. It still contains some truth, just contaminated truth. The creed, for example, is essentially an orthodox representation of Christian belief, yet it has been slowly and incipiently polluted by hypocritical and heretical influences: 'truth is held in the creed of Christendom but the leaven of the Pharisees has worked through it so it is held without faith or righteousness'.⁵⁹⁵

In Kelly's commentary on Revelation *Lectures On The Book of Revelation* (1897) his views on the distorting and twisting influence Babylon has on truth is explored fully. Babylon is responsible for 'every blot or error which creeps in to the word of God'.⁵⁹⁶ Whilst Kelly, as a fundamentally evangelical Protestant, would deny that there could be any error in the actual written word of God there is of course plenty of room for error in the exposition, interpretation and application of those words by an individual who has come under Babylon's pernicious influence. Her *modus operandi* is through making those who read scripture so 'drunk' that they cannot sensibly and sagaciously make sense of who God is. Babylon is an 'active source of corruption, intoxicating men and drawing

⁵⁹³ WK, *God's Inspiration* (1903), p. 595. See also the following places where Kelly inextricably links Babylon with confusion. WK, *Job* (1919), p. 63; WK (1876), p. 63; WK, 'Joshua' in *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Earlier Historical Books of the Old Testament* (Broom, 1874b), pp. 91-92; WK, 'Luke' in WK, *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Gospels* (1867a), 2nd edn., reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1970), p. 256; WK, *The Epistle Of Paul To The Thessalonians* (Cheverton, 1893), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁹⁴ WK, 'Micah' in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), pp. 257-258.

⁵⁹⁵ WK, 'What Is God's Kingdom Like?' in *BT*, Vol. N1, 1897, pp. 356-357.

⁵⁹⁶ WK (1897b), p. 323.

them away from the living God'.⁵⁹⁷ Babylon does not refer to darkness and blindness to scripture, in that the scriptures are simply unknown, but rather Babylon refers to what is known and true yet fraudulent and manipulated. She represents 'the use and abuse of revealed light . . . look at Babylon: she is evidently the great corrupt and corrupting power in religion . . . producing confusion . . . seductive to men'.⁵⁹⁸ Babylon is the corrupt and licentious woman who, with no doubt, is the source of religious corruptions.⁵⁹⁹

Kelly lists a number of specific doctrines that are held by the churches around him as being corrupt and confused. Legalism, ritualism, Gnostic confusion, monasticism and asceticism are described by Kelly as the 'fatal mischief' of Babylon.⁶⁰⁰ The Catholic doctrine of sin is particularly Babylonian according to Kelly,⁶⁰¹ as is the authority of tradition.⁶⁰² Catholic sacramental theology is also connected to Babylon, with Holy Orders, Baptism, Confirmation,⁶⁰³ Eucharist,⁶⁰⁴ marriage,⁶⁰⁵ extreme unction⁶⁰⁶ and penance⁶⁰⁷ all being described as Babylonian confusions of the truth. The role of

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 326.

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 335.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid. For further examples of links between Babylon and corrupted truth see also WK, 'The Coming', in *Three Prophetic Gems* (1970), p. 87; WK, *Church of God* (1890), p. 243; WK (1872a), p. 5.

⁶⁰⁰ WK, *Exposition of the Second Epistle to Timothy* (Race, 1913), p. 251.

⁶⁰¹ WK, 'Jesus The Son Of God', in *BT*, Vol. N11, 1917, pp. 197-198. Also WK, 'Amos' in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), p. 161.

⁶⁰² WK, 'Philadelphia and Laodicea' in *BT*, Vol. 16, 1886-1887, p. 286.

⁶⁰³ WK, *Is The Anglican Establishment A Church of God?* (Broom, n.d.), pp. 2-3. See also WK, *Job* (1919), pp. 132-133.

⁶⁰⁴ WK (1906b), p. 16.

⁶⁰⁵ WK, *Exposition of The Epistle of Paul to Titus* (Weston, 1901), p. 32.

⁶⁰⁶ WK, 'Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XIII, On the Unity of the Church, June 29th 1896' in *The Kelly Collection* (Ramsgate, Kent: Stem Publishing, 1998), n.pg. WK, *Exposition of the Epistle of James, With a Translation of an Amended Text* (Hammond, 1913), pp. 185-186; WK, *Lectures on the Epistle of Paul, the Apostle, to the Galatians* (Morrish, 1865a), p. 95-96, 125; WK, 'The Second Advent Before, not After, the Millennium', in *BT*, vol. 17, 1888-1889, p. 137.

⁶⁰⁷ WK, 'Encyclical Letter' (1998), n.pg.

canonisation,⁶⁰⁸ and the adoration of saints, Mary and the consecrated elements are described as Babylonian too.⁶⁰⁹

Like Darby, Kelly believes that an incorrect and confused understanding of the Church is a sign of Babylon's influence. In particular, a common mistake is of confusing the scriptural promises, admonishments, warnings and future hope of the church with scriptures that should only be applied to Israel; the covenant people of God.⁶¹⁰ However, simply having a correct understanding of what the church is, is not enough on its own. If one is a member of an Established church then true ecclesiological doctrine has been corrupted: 'Membership of a church is the vast error of Christendom. Rome, I presume, was mother of it . . . the church . . . fell back on the State to resist the Papacy . . . Babylon [is] the corruption of the church'.⁶¹¹ The view is reiterated when Kelly states: 'Membership of the Church of England, [is] . . . in a word, BABYLON'.⁶¹²

It is not surprising that the Established Church comes under particular attack here given Kelly's own historical context. As has already been seen above, the Brethren viewed all of Protestant Christendom to be, in essence, the daughters of the Great Harlot. Anglicanism, arguably the eldest of Babylon's daughters and the least distant from the Roman church would have shared particularly in her mothers characteristics. Thus it is clear that just as the term Babylon, when used in the book of Revelation, had already taken on new significance for those who originally read the text, so now the open ended term came to mean new things for those who read it in new situations and whose biblical interpretation shadowed their sectarian tendencies.

⁶⁰⁸ WK, *Sanctification* (Broom, 1872c), pp. 17-18.

⁶⁰⁹ WK (1963), p. 3.

⁶¹⁰ WK (1865c), pp. 43-52.

⁶¹¹ WK 'The Churches and the Church' in *The Kelly Collection* (Ramsgate, Kent: Stem Publishing, 1998), n.pg.

⁶¹² WK, *Is The Anglican Establishment A Church of God?* (n.d.), pp. 6-8.

For Kelly the source of such confused and corrupt doctrine is to be found in false teachers. He describes such counterfeit instructors as bringing shame on the truth and being responsible for encouraging a great exodus from the truth. Such teachers have a ubiquitous influence, and although the specific details of their confusion and corruption may differ, they are at least united in their liberal and critical approach to scripture. He condemns them thus

What can bring a deeper stigma on 'the way of the truth' than . . . these accredited teachers? . . . Babylon and the false teachers, with . . . well-turned words have all along drawn the mass into departure from the truth . . . [the] false teachers which is now poisoning the fountains of Christendom . . . They may differ each from the rest doctrinally in other respects; but they all agree to let in scepticism as to scripture . . . Now where is there a single denomination free . . . [of] that deadly error . . . in our day we see how those who are false in doctrine are bold enough to set conscience at defiance . . . they abandon the truth which they had solemnly pledged themselves to preach and teach.⁶¹³

Kelly then goes on to identify some of these co-called false teachers, both on a denominational and personal level. Kelly identifies Babylon, the symbol of confusion of truth, as the parent of the religious corruptions of Catholicism and Protestantism who both alike have departed from the word of God and consecrated error.⁶¹⁴ Yet, he does not remain quite so general about his identification of the place where the false teachers may be found, going on to identify the Popes in particular as a source of doctrinal confusion: 'The Popes . . . build up their tower of Babel . . . there is no excuse for the confusion of theologians'.⁶¹⁵ Here, in one of the few cases where Brethren authors are 'anti-pope' rather than 'anti-papal' in their exegesis, he explicitly states that individual Popes are

⁶¹³ WK, *The Second Epistle Of Peter* (Weston, 1906c), pp. 126-127.

⁶¹⁴ WK (1872a), pp. 5, 12.

⁶¹⁵ WK, 'Encyclical Letter' (1998), n.pg.

confused over doctrine through his use of the Tower of Babel motif, the place that we have already determined to refer to the source of confusion. Within Catholicism it is not simply the Popes who cause such confusion over matters of truth. All 'Catholic expositors . . . [have a] false interpretation [of scripture because they have been] misled by some ancient fathers . . . we do not know to what confusion and error we may be led'.⁶¹⁶ Evidently the whole process of Catholic doctrine formation is confused from the Fathers through to the theologians and expositors through to the Popes. The Protestants do not get off lightly from the charge of being false teachers. Comparing the Reformers to the children of Israel leaving their Babylonian captivity Kelly states that Lutherans, Calvinists and Puritans never recovered the truth and are still in darkness.⁶¹⁷ They may have come out of Babylon but her corrupting and darkening effect on truth is still active in their churches.

It is not just the mainstream denominations that are accused by Kelly of being places like the tower of Babel, that is, places where one becomes confused over matters of the truth. The Catholic Apostolic Church, a Dissenting and Independent Christian movement contemporary to the Brethren movement, whose founder Edward Irving and benefactor Henry Drummond would have been personally known to Kelly and other Brethren through their prominence at the Powerscourt and Albury conferences, are given special attention here. Here we see a struggle to define very precisely the borders of the 'true' community of God's people. Kelly suggests that the Irvingites hold in high regard the perplexing doctrines of Babylon: 'Babylon, the great confusion and corruption of

⁶¹⁶ WK, *Jeremiah: The Tender Hearted Prophet of the Nations* (Hammond, 1938), p. 51.

⁶¹⁷ WK, 'Joseph' (1871a), in *The Kelly Collection* (Ramsgate, Kent: Stem Publishing, 1998), n.pg.

truth . . . seems at this time to have risen into no small honour in Irvingite eyes'.⁶¹⁸ Yet the same may be said to be true not just of 'Irvingism; but in all sacerdotalism, Puseyism, Ritualism' for whenever the church is run by a priesthood it will always 'lead to the final catastrophe of Babylon'.⁶¹⁹ Again the Oxford Movement of the 1830s and 40s comes under attack again from the Brethren, but this time specifically Rev. E.B. Pusey who took over from Newman as leader of the Oxford Movement in 1841. Their High Church 'Romanistic' tendencies to ritualism and their sacerdotal emphasis on the holy orders Kelly found to be Babylonian. The criticism could be very precise indeed. The Bishop of Carlisle, for example, is condemned by Kelly for teaching people about Babylon and the antichrist yet failing to preach salvation and the gospel,⁶²⁰ whereas Dr Driver, Regius Professor of Hebrew at Oxford, is criticised for 'hankering after Babylon', since in Kelly's view Driver's historical-critical approach represents 'the hateful, impious, and blasphemous spirit of error' found in Babylon.⁶²¹ Another individual picked out by Kelly for espousing confused and corrupted teaching is the Rector of St. Saviour's, Rev. R.P. Carey, who disagrees with Kelly over whether or not offenders within the church should be excommunicated. Carey believes that 'any decent man of the world' should be allowed fellowship and thus be considered a saint. For Kelly, Carey's views show a confusion over the correct understanding of the Church (he sees it as a politico-religious institution), and also confusion over what it means for God to call his people to come out. Carey believes the 'call out' to refer to Jerusalem, but Kelly sees this as an example of

⁶¹⁸ WK, 'The Catholic Apostolic Body', in *BT*, vol. 17, 1888-1889, pp. 315 ff.

⁶¹⁹ WK, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost' in *Lectures on the Doctrine of the Holy Spirit* (Broom & Rouse, 1867b), pp. 133-134.

⁶²⁰ WK, *The Feasts In Deuteronomy xvi* (Weston, 1906a), pp. 26-27.

⁶²¹ WK, 'The Interpreter': *A Church Monthly Magazine*, January 1905. Vol. 1. No. 1, pp. 238-240.

scriptural error, a misinterpretation. The call is to 'come out' of Babylon, which for Kelly represents any system of confusion.⁶²²

To be in fellowship with Babylon, either by virtue of association with individual false teachers or denominations that hold confused doctrine, means to be in danger of being deceived and ruined: 'dense delusion . . . ruinous infatuation . . . Babylon . . . the Gentile city of confusion . . . it becomes them to inquire whether they may not have fellowship with her sins'.⁶²³ The use of 'fellowship' here is strongly hinting at the interaction between brethren in an assembly. Kelly writes that: 'no man or woman guilty of such shameful impropriety would be allowed a place in fellowship'. He refers to the excommunication of the Bethesda assembly in similar terms, in particular drawing attention to 'a former Fellow of Exeter College, to whom we refused fellowship'.⁶²⁴ This could refer to either Newton (fellow 1826-1832), or Harris (fellow 1815-1829). Both were part of the excommunicated assembly in Bethesda.⁶²⁵ Kelly goes on to say that the reason that the Exclusives such as he, Wigram and Darby acted the way they did towards the Brethren at Bethesda, or the reason for making so called 'assembly judgments' which excommunicated both individual persons and whole assemblies for doctrinal error, was that 'errors if unredressed might be fatal'.⁶²⁶ Thus we see that Kelly believes that by having fellowship with either a person on an individual level, or an assembly on a corporate level, that has been seduced from the truth by Babylon, that the sinful delusions

⁶²² WK, *The Church Of God And The Ministry Of Christ, With Collateral Points, In Reply To The Rev. R. P. Carey's 'Remarks'* (Morrish, 1863), p. 5, 71. n*.

⁶²³ WK, *Notes on the Second Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians with a New Translation* (Bible Truth Pubs., 1975), pp. 50-51.

⁶²⁴ WK, *The Plymouth Brethren: A Reply to the Christian Observer* (Morrish, 1866), pp. 44, 49. n*.

⁶²⁵ Richard Hill (1799-1880) was a member of the Bethesda assembly at Plymouth who had studied at Exeter College but he, unlike Newton and Harris, was never made a fellow.

⁶²⁶ WK (1906c), p. 74.

and confusion and corruption over truth, regardless of moral uprightness and character, can lethally threaten other believers.

For Kelly the danger of Babylon is 'fatal to the soul',⁶²⁷ more so than any other spiritual danger,⁶²⁸ and must be guarded against. Babylon is trying to seduce and corrupt the souls of the Brethren and care must be taken, presumably care over the correct meaning of scripture, to safeguard oneself: 'take good care that our own souls are preserved from the contaminations of Babylon . . . guard against the seductions of the enemy!'⁶²⁹ She is plotting to cause believers to descend into error, for this is the 'chief conspiracy of Babylon- the false lady'.⁶³⁰ Her teachings are so virulent that physical contact alone through fellowship is not the only way her dangerous teachings can contaminate the believer, Kelly writes: 'Beware of reunion with the city of confusion . . . beware even of looking back'⁶³¹ thus almost implying an airborne vector of transmission. Simply ceasing contact with such a confused believer is not enough, for: 'those who assume that just because they have separated themselves from Babylon they are no longer exposed to her dangers are deceiving themselves'.⁶³² The virulent, 'malarial', disease-like character of Babylonian confusion is developed at length as a warning to Brethren against associating with those who adhere to false teachings.⁶³³ The source of the Babylonian disease is 'the woman of Revelation', the virus of her teaching is the 'spread of nominal, faithless doctrine and creed', and the symptoms of the Babylonian disease: 'affects men's

⁶²⁷ WK, *The Mystery of Godliness: A Discourse on 1 Tim. iii:16* (Shorto, 1895), p. 3.

⁶²⁸ WK (1897b), p. 357.

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 389.

⁶³⁰ WK, *The Lord's Supper, 1 Cor. XI* (Baldwin, n.d.), pp. 10-11.

⁶³¹ WK, *The Judgment, Not Reunion, of Christendom* (Hammond, 1963), p. 13.

⁶³² WK, *The Priesthood, its Privileges and its Duties: An Exposition of Leviticus 8-15* (1902), reprint (Bible Truth Pubs., n.d.), pp. 101-102.

⁶³³ WK (1863), p. 28. See also WK, 'The Christian Hope Consistent With Events Revealed In Prophecy', in *BT*, Vol. 9, 1872-1873, p. 40.

mind and feelings'.⁶³⁴ The cure from contagion and deadly confusion of the truth is to follow the words of the angel of Rev. 18:4: 'Come out'. Such a cure is offered to a certain Rev. F. Whitfield, who Kelly informs us, was once with the Brethren, but after the 1850 Dublin split sided with the Bethesda party before eventually recanting his secession and rejoining the Anglican church. Kelly writes to Whitfield: "Come out of her my people . . . renounce Babylon . . . leave every other error and evil . . . unquestionably the wicked are to be put out'.⁶³⁵ The use of the text here is highly individualistic.

We may conclude that Babylon, for Kelly, is a symbol of confused and corrupted truth and doctrine, including confusion over sacraments, Christology and ecclesiology, presented by false teachers from false denominations, she is deadly and seductive, virulent and contagious and the only prescription for safety is complete isolation from the germ or fatal doctrine, to 'come out'.

Kelly's understanding of Revelation's Babylon motif as pointing to the confused doctrine of his competitors has been treated here in some detail here. This detailed account was necessary however as it illustrates something of the complexity, depth and scope of the use made of the Babylon motif by this particular Brethren author, who was not alone. As we have seen, Kelly is not content to use the biblical palette to paint in overly broad brush strokes a picture of contemporary Babylon, but he is concerned to trace in precise and painstaking detail an outline of the specific doctrines held by particular individuals which he believes to be Babylonian. Brethren exegesis once again rides the crest of the wave of historical circumstances.

⁶³⁴ WK, *Exposition Of The Gospel Of Luke, Edited With Annotations, By E.E. Whitfield* (Holness, 1914b), p. 231.

⁶³⁵ WK, *Brethren and their Traducers: A Refutation of Rev. F. Whitfield's Letter to Rev. O. Dobree* (Morrish, n.d.), p. 31.

Wigram

Wigram, as someone who devoted much time to the study of Hebrew scripture, was well aware of the semantic link between Babylon and Babel in Gen. 11, the entry point for confusion into the world. In the second of three lectures he delivered on *The Coming Kingdom* (1876) he asks a rhetorical question: 'What is Babylon?' He answers

the city and tower built in the plain of Shinar, where the Lord confounded their language . . . Babel, or confusion . . . Nebuchadnezzar's strange confusion of mind and actions . . . in the Revelation . . . a corrupt, lascivious woman . . . the most fruitful and least suspected root of evil corruption, was in confusing civil power in the world . . . and the power in the church . . . to blend, or try to blend the two distinct and opposite things in one, was to make a new system, and a system of confusion.⁶³⁶

Here he links Babylon with a number of types of confusion, namely confusion of language, confusion of mind and action, and confusion of doctrine. Here he is not defining Babylon simply as wrong language, incorrect thought and action, or erroneous doctrine, but rather as confusion, misunderstanding and uncertainty over things that contain a kernel of truth, albeit truth blended in with lies:

Romanism, as a church system, is based upon truth; pure error is rarely found in her, but truth mis-stated and perverted . . . each of her doctrines may be aptly compared to some adulterated compound consisting of so ingenious a mixture of truth and falsehood, so entangled and intimately blended, that the falsehood is [in chemical phase] *held in solution*.⁶³⁷

The fact that Wigram did not appear in chapter five of this thesis is indicative of the fact that this Brethren interpreter did not single out Catholicism as specifically Babylonian. Wigram did however include Catholicism in the pandenominational phrase 'professing

⁶³⁶ GVW (1873), pp. 58-59.

⁶³⁷ GVW, 'God's System of a Church', in *BT*, vol. 16, 1886-1887, p. 199.

church' which he used as a catchall label. Wigram's concern, however, to identify Babylonian doctrinal error did mean that the Catholic church came into his sights when interpreting Rev. 17-18, since he highlighted the specifically Catholic doctrines of unity, infallibility and absolution as specific example of truth mixed with falsehood. Corrupted doctrine and confused teaching is combated in the assembly by Brethren being in agreement over issues of truth, but as Babylon is a mystery who tries to exert a mystifying influence over issues of truth and true unity in doctrine, she poses a hidden danger.⁶³⁸ We perhaps see here a concern for truth which borders on near paranoia and that gives rise to an interpretation of the text with nightmarish qualities. The biblically saturated world in which Wigram and his fellow Brethren are now inhabiting is a dangerous place.

Like Baines and Wolston in the previous chapter, Wigram, who from the very earliest period of schism within the Brethren community identified himself with the Exclusive sect led by Darby, found a contemporary application for the Letter to the Church in Thyatira in Rev. 2. In particular he saw in the image of the woman Jezebel, who seduces members of the church with false teachings and the mysteries of Satan, a spiritual explanation for the presence of confused doctrine within the assemblies such as Bethesda: 'there is a farther thing in the Church at Thyatira, where Jezebel is teaching. If an assembly take the position of covering over evil it is like this'.⁶³⁹ Wigram also uses the image of Balaam's 'enticing' teachings, which he combines with Jezebel's 'misleading' teachings, to add further weight to his warning against confused doctrine in an assembly.

⁶³⁸ GVW, *To The Christians in New Zealand*, pp. 11-12.

⁶³⁹ GVW (1881), p. 158.

He uses the sectarian language of Num. 22:10 'Do not go with them' as a warning to his Brethren to stay away from Bethesda.⁶⁴⁰

Wigram's support for Darby's project of excommunicating whole assemblies for doctrinal error can be seen in *The Present Question 1848-1849*, a compilation of three letters written by Wigram in response to the Bethesda schism. In these letters Wigram systematically lays down his own views on the danger of heresy, its contagious nature and the need to excommunicate not only individuals but also whole assemblies who have been contaminated by the confused doctrines. Wigram recommends 'Holy separation from evil around' as the appropriate response to Bethesda, for such Brethren carried with them the unseen germ of confusion, thus 'no one could be received from thence save upon the understanding they were clear from evil'. The offensive and evil doctrine held at Bethesda was contagious: 'able to spread . . . and put sincere souls off their guard'. The only solution available to prevent infection from this spreading, contagious and corrupting teaching was to withdraw from contact with the evil altogether. Those at Bethesda, Newton and even his supporters have been 'tainted with the doctrine' and thus the only possible way to halt the transmission and widespread infection of the diseased doctrine was 'separation from Mr. Newton and his views'.⁶⁴¹ In the second letter, in reference to the 'evil of Bethesda' Wigram writes: 'In Babylon, as such, the animating energy was clearly of Satan, with all untruthfulness, lying, and cunning craftiness. It was moulded clearly on corrupted truth'.⁶⁴² If a person remains in fellowship at Bethesda then they are 'shareholders' in this evil. Wigram makes a reference to the May 1848 meeting about the Bethesda dispute held in Bath where some hundred leading Brethren met to

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 168.

⁶⁴¹ GVW, *The Present Question* (1848-1849), Letter 1. p. 4.

⁶⁴² GVW, *The Present Question* (1848-1849), Letter 2. pp. 8-9.

discuss what should be done in the wake of the Plymouth disorder.⁶⁴³ Darby, Kelly, Trotter, Wigram and other soon-to-be-Exclusives insisted that the only way forward they could see was to excommunicate Newton, members of the Ebrington and Compton Street chapels in Plymouth in which Newton preached, members of the Bethesda assembly in Bristol which had received members from Plymouth, and also anyone who had any contact with them:

It was an unwise and unholy act of Bethesda to cut itself off . . . to identify itself with and endorse that work of Satan by receiving and retaining the emissaries of it . . . [Bethesda] not only has let in the jesuitical system of Compton-street, and given currency to the doctrine of Mr. Newton, but it has done so in acts which exhibit the very same evil system . . . it has made the whole body of its members, as such, commit themselves to the evil.⁶⁴⁴

Not all Brethren agreed with this sectarian response. One such Brethren was Andrew Jukes, founder of the first Brethren assembly in Hull (1842), who on attending the Bath meeting about Bethesda questioned the decision to excommunicate George Müller: one of the leaders of the Bristol assembly who was noted not only for his moral uprightness but also for his radical social action work with orphans in the Bristol region. Wigram argued that Müller, in accepting contaminated Brethren from Plymouth into his Bristol assembly, had tacitly sanctioned the heresy, for: 'he stands connected with an immoral spiritual system, [it] would be impossible [to receive him] until he has confessed his error and removed the evil'.⁶⁴⁵ For Wigram the 'sin of receiving and sanctioning' those who had become 'tainted with the blasphemous errors' was just as bad as holding onto the

⁶⁴³ Coad, p. 157.

⁶⁴⁴ GVW, *The Present Question* Letter 2, p. 7.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

errors oneself.⁶⁴⁶ He writes that 'being individually free from the error in doctrine mattered not' for there are many Brethren 'who repudiate with horror the doctrine, and perhaps do not hold it, and who yet are under the power of this spell'.⁶⁴⁷ Thus even if an individual rejected the erroneous doctrine, as Müller did, this made no difference as the evil could still spread. Müller, by receiving Brethren from Plymouth into his assembly in Bristol, had sanctioned the heresy and become tainted by it. Whereas for Darby the power of the doctrine to taint was like an infectious contaminating poison, and for Kelly the power of the doctrine to pollute was like a poisonous or contagious disease, Wigram perceived its effects as its power to bewitch, like being under a spell or enchantment. Other notable Brethren, who, although Wigram conceded did not hold onto Newton's Babylonian heresy, were still condemned through the language of Babylonian contagion included Robert Chapman,⁶⁴⁸ Henry Craik,⁶⁴⁹ Feltham, Meredith and Aitchison.⁶⁵⁰

Other Authors

GRANT

Grant, who formed the Exclusive Grant division of Brethren in America on a principle of excommunication similar to that of Darby and Kelly in Britain, links the allowing in of the woman Jezebel into the Thyatiran church with confusion of fellowship, concluding that it is thus necessary to judge the character of those allowed fellowship according to the truthfulness of their faith. He states

⁶⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁸ GVW, *An Appeal to Saints that Remain Still in Bethesda and Salem, as to Certain Bad Doctrine* (Campbell, 1848), p. 15. Also pp. 7, 10, 11.

⁶⁴⁹ GVW, *An Answer of G. V. Wigram, to 'Mr. H. Craik's Letter, dated 15th November, 1848'* (Campbell, 1848), p. 22. GVW asks when Craik will be delivered from the evil of Bethesda and Newton.

⁶⁵⁰ GVW, *The Present Question* (1848-1849), 'Letter of the Ten', p. 33.

Suppose all Christians accepted your invitation and you were really able to assemble all the members of Christ at the Lord's table with their jarring views, their various states of soul, their entanglements with the world and with their evil associations . . . your 'gathering' would be a defiance of the holy discipline. It would be another Babel (confusion). Do you think that outward unity is so dear to Christ that He would desire it apart from true confession, cleansing and fellowship in the truth?⁶⁵¹

Here he puts forward certain qualifications for being accepted into fellowship around that central act within all Brethren assemblies, namely the Lord's Table, including truthfulness of what one confesses, purity and accuracy of association. For Grant, to accept one into fellowship who could not meet such requirements, even though still a Christian, would lead to confusion, just like the coming together of all the nations in defiance of God on the plain of Shinar in Gen. 11 and in the seduced church of Thyatira in Rev. 2.

NEWBERRY

Newberry, in his exegesis of Rev. 17:4, draws attention to the fact that the Great Whore is 'dressed in purple and scarlet and is glittering with gold'. Such attire, he argues, is a reference to confused, corrupt and false doctrine:

purple, the combination of scarlet and blue, is emblematic of authority which unites the heavenly and the spiritual with that which is earthly and carnal. False doctrine is, for the most part, a corruption of Divine truth- error overlaid with thin layers of truth, like base metal gilded.⁶⁵²

He, like Darby and Kelly earlier on in this chapter, does not accuse Babylon of outright lies and blatant falsehood but rather sees her as much more seductive and incipient in her

⁶⁵¹ FWG, *A Divine Movement*, p. 34.

⁶⁵² Newberry (c.1890), p. 98.

influence, taking truth and distorting it, corrupting and confusing the truth, mystifying and intoxicating the truth with subtle lies.

TWEEDIE

This pernicious influence can be seen in the writings of Tweedie, who in an entry to the *Northern Witness* on the subject of Babylon as a Mystery, writes: 'I think the strong delusion to believe a lie comes here on those who, in the days of the great whore, believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness'.⁶⁵³ Thus although he does not write that Babylon's lies have a veneer of truth, she does, for Tweedie, influence and seduce believers into delusion and misunderstanding, perhaps as a result of her intoxicating wine causing drunkenness with regards to matters of truth.

POWERSCOURT

Lady Powerscourt also understands Babylon as the source of falsehood and lies but she is closer to Darby and Kelly than Newberry in her understanding of the nature of such confusion in that these errors are not simply lies or untruths, but corruptions and distortions of truth. She writes in a letter: 'misunderstanding scripture . . . wonderfully blind . . . to take up our lot with Babylon . . . every principle of error seems to have its representative . . . contradictory opinions, each proved from scripture . . . a perceptible mixture of error and prejudice'.⁶⁵⁴ This suggests that Babylon's lies may even have their origin in scripture and may be argued from the word of God but, through misunderstanding, blindness and prejudice, are erroneous and contradictory. She clearly

⁶⁵³ Tweedie, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great', pp. 94-95.

⁶⁵⁴ TAWP, Letter 23, 1879, p. 62.

links this confusion of truth in with the tower of Babel pericopae in Gen. 11 as she writes that 'Babel destroyed itself by its confusion'⁶⁵⁵ thus supporting the recapitulatory views indicative of wider Brethren exegesis.

SNELL

The concept of a Babylonian veneer of truth which gilds lies and thus produces confusion can be seen in Snell's commentary on the Revelation. When discussing Babylon the Great he writes: 'The devil's powers of mimicry; his artful ways of having something outwardly resembling what is of God', but they result in 'deceiving the world'.⁶⁵⁶ Babylon represents the church on the outside, the veneer of Christianity, but on the inside is the 'false and corrupt one'.⁶⁵⁷ She does this by making believers drunk and thus too inebriated to discern what is really true from what is, not merely openly false, but what is secretly masquerading as true on the outside. He writes of the golden cup of abominations found in the harlots hand in Rev. 17:4, which will 'deceive and intoxicate'.⁶⁵⁸ Drinking from her cup makes one feel emotional and sensually like one's religious needs for forgiveness have been fulfilled but in reality the cup has no real power or salvific effectuality. Here Snell alludes to the ritualistic partaking of the eucharist and the confused belief that such a sacrament can actually make one holy. The sacramental chalice is, for Snell, a 'bewitching cup'. Snell continues in the tradition of interpreting Apocalyptic Babylon in light of the tower of Babel story in Gen. 11,⁶⁵⁹ yet he does not confine the story to its historical context but applies it to his own day: 'we must conclude

⁶⁵⁵ TAWP, Letter 78, 10th November 1836, pp. 234-235.

⁶⁵⁶ HSS (1866), p. 156.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 157.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 160.

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 160.

that Babel, or confusion, must be wherever the Lord is not wholly followed'.⁶⁶⁰ Such confusion primarily comes through the mixing of 'church and world', it is indeed a deadly poison'.⁶⁶¹

BAINES AND WOLSTON

Brethren authors Baines and Wolston add little to the growing hermeneutic. Babylon is the corruption of religion⁶⁶² and the source of confusion.⁶⁶³ Baines does contribute a new idea to the emerging Brethren interpretative outline in that he adds that Babylon is a symbol of the great apostasy or falling away from truth. Baines writes 'men will be given up to strong delusion that they should believe a lie . . . and more especially that deadly delusion symbolised by the plague of bitter waters'.⁶⁶⁴ He does not however call for an assembly to be excommunicated or put out of fellowship if an individual adheres to heretical teachings, rather he simply understands that assembly to be a false church, a place where confusion makes itself at home and where people sincerely believe that they hold onto the truth but that their truth is actually a fake imitation. Babylon is 'a false thing . . . the counterfeit . . . the false church is the harlot . . . the false church is Babylon, the habitation of confusion'.⁶⁶⁵

TROTTER

Trotter, a strong supporter of Darby and the Exclusives, used Babylon as a tool to berate and excommunicate the epistemological other. Like for many of his Brethren above,

⁶⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 166.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid., p. 174.

⁶⁶² TBB (1879), p. 226. WTPW, '*Handfuls of Purpose*', pp. 122-123.

⁶⁶³ TBB (1879), p. 221. WTPW, 'A Notable Birthday', Lecture 2 of 10 in *CNT*, pp. 42-43.

⁶⁶⁴ TBB (1879), p. 117.

⁶⁶⁵ TBB (1879), p. 291.

Babylon was, for Trotter, both the symbol and source of doctrinal confusion.⁶⁶⁶ His views are important for he provides an eye-witness account of the Plymouth and Bethesda controversy, and in particular officially records Darby's views on this matter. He notes that:

Mr. D. . . . was obliged, in order to keep a clear conscience himself, to withdraw from the assembly . . . there was evil allowed in the assembly . . . separation became unavoidable . . . the corruption of moral integrity, and the system of intrigue and deception which attended the evil . . . Thus far the evil had been confined to the undermining all the truths . . . most corrupting in their effects on others . . . false doctrines . . . Strange things were known to have been taught.⁶⁶⁷

He also adds to the developing Brethren exegesis of Babylon as 'confusion' by interpreting Rev. 17-18 in light of the parable of the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-30), of which he notes that the tares have a 'specious but spurious resemblance to wheat' and that the tares represent the 'children of the wicked one . . . counterfeit and spurious . . . hypocrites . . . false professors'.⁶⁶⁸ He also interprets Rev. 17-18 in light of the parable of the leaven (Mt. 13:33). The leaven is, according to Trotter, heretical teaching 'secretly and clandestinely introduced'. The source of such heresy is the 'mystic woman of Revelation 17' she has secretly introduced confused teaching into the Church which has 'openly developed at last in the foul system of Babylon'.⁶⁶⁹

⁶⁶⁶ WT, 'The Last Days of Gentile Supremacy', p. 275.

⁶⁶⁷ WT, *The Origins of (so-called) Open Brethrenism: A Letter by W. Trotter Giving the Whole Case of Plymouth & Bethesda*. Otley, July 15th 1849 (Kingston: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.), pp. 11-15.

⁶⁶⁸ WT, 'The Predicted Corruption of Christianity', pp. 191-192.

⁶⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 195.

BELLETT

Bellett continues in the emerging hermeneutical stream of Brethren exegesis that identifies Babylon as confusion, using such language as 'strangely inconsistent' doctrine,⁶⁷⁰ idolatrous doctrine⁶⁷¹ and lies⁶⁷² to describe Babylon's effects on truth. Although he concedes 'there may be much evangelic truth confessed in systems which will be judged at Babylon'⁶⁷³ there is much incorrect teaching there and Brethren must purge themselves from such 'incorrect teaching': the 'canker' and 'error' of Babylon.⁶⁷⁴ Bellett adds to the growing interpretative trend by linking Rev. 17-18 with Josh. 7, the story of Achen's sin. Although this theme, it will be seen in chapter eight, is picked up by other Brethren authors to vilify the world, here Bellett uses the story of the hidden Babylonian garment to warn of the danger of hidden Babylonian heresy. The Babylonian garment brings a curse and leprosy on the people. Bellett writes: 'the cursed thing has been again and again and ever taken. His responsible creature, has linked himself with pollution'.⁶⁷⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated quite clearly that one of the ways that the Brethren use the Whore of Babylon motif is to vilify *intra muros* those who believed confused, corrupt and heretical doctrine. In doing so the group is strengthened from within as it is such 'rhetoric of accusation and retribution' which on a sociological level 'ties the individual tightly into community bonds and scores on his mind the invisible fence and paths by

⁶⁷⁰ JGB, *Witnesses for God*, p. 18.

⁶⁷¹ JGB, 'Babylon' (1885-1887), 1.25.

⁶⁷² JGB (1887), p. 29. See also, JGB (1880), p. 32.

⁶⁷³ JGB, 'An Extract, Fragment', in *CF* (1891), 11.37.

⁶⁷⁴ JGB, 'Rightly Dividing' the Word of Truth' (n.d.), p. 89.

⁶⁷⁵ JGB, *Notes on Joshua: An outline study of the book of Joshua* (Kilmarnock: Ritchie, 1938), pp. 44-45.

which the community co-ordinates its life in common'.⁶⁷⁶ The change in interpretation from the previous two chapters in which the Brethren used 'Babylon' to eke out their own space amongst all the other Christian denominations of their time to identifying the 'Babylon within' as the source of heresy, reflects the change in *Sitz im Leben* of the group. The Brethren use of Babylon in the way shown above is in many ways remarkably similar to the way medieval European society used the charges of witchcraft and leprosy to force out certain members of society who posed a risk to the internal order and to reinforce the social hierarchy inside.⁶⁷⁷ Additionally, the Brethren understanding of Babylon as a hidden miasmatic danger is remarkably similar to contemporary attitudes to technological and environmental danger in the US, for as Douglas and Wildavsky have noted, the essential elements of risk and danger are that 'danger is involuntary (we should not willingly accept them), irreversible (there is no turning back), and hidden (we shall not know we are encountering them)'.⁶⁷⁸ Each essential component of danger is met, according to the Brethren, in heresy. Heretics like Newton and his circle should not be willingly accepted into fellowship, to do so may result in the heresy being transmitted miasmatically to other Brethren. Heresy, like technological and environmental danger, is also irreversible. The Brethren from the Plymouth and Bristol controversies of the late 1840's set out on a path of division and dissent, for as Knox has noted of the centuries preceding the Brethren movement, 'Schism begets schism' and the first split of a sect necessarily entails the next.⁶⁷⁹ Heresy, like technological and environmental danger, is hidden. The Brethren described heresy as a Babylonian garment 'hidden' under a tent

⁶⁷⁶ Douglas, *Risk and Blame* pp. 27-28.

⁶⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-99.

⁶⁷⁸ Douglas & Wildavsky, p. 16.

⁶⁷⁹ Ronald A. Knox, *Enthusiasm: A Chapter in the History of Religion with Special Reference to the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), p. 1.

(Josh. 7) and a wicked Babylonian woman 'hiding' evil in an ephah (Zech. 5). Once more the charismatic and authoritarian personality of Darby drives the community interpretation. His dealings with Ebrington Street and Bethesda show a coercive form of social control and perhaps even a political exercise of power as he used the language of Babylon to excommunicate Newton and those who looked to Newton and not Darby as their leader.⁶⁸⁰ Darby's doctrine of contamination, which was influenced by his reading of Rev. 18:4, and his vehement application of the language of Babylon to those who differed to him doctrinally can be seen in socio-religious terms as an intolerance of ambiguity or 'confusion'. Darby and other Exclusive Brethren's feelings about Babylonian confusion is quite clear, for the group 'the ambiguous or unstructured situation is avoided as it usually precipitates unpleasant emotional reactions ranging from uneasiness to anxiety' manifest not just at cognitive level but also at 'interpersonal or social level'.⁶⁸¹ As such, an examination of the exegesis of Darby and his Exclusive circle reveals something of a hierarchy of 'authoritarian personalities', where 'Ego-control' represents the individual's characteristic means of handling or mediating both his 'internal need tensions' and the demands imposed upon him by the 'external world'.⁶⁸² As we have seen here in this chapter, such is evidently correct. The Exclusive Brethren use Babylon to give divine sanction to their own authoritarian desires to control who is inside and who is out.

⁶⁸⁰ Darby uses 'Babylon' to coerce the Brethren. For a study of the way that powerful figures coerce others and control their freedom see Alan S. Rosenbaum, *Coercion and Autonomy: Philosophical Foundations, Issues and Practices* (NY: Greenwood Press, 1986).

⁶⁸¹ J. Block & J. Block, 'An Investigation of the Relationship Between Intolerance of Ambiguity and Ethnocentricity', in *The Journal of Personality*, ed. by K. Zener, vol. 19, Sept. 1950-June 1951 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 303.

⁶⁸² Daniel J. Levinson, 'Projective Questions in the Study of Personality and Ideology', in T.W. Adorno, et. al, *The Authoritarian Personality* (NY: Harper, 1950), pp. 595-600.

The authors in this chapter have been, predominantly, from the Exclusive factions of the Brethren movement whose sectarian ecclesiological tendencies have been reflected in their use of the text. There is of course an obvious point to make here and one that shall not go unnoticed. The fact that the tradition to which this group of Brethren writers belonged became known as 'Exclusive' is an indication of their strict ecclesiological stance. In the hands of such authors, Rev. 17-18 took on particular significance as they read into the text their own experiences, fears and interests. The task was not a difficult one since in many ways the experience of the Brethren, at least as they perceived it, was not unlike the experience of the community for whom Revelation was originally written, both existed within a threatening world (perceived or actual) characterised by impurity, religious fornication and danger. Thus the relationship between what had been written and what had been read was a fairly close one and for the Brethren this divine confirmation of their status and the call to maintain purity was a powerful imperative.

Chapter Eight

'Babylon' is Worldliness

So far in this thesis it has been argued that the Christian Brethren of the nineteenth century used the Whore of Babylon motif as a form of vituperative rhetoric against those who do not belong within the group. This has been clear in the primarily religious interpretations of the Whore of Babylon motif examined in chapters five and six in which Babylon was used polemically against both Roman Catholicism and against all of the so called 'corrupt' denominations of Christendom. In the previous chapter attention was drawn to the use of the Babylon motif to define on an intellectual and epistemological basis who, for the Brethren writers, was 'in' the group and who was 'out'. It was shown in that chapter that a significant part of this was centred upon an attempt to draw a line between those who, from the perspective of the writer, believed what was 'true' and those who believed what was 'false'. The concept of Babylon here proved to be a useful way of understanding the outsider who, according to the Brethren, held onto confused and heretical doctrines. This present chapter, by contrast, is concerned with what might be termed 'secular' or 'worldly' interpretations of the Whore of Babylon motif among Brethren interpreters. As will be shown, the vituperative use of the text to vilify the enemy need not only be levelled against the religious or epistemological 'other', for the image of Babylon would prove to be a convenient tool to be used polemically to warn the Brethren of the dangers of the very world in which they lived.

This method of tapping into the psychology and dynamics of an emerging sectarian community reflects Newport's suggestion that *eisegetical* schemes provide a useful way into the thinking of religious groups. Newport draws attention to Tyrrell's

famous remark that 'those seeking to reconstruct a life of Jesus are all too often in the position of looking into a deep well only to see there a faint reflection of themselves'.⁶⁸³ However, Newport goes on to note that 'those distorted images at the bottom of Tyrrell's well surely have some value, if not to the biblical scholar of the historical-critical school, at least to the historian of ideas, and perhaps to the literary theorist as well'.⁶⁸⁴ Newport's work is helpful in that it makes this argument generally with reference to a variety of different groups. Inevitably, however, his work does not go into great detail concerning any one of them. In this thesis the method is used with reference to one relatively small group and one particularly narrow text. The results, therefore, are less broad but significantly deeper.

Any new sectarian Christian denomination faces the problem of both defining and representing the 'self', that is, who they are, and of defining and representing the 'other', that is, who and what it is from which they have seceded. The question to be addressed here is: 'What does it mean for one to be a part of the Brethren movement?' The exegesis of the Whore of Babylon motif is a significant way in which the Brethren community tried to solidify their own identity and answer that very question as a dangerous, bloodthirsty enemy provides on a sociological level 'unification on the basis of conflict'. Babylon, a 'danger which is always threatened but never materialised' can thus be seen as 'especially apt to strengthen the feeling of unity' in sociological terms.⁶⁸⁵

Anthropologist Mary Douglas, in *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), whilst discussing theories about the concept of pollution with particular reference to bodily refuse notes that social structures, for example

⁶⁸³ Newport (2000), p. 21.

⁶⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁵ Simmel (1955), pp. 103-105.

Christian denominations, are vulnerable around their margins or boundaries. All such margins, or places where contact with the 'outsider' occurs, could be viewed as dangerous and it is crucial to her analysis not simply to 'treat bodily margins in isolation from all other margins' as 'there is no reason to assume any primacy for the individual's attitude to his own bodily and emotional experience, any more than for his cultural and social experience'.⁶⁸⁶ For a Brethren interpreter his experience of the wider world occurs on the margins of his own social existence and is thus a potentially dangerous one.

Douglas' now classic work may be helpful here too. According to her theory such margins and boundaries are vulnerable because they are the place of interface between the insider and the outsider. The boundary is a permeable or porous area, a place susceptible to allowing danger in through contact with the 'outside' and, as such, can lead to feelings of anxiety from within about the integrity and security of the group as it participates, willingly or unwillingly, in an exchange of ideas and values at this interstitial border. In this chapter it is argued that in the hands of the Christian Brethren interpreters, the book of Revelation helped to ease the sense of 'danger' that came through contact with the outside world; a danger that might lead to impurity. Just as 'pollution rules' within a culture ensure 'the order in external physical events',⁶⁸⁷ so too for the Brethren, the prophetic text of the Apocalypse which revealed the future to the group, gave order and meaning to the external physical world. It also identified clearly the source of danger: Babylon.

⁶⁸⁶ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (Routledge, 1966), p. 121.

⁶⁸⁷ Mary Douglas, 'Pollution' in *The International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, 18 vols, ed. by D.L. Sills (NY: Macmillan, 1968), 12.339.

Douglas herself leans in this direction in showing that the notion of boundary transgression, or 'pollution' as she defines it, has its origin in the social construction of entities with highly defined boundaries. The exegesis of the Apocalypse for the Brethren authors, just like the exegesis of Leviticus for Jewish authors, provides, so it is argued here, 'a positive pattern in which ideas and values are tidily ordered' and 'above all . . . has authority'.⁶⁸⁸ Thus if such boundaries are transgressed, for example, by not conforming to the standard Brethren exegesis of the Apocalypse or not adhering to the authority of prominent Brethren such as Darby, a person becomes symbolically dirty or polluted and 'is matter out of place'.⁶⁸⁹ They become 'outsiders' because of divergent beliefs. Douglas states that 'a rule of avoiding anomalous things affirms and strengthens the definitions to which they do not conform'⁶⁹⁰ and, although she does not talk about the Brethren specifically as is the case in this chapter, her theories when applied to this group suggest that the Brethren would have a rule of some kind about avoiding the world and the things of the world. Such a rule strengthens the Brethren view that they are not of the world but merely strangers passing through. The call for separation is of course explicit in the angelic voice of Rev. 18:4: 'come out of her my people', the text which follows is full of images of ritual pollution for Babylon is 'unclean', 'detestable', and has 'plagues'.

Douglas is helpful in another way in this chapter. Her 'matter out of place' theory can be applied further to the Brethren movement insofar as the Brethren, through their imminent eschatological expectations, considered themselves to be 'matter out of place'. The boundary with which they interface is not just a religious boundary but also a secular one for the Brethren define themselves not just against other denominations but also

⁶⁸⁸ Douglas (1966), pp. 38-39.

⁶⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

⁶⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 39.

against the world. This world, they believe, is not the home of the true saints, but heaven is their home.⁶⁹¹ The Brethren are just passing through this world and must do so undefiled. Thus they may be considered, in Douglas' terms: 'matter out of place'.

Douglas has also applied her cultural theory of pollution and contamination to the secular tenets of contemporary Western society. According to Douglas, and her colleague Aaron Wildavsky, the concept of boundary transgression as pollution is 'an instrument of control' that gives 'the central establishment . . . the monopoly of explaining the natural order'.⁶⁹² Thus, 'from the point of view of the central political establishment, the socially inferior are morally and physically contaminating, to be segregated and forcibly confined, punished if they try to break out'.⁶⁹³ For the Brethren this punishment does not just come from within the group (as was seen in the previous chapter and the use of Babylon in Darby's project of excommunication), but it comes also from without. The punishment for transgressing the boundary between the Brethren and the world is to be counted as being 'in' Babylon on the day of her judgment; to 'share her sins', to 'receive her plagues' and thus be judged by God.

The Brethren movement is an entity which has its own religiously and culturally particular rituals. The primary example of this is the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Beliefs are important too and here it would appear to be an inaugurated futurist eschatology and a sectarian ecclesiology which are foremost. Unlike many other religious groups, social practices were relatively unimportant for the Brethren writers. With the exception of the notable work of Müller and Barnardo, who established orphanages for

⁶⁹¹ For example, WTPW, 'Handfuls of Purpose' pp. 340-341. 'What is a stranger? A stranger is a person who is away from home. Where is our Home? It is the place where Jesus is. That is home. He is not here. He is up there'.

⁶⁹² Mary Douglas & Aaron Wildavsky, *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley: California UP, 1982), p. 47.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

children, much Brethren activity showed the outworking of a premillennial pessimism. This makes sense: if, after all, the world is soon to end, what point is there in trying to fix it up? The world is not getting better but gradually worse and heading for judgment.

In this sense the Brethren's struggle against this world can be seen as a struggle to maintain cultural identity amongst a rapidly changing religious, political and economic milieu. The Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the efforts of Newman and Pusey to re-Catholicise the Church of England was understood by the Brethren to be a return to Babylon (this has been clearly demonstrated above). Yet forming their own religious movement was only a religious response to a religious problem. The world in which the earliest Brethren authors lived was a world that appeared to fulfil the darkest predictions of a dispensational schema. The French Revolution was the source of widespread uncertainty within English political and social circles, which, when combined with the war between America and England during the first decade of the 1800's and that fact that most of Europe was engaged in the Napoleonic wars, caused many to turn to scripture and in particular the apocalyptic portent of 'wars and rumours of wars' to explain their own *Sitz im Leben*.⁶⁹⁴ Similarly, a ubiquitous European cholera infection reinforced such a belief further, again being seen as a sign of the world's impending doom and of God's great displeasure. For the Brethren, then, the world was an unsafe place and the book of Revelation was a guide to those who found themselves trapped in it.

Thus the use and influence of the Whore of Babylon motif can be seen in how the Brethren invented their own identity. The Whore of Babylon motif enables the Brethren authors to pursue the question of how one comes to know the 'other'. The 'religious other' is, in this case, Papal Rome and her many daughters; that is, the sum total of all

⁶⁹⁴ Matt. 24:6; Mk 13:7.

corrupt Christendom. The 'secular other' is the world in which the Brethren live. The ability to comprehend the complex dynamics of any community, whether religious, secular, geographical, ethnic, small, large, is always a significant activity, and, as anthropologist Geertz has noted, one can never really get to the bottom of things as the final interpretation of any text will not elicit the same exact meaning for everyone.⁶⁹⁵ The group of Brethren authors here examined did not have a simple, one-layer answer to who Babylon was, but rather they understood the identity of Babylon on a number of levels. The exegesis occurred over a number of complex layers. Whilst the identification of Babylon highlighted in chapter seven above presented a warning to the Brethren about incorrect and confused exegesis, it is somewhat ironic that the community as a whole appears not to have held onto a single 'right' interpretation of what Babylon was, but rather held a number of simultaneously 'right' interpretations.

Darby

This tendency to adopt a number of different interpretations of the Babylon motif, all of which were simultaneously thought be right, can be seen in no less central a figure than Darby. As has been noted above, Darby identified Babylon as the Roman Catholic church, yet also as the whole of corrupt Christendom, and simultaneously as corrupt and confused doctrine. However in this chapter it becomes clear that Darby also interpreted the Whore of Babylon motif as referring to the world and worldliness, thus drawing the boundaries not just within the Christian tradition but also without.

⁶⁹⁵ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Hutchinson, 1975), p. 313.

Darby writes quite clearly that 'the great principle seen in Babylon was worldliness'⁶⁹⁶ and that 'Babylon [is] a thing of this world'.⁶⁹⁷ But somehow Babylon is more than just something in or of the world. She is representative too of the power and authority of the world and for this reason Darby writes: 'the government of the world . . . [is] Babel and violent power'⁶⁹⁸ and also: 'Babylon is . . . [the] power of the world'.⁶⁹⁹ Here Darby is using government not just in a political sense, insofar as he perceives Babylon to be behind the political, legislative and administrative agency of the world, but in more general terms as that which has authority and power over things. Babylon represents the secular 'other', the physical world and its authority, power and control. The language of religious boundaries, the distinction between self and other, is apparent when Darby writes of the 'outward worldly glory of Babylon'.⁷⁰⁰ Babylon represents an 'other' external world or sphere of existence to the internal world in which the Brethren exist.

For Darby Babylon symbolises a lust for the beauty or attractiveness of the world. She represents the dangerously attractive external world outside of the Brethren's internal world: 'see how people are attracted by the external . . . [by] the woman . . . the spirit of the world'.⁷⁰¹ She is a thing which allures man: 'Babylon . . . the beauty which attracts man but disgusts God . . . it is the world'.⁷⁰²

⁶⁹⁶ JND, 'Notes on the Apocalypse', 5.97.

⁶⁹⁷ JND, 'Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans' (1849), *CW* 26.191; See also, JND, 'Isaiah', in *NC*, 4.10. 'the Fall of Babylon . . . the darkness of this world', and JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.352. 'Babylon, The world-church'.

⁶⁹⁸ JND, 'Genesis, Typically Considered', in *NC*, 1.123.

⁶⁹⁹ JND, 'Notes on Isaiah', in *NC*, 4.46.

⁷⁰⁰ JND, 'Practical Reflections on the Psalms' (1860), *CW*, 17.325.

⁷⁰¹ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation' 34.346-347.

⁷⁰² *Ibid.*, 34.344.

Darby draws attention to Babylon's designation as a prostitute or whore. She is the one who entices and allures men, causes them to lust after her and then seduces them: 'the woman was gorgeously and imperially arrayed, had every human glory and ornament on her, and a rich cup of prostituting . . . [the] source of all seduction to men'.⁷⁰³ Her sexuality is seen as a threat to Brethren purity. Douglas notes that in certain cultures lethal punishments are inflicted on those who have engaged in adultery 'in the interests of maintaining the social structure'⁷⁰⁴ and this is certainly the case for Babylon who, because of her prostitution and adultery, is judged and destroyed. Thus continuing with Darby's fourth layer of exegesis, this world, which Babylon symbolically represents, seeks to seduce the saints and thus will be judged and destroyed to maintain the social structure of the true church. Babylon is: 'the strange woman' who represents all 'the snares and attractions of corruption . . . seeking to satisfy one's lusts by violence and corruption . . . self-will . . . full gratification . . .' This 'strange woman' has 'the ruin of man written on her forehead'.⁷⁰⁵

In Josh. 7 we read of how Achan the Israelite acted 'unfaithfully' or adulterously as he hid a Babylonian garment under his tent. He was taken outside of the camp and burned. Darby comments: 'What of . . . the Babylonish garment? That was merely the people gratifying their lust with the things of the world',⁷⁰⁶ thereby linking the act of holding onto something made in Babylon with lusting after or sexual desire for the world.

⁷⁰³ JND, *Synopsis of the Books of the Bible*, 5.581-582.

⁷⁰⁴ Douglas (1966), p. 131.

⁷⁰⁵ JND, 'Practical Reflections on the Proverbs' (1866), *CW*, 17.342-378, 355-356; see also 'a strange woman . . . This was mere corrupt lust . . . The heart, allured by evil . . . following the path of lust to death . . . The special warning (v. 8) is withdrawal, not coming near the door of her house . . . [do] not go in the path of lust, nor [let] lust have occasion to seize hold of the will . . . The evil too, as it was reckless, was shameless'. *Ibid.*, 34.373-37; and, JND (1860) 17.221. 'The church of God is . . . formed of people who are of no account in this world . . . the grandeurs of the . . . Babylons, which God judges, eclipse it in our sight? . . . Is the appearance and vain show of this world of weight with us?'

⁷⁰⁶ JND, 'Readings on Joshua', in *NJ*, p. 434.

In Rev. 17:16 and 18:8 the Whore of Babylon is burned with fire and in Gen. 38:24 and Lev. 21:9 burning is the punishment for prostitution. Douglas notes that in some cultures fear of sex pollution is 'mediated by contact with fire'.⁷⁰⁷ Clearly on an anthropological level this kind of view is behind the Israelite punishment for prostitution, the apocalyptic punishment of Babylon and, *vis-à-vis* Brethren exegesis, the judgment waiting the world and those who engage in intercourse with the world.

Douglas also notes a commonly held belief which she defines as the 'Delilah complex', a 'belief that women weaken or betray',⁷⁰⁸ found among many groups and cultures throughout the world. The name of course refers to the story of Samson and Delilah in Judges 16. Delilah, perceived in popular exegesis as a prostitute, seduces Samson to give up his position as a Nazirite, one who is set apart for God. For Darby, the true church is, like Samson, set apart for God. The apocalyptic prostitute, Babylon, seeks to seduce the believer away from God and into the world. One way that She does this is by mixing the Church and world together. Babylon blurs the distinction between the two worlds. The porous boundary between the sphere of the church and the sphere of the world, the place where they meet, the interface, margin or boundary between the Brethren community inside and the outsiders in the world is a dangerous, vulnerable place. Darby writes: 'The church and the world cannot go on together . . . "Ye are not of this world"',⁷⁰⁹ and that 'Everything not heavenly is mixed up with her'.⁷¹⁰

For Darby, this illicit union and adulterous relationship between the church and the world can be seen in no clearer terms than in the formation of the Church of England

⁷⁰⁷ Douglas (1966), p. 154.

⁷⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 154.

⁷⁰⁹ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.351-352.

⁷¹⁰ Ibid., 34.348.

and its church-state affiliation. In no unclear terms Darby states 'the union of church and state I held to be Babylonish'⁷¹¹ and that 'the position and worldliness of the church . . . disqualified it for being an agent of the gospel in the country'.⁷¹² So, whereas Dennett, Trotter, Wolston, and Newton identify the Church-State relationship as a religious corruption of Babylon further defining the community's religious boundaries, Darby uses the Church-State relationship in a secular way to define the community's secular boundary. For Darby, the Church of England is no longer a church but has been completely subsumed by the world. Further evidence of this view can be gleaned from his exegesis of Zech. 5. He writes of 'the ephah and the woman . . . the union of the Church in the world . . . the woman in the world . . . the professing Gentile Church now simply buried in the world'.⁷¹³

Douglas highlights a number of specific things that, from an anthropological perspective, belong outside of the boundaries of many societies and cultures which when brought inside ritually defile and make one dirty and impure.⁷¹⁴ The Brethren have their own list of specific worldly things that exist at the interface between their own community and the world which similarly pose a threat and danger to those inside. Darby's list includes pride,⁷¹⁵ learning and numbers,⁷¹⁶ worldly prosperity and advantage,⁷¹⁷ selfish enjoyment and lust,⁷¹⁸ drunkenness⁷¹⁹ and lasciviousness.⁷²⁰

⁷¹¹ JND, 'Analysis of Dr. Newman's Apologia', 18.156.

⁷¹² JND (1833), 1.79.

⁷¹³ JND, 'Zechariah', in *NC*, 4.217-218. See JND, 'Christian Liberty of Preaching and Teaching the Lord Jesus Christ' (1834), *CW*, 1.116-117; JND, 'The Claims of the Church of England Considered; Being the Close of a Correspondence Between the Rev. James Kelly, of Stillogan, Ireland, and J.N. Darby' (1842), *CW*, 14.314; JND, 'Reply to the Remarks in Two Leading Articles of the Christian Journal Entitled 'Our Separating Brethren'' (1871), *CW*, 14.244.

⁷¹⁴ Douglas (1966), p. 121.

⁷¹⁵ JND, 'Thoughts on Isaiah the Prophet', *CW*, 30.309.

⁷¹⁶ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.255.

Involvement with these things, which exist on the margins of the Brethren world, is categorised as dangerous and the image of the Whore of Babylon is put to use by Darby to warn his brethren of such danger and potential defilement.⁷²¹

There are other ways in which Darby uses the Babylon image. For example, he can use it in a geographical sense to describe the location in which he lives.⁷²² He also uses Babylon to refer to the act of commercial business, particularly within the geographical confines of England.⁷²³

It is plain then that in the work of arguably the most significant person from the movement here under discussion, we can see the book of Revelation in general, and the Whore of Babylon Motif in particular, being put to great use. The text serves Darby well as he looks to it to provide him with the guidance needed on matters relating to those points in the world where danger and potential impurity are to be found.

⁷¹⁷ JND, *Synopsis of the Bible*, 5.584.

⁷¹⁸ JND, 'The Proverbs', in *NC*, 3.293.

⁷¹⁹ JND, 'Christianity not Christendom', 18.253.

⁷²⁰ JND, *The Closing Days of Christendom* (Hammond, n.d.), pp. 3, 5. See further, JND, 'Testimony of God: Or the Trial of Man, the Grace and the Government of God' (1861), *CW*, 22.513-514; JND, 'The Church and its Friendly Subdivisions' in reply to Mr. R. W. Monsell' (1849), *CW*, 4.250; JND, 'The Altar of Abraham' (1850), *CW* 16.103-104; JND, 'Hints on the Book of Genesis: Being the Substance of Remarks at a Scripture Reading' (1873), *CW*, 19.135; JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* vol. 1, 'April 1867', pp. 495-496. In each of these publications Darby uses Babylon to warn against a list of specific forms of worldly attitude or behaviour.

⁷²¹ For further examples of how Darby uses Babylon to warn his brethren of the dangers of the world see: JND, 'Scriptural Criticisms' 13.20. 'Babylon has no need to be sorrowfully and separately waiting . . . the true-hearted believer . . . will, as separated from the world, wait for Him in whom his hope is, in the spirit of holy separation'. JND, 'God for us' Romans 8: 26-39', *CW* 31.250; JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* Vol. 2, 1868-1879 (Kingston on Thames, Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d.), 'February 5th, 1874', p. 254; JND, 'General Remarks on the Prophetic Word (continued)' *CW*, 30.361-362.

⁷²² JND, 'Thoughts on Isaiah the Prophet', 30.309; JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* Vol. 2, 1868-1879, 'August 11th, 1873', p. 236.

⁷²³ JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.328, 338.

Dennett

Dennett, like Darby, links Babylon with the world. It has been demonstrated in chapter six that Dennett identified Babylon with the church in Laodicea which he interpreted as a warning to the daughters of Babylon. Further, in *Expository Jottings* (1883), Dennett describes Laodicea as the 'worldliness of the assembly',⁷²⁴ thus linking Babylon with the world. For him Babylon represents worldly glory and the worldly church⁷²⁵ and he draws a distinction between the community of the Brethren, which are the true heavenly church, and the Babylonian 'other', that is, those who make up the world church.⁷²⁶ Both those inside and outside must remain together until the time of judgment as the parable of the tares and the leaven foretell.⁷²⁷

For Dennett, Babylon is ultimately something intrinsically selfish. He describes Babylon variously as self-exaltation, self-gratification, self-confidence, self-glorification and self-sufficiency. Babylon is seeking one's own happiness, acquisitions and stability in this world.⁷²⁸ Babylon lives a life of pleasure, gratifying her worldly desires,⁷²⁹ whereas the true church of God is heavenly in character and does not belong to the earth.⁷³⁰ Such selfish attitudes do little to reinforce a unified social order within the Brethren community, whereas loyalty towards other Brethren and the Brethren hierarchy fosters *communitas*, symmetry and inner coherence, helping maintain order and reinforce the boundaries.

⁷²⁴ ED (1991), p. 17.

⁷²⁵ ED (1892), p. 226.

⁷²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 221.

⁷²⁷ ED, *The Blessed Hope: Being Papers on the Lord's Coming and Connected Events* (W.H. Broom, 1879), p. 61.

⁷²⁸ ED (1892), p. 234.

⁷²⁹ ED, 'Widows Indeed', in *The Christian Friend and Instructor. Papers for the Comfort and edification of the Children of God* (Broom, 1882), 9.125.

⁷³⁰ ED (1892), p. 221.

In a variation on the general Brethren theme, Dennett uses the Babylon-is-the-world idiom to traduce those who engage in philosophical study. The origin of philosophy, Dennett states, is Babylonian and even in modern times retains this character. Students seeking 'learning and wisdom' can be lead into spiritual declension and even backsliding through the worldly influence of Babylon philosophy.⁷³¹ As we have seen in chapter seven, heretical or confused thought is dangerously contagious and the Brethren need to protect their boundaries from epistemological defilement. Here, once again, the image of the Whore of Babylon is used to mark out the areas where it is unsafe for the faithful to go.

After exploring the threats that Babylon poses to Brethren purity Dennett finds, in the biblical character of Daniel and his friends Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, examples of how purity and distinction can be maintained even when Babylon (which in the Daniel story is of course literal Babylon)⁷³² is pressing hard on the boundaries of the Brethren community. Daniel was, according to Dennett, a 'true Nazirite' who walked 'undefiled amid the Babylonish seductions and corruptions'. The Nazirite is one who, according to Num. 6, has made a voluntary and special vow of separation to Yahweh. He or she will follow strict laws of separation including abstaining from alcohol, not cutting one's hair, and avoiding corpses. Dennett states of the Naziriteship of Daniel that 'an application may be made to ourselves' and that his readers must walk 'in a path of holy separation'.⁷³³ After linking the book of Daniel with the Apocalypse, Dennett then exhorts his readers to 'maintain the place of separation outside of all the alarms and confusions of the world'. Thus for Dennett true separateness and true holiness can only

⁷³¹ ED, *Daniel the Prophet, and the Times of the Gentiles* (Rouse, 1893), pp. 12, 16.

⁷³² Or at least understood by a non-critical reader as literal Babylon.

⁷³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

be found outside the world, that is, inside the Brethren conceptual sphere. Samson was also a Nazirite yet, as we have noted earlier, he lost his set apartness and distinction, an event which Douglas uses to develop her 'Delilah complex' theory. Such a theory sheds light on how those who have separated themselves from the external world perceive the outside world as a threat of impurity, particularly in the form of the sexualised female, to which category Babylon is antitypical.

Ultimately Dennett's view of the world is fuelled by his premillennial pessimism linked to a dispensational worldview. Babylon represents the societal, governmental and commercial power of the world. Such worldly things the Brethren must avoid as their destruction is foretold in Rev. 17-18. Babylon, this world, will be judged, rendering the nations powerless and unstable and shattering the very framework of society. As such, no improvement in the state of the world should be expected or even worked towards, indeed it would be a waste of time for a Christian to engage in any kind of political action in the vain hope of trying to improve the world. Dennett writes

Will any political changes or legislative enactments alter the moral character either of human governments or of their subjects? . . . trace the course of human governments from the days of the kingdom of Babylon up to the present time . . . some individual monarchs have been pious men; but . . . whatever their piety, they could not change the course or the character of their governments.⁷³⁴

Clearly then Babylon, this world and all that it represents is, for Dennett, a place to which the Brethren do not belong.

⁷³⁴ Ibid., pp. 59-60.

Mackintosh

Mackintosh was very aware of the dangers posed at the vulnerable margin between the internal world of life within the Brethren movement and the world 'outside'. He warns his reader of the inherent risks at such interstitial places, for example, in his work *Jehoshaphat: A Word on World-Bordering* (n.d.) he blames the proximity of the kings of Israel to the Babylonian nation around them for Israel's Babylonian captivity.⁷³⁵ Like Dennett he also uses the concept of the Nazirite, which he defines as people who 'separate themselves from Babylonish pollutions . . . apart from the world's defilement',⁷³⁶ to warn his Brethren of the dangers of such 'World-Bordering', to borrow Mackintosh's phrase. After exhorting his reader to 'have nothing to do with rank in this life', and to separate from 'everything which directly savours of the flesh and of the world' he turns his attention to childcare, something he designates: 'the management of our children',⁷³⁷ for they too can be found in Babylon:

The music master, and the dancing master, are surely not the agents which the Spirit of God would select to help our children along, nor do they, by any means, comport with that high-toned Nazariteship to which we are called . . . shall I be so base as to train my children for the devil and the world? . . . If my children savour of Babylon, I savour of it myself'.⁷³⁸

Like Dennett and Darby, Mackintosh treats the concept of the civilisation of society with disdain. He says that there was much to be found in Babylon that

was attractive to the nature's eye. The arts and sciences were cultivated amongst them. Civilization had reached a far loftier point amongst those ancient nations than we moderns are disposed to admit. Refinement and

⁷³⁵ CHM, *Jehoshaphat: A Word On World- Bordering*. 6th edn. (Morrish, n.d.), pp. 9-10, 13, 15, 32.

⁷³⁶ CHM, *Discipleship in an Evil Day: Lectures on the Book of Daniel*, 2nd edn., (Morrish, 1859), p. 9.

⁷³⁷ CHM, *Thou and Thy House: or, The Christian at Home*, 3rd edn. (Morrish, n.d.), p. 31.

⁷³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

luxury were probably carried to as great an extent there as amongst those who put forth very lofty pretensions.⁷³⁹

Such civilised, sophisticated and refined things in life are, according to Mackintosh, merely the gilded bait on a Babylonian hook. The true Christian should learn from Hezekiah's mistake and be 'raised above the influence of the world's polite attraction'.⁷⁴⁰

Just as a Durkheimian analysis of a society suggests that 'dangerous powers imputed to gods are, in actual fact, powers vested in the social structure for defending itself',⁷⁴¹ so here dangerous powers imputed to the world are used by the Brethren to defend the insider from the secular other, that is, the world. It is important to note that when such a 'closed community' as the Brethren speak of the world they 'invoke the idea of the evil outside as a theological image, justifying their separation from the established order'.⁷⁴² Above, Mackintosh uses examples from scripture of the physical threat that geographical Babylon posed to literal Israel as a warning of the threat that symbolic Babylon, this world, poses to the true church. The world is evil and to designate it as such reinforces the boundary between insider and outsider for such a 'sense of border is inherent in the consciousness of the people [like the Brethren] who perceive their lives as . . . essentially critical of some defined other part of human society where power resided'.⁷⁴³

⁷³⁹ CHM (1869), pp. 28-29.

⁷⁴⁰ CHM, *Work In Its Right Place; Or, Reflections On The Life And Times Of Hezekiah*. 3rd edn. (Morrish, 1862), p. 44.

⁷⁴¹ Douglas (1968), 12.339.

⁷⁴² Douglas & Wildavsky (1982), p. 102.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

Bellett

Bellett continues to use the emerging Brethren exegesis of Babylon to warn of the dangers of contamination from the world but becomes highly specific as he describes one particular activity as being especially Babylonian. He writes: 'now, this moment you are called to the admiration . . . of the world's greatness . . . It calls itself a "great exhibition of the world's achievements" . . . no part of scripture can help us to understand it better than this . . . the 17th chapter'.⁷⁴⁴ To this, the editor of the pamphlet adds: 'Bellett was speaking in February 1851 at the "Great Exhibition"'. Bellett clearly uses Rev. 17-18 to explain why such a 'Great Exhibition' is taking place in the Crystal Palace, Hyde Park, London. The Victorians, proud of their industrial, military and economic achievements which had made Great Britain arguably the greatest world power of its time, arrived in their millions to see some thirteen thousand exhibitions dedicated to British accomplishment. The events struck such a chord with Bellett that he dedicated an entire publication to identifying the Exhibition as Babylon. In *Belshazzar's Feast in its Application to the Great Exhibition* (n.d.) we read: 'The mind turns with these thoughts to the present moment . . . to the subject of "The Great Exhibition" . . . The Exhibition is therefore in full collision with the mind of God. Christ exposes the world; the Exhibition displays it'.⁷⁴⁵ The reason why such an exhibition disagrees so strongly with what Bellett perceives to be God's thoughts is based on his pessimistic outlook that is so often indicative of a premillennial world-view; namely that trying to make the world better is a waste of time.⁷⁴⁶ Such an event is therefore against God's divine will and could perhaps be seen as rebellion against God, if not even as antichristian. The very same project was

⁷⁴⁴ JGB, *Belshazzar's Feast in its Application to the Great Exhibition* (Morrish, n.d.), p. 16.

⁷⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

undertaken in Gen. 11 according to Bellett. The Great Exhibition is a modern day rebuilding of the tower of Babel.⁷⁴⁷

The danger of going to the Great Exhibition is that it is the very epitome of all that is worldly, earthly and carnal and as such represents a grave danger of pollution to those who cross its margins and enter the Crystal Palace. It is the 'great shop of the world's ware', a place where 'man's works are displayed there. Man's art is enthroned there, and man expects to be admired and wondered at there . . . It is a mirror in which the world is reflected in a thousand attractive forms . . . It is full of the spirit of the last days'.⁷⁴⁸ Ultimately the Great Exhibition is a symbol of the Great Whore of Revelation. Bellett writes of 'the world's advancement, the jubilee of Babylon . . . the woman of Revelation 17 glorifies herself, and lives deliciously in the earth'. Thus, Bellett writes that the true Christian should remain separate from the exhibition. Just as Daniel remained separate from the feast of Belshazzar, so the Christian must be separate from the worldly temptations displayed in the Crystal Palace, for God requires 'Separation of His own out of the world'. Furthermore, this is not just a spiritual separation but also a physical 'separation from the earth'.⁷⁴⁹ He concludes by exhorting his readers to ask themselves: 'if we have a pulse of affection or allegiance to Jesus, can we glory in this present moment with all its costliness and pleasures?'⁷⁵⁰ Thus implying that attendance equates to betrayal of Christ himself.

⁷⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 12, 16.

⁷⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 14-15.

⁷⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁷⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 24. The only other Brethren author to comment on the Great Exhibition is William Trotter. See, Trotter, W. *The Millennial Reign of Christ and the Universal Blessing of the Earth Connected with the Restoration of the Jews*, Psalm 72, Lecture 4 of 8 in *LP* (Broom & Rouse, 1890), p. 84. 'Think, my brethren, of what the pride of man's heart is doing at this very moment, in concentrating the wealth and energies of all nations in making one grand display to all the world of what man's skill and energy can effect!' He does not, however, link the Exhibition with Babylon.

It will be clear by now that the identification of Babylon in Brethren exegesis is becoming more and more specific and systematised as the Brethren's ecclesio-social structure becomes more systematised and the boundaries of the movement more well defined. Douglas has noted that 'pollution rules indicate areas of greater systemization of ideas'⁷⁵¹ thus the more complex the pollution rules, the more systematised the groups ideas will be. This is indeed true of the Brethren exegesis unfolding in this thesis.

Other Authors

It has been shown above that a number of Brethren authors linked the symbol of 'Babylon' to 'worldliness'. In doing this they achieved further clarification of where they stood before God. As was seen in the previous chapters, for the Brethren 'Babylon' was 'false religion' not just in general, but even in the context of 'false' members of the Brethren movement itself. They used the symbol of Babylon to draw a line, perhaps more accurately a circle, in the sand. But they used the same symbol to distance themselves from the world and hence to bring themselves out in even sharper relief against the presumed wicked and worldly backcloth. It was not just the four writers above who did this. Rather the view seems to have been pretty well embedded with the movement as a whole. In an attempt to show how, so it seems, such views were stitched into the very fabric of the Brethren movement and how the symbol of Babylon was used widely both to facilitate and communicate this view, a very brief summary of some of those other writers will now be presented.

⁷⁵¹ Douglas (1968), 12.339

WIGRAM

In the four publications in which Wigram can be seen to link Babylon with the world his main emphasis is on worldliness in the church.⁷⁵² The church becomes Babylonian when it looks to the world for its power.⁷⁵³ To try and 'blend' the world and the church together leads only to confusion. Such confusion, on an anthropological level, is indicative of pollution in many cultures, and if, for example, one takes the ancient Israelites as an example, such confusion can lead to ritual defilement as was the case in Leviticus and the abomination laws. Here the Hebrew word *tebel* (e.g. Lev. 18 and 20), translated as 'contamination' may be understood as synonymous with mixing, confusion, pollution or loosing distinctiveness.⁷⁵⁴ Awareness of such Hebrew linguistics was not beyond Wigram.

MILLER

Miller identifies Babylon as something secular on three occasions yet in each instance he stresses, like Wigram, that Babylon is the mixing of the Church with the world.⁷⁵⁵ The place where the church and the world meet is a dangerous place, a boundary where ideas are exchanged. The importance of maintaining a distinction between 'insiders' (the Brethren) and 'outsiders' (the world) is stressed, as the place where the two worlds meet is unsafe thus boundaries must be reinforced.

⁷⁵² See GVW (1881), p. 159. 'Babylon signifies confusion, mingling with the world'.

⁷⁵³ GVW (1873), pp. 25-26.

⁷⁵⁴ Wilma A Bailey, 'tebel' in *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis*, 5 vols, ed. by W. Van Gemeren (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 1.664.

⁷⁵⁵ AM, *Meditations on the Beatitudes (Matthew V) and Christian Devotedness* (Morrish, 1878), pp. 16-17. See also, AM, *CH*, 1.355. 'The church . . . shakes hands with the world, and sinks into its position . . . This was Babylon spiritually'. AM, *CH*, 2.195-196. 'The very essence of Babylon [is] the unhallowed mixture of Christ and the world'.

GRANT, LINCOLN AND NEWBERRY

Grant insists that those who merely call themselves Christian but do not maintain a separation from the world should not be allowed to take part in that most defining of all Brethren rituals: the Lord's supper, because of 'their entanglements with the world . . . it would be another Babel'.⁷⁵⁶ Lincoln insists that: 'not only must there be separation from evil . . . but separation entire in this specified manner from the religious world'.⁷⁵⁷ Newberry likens association with the world to prostitution. Worldliness is: 'the prostitution of Christianity to secular ends . . . spiritual fornication. The union of the carnal and the spiritual, the human with the Divine, the earthly and the heavenly . . . [it is] the wine of Babylon's fornication'.⁷⁵⁸ These authors maintain the importance of distinction, of not allowing the things of the world to mix with the things of the church. There must be no homogenising, to do so would make one guilty of the Levitical sin of *tebel* of uncleanness through mixing or confusing things which leads to ritual impurity.

POWERSCOURT

Lady Powerscourt links Babylon with worldliness in five of her *Letters and Papers* (1872). She warns of the danger of Brethren taking 'our lot with Babylon . . . to feast the world; to nestle themselves as the world'.⁷⁵⁹ For her, Rev 18:4: 'come out of her' is a warning spoken to the church in the world who surround themselves with ungodliness.⁷⁶⁰ Like Darby and Mackintosh, Powerscourt draws reference to the Babylonian garment of

⁷⁵⁶ FWG, *A Divine Movement*, p. 34.

⁷⁵⁷ William Lincoln, *W. Lincoln's Leaflets*, no.8, 2nd Series, 'On the Value of the Third Epistle of John: and More Especially in These Closing Days of Christendom' (Yapp & Hawkins, n.d.), p. 2.

⁷⁵⁸ Newberry (c.1890), p. 97.

⁷⁵⁹ TAWP, Letter 23, 1829, p. 62.

⁷⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Letter 57, July 16th, 1833, p. 157.

Josh. 7, we should: 'treasure no Babylonish garment however goodly'⁷⁶¹ as to do so leads to ritual defilement and contamination. Powerscourt urges her reader to remain faithful, virginal and separate in order to retain distinctiveness from Babylon.⁷⁶² To associate with Babylon is to be the opposite of these virtues, to be unfaithful, promiscuous and in alliance with the world.

Brethren Periodicals

Periodicals often give a rather better sense of what is happening 'on the ground' of a religious tradition. This is so since they often contain the views of authors who may never actually write a substantial book and through such things as brief comments and letters to the editor they can be a more accurate barometer of the spiritual pressures within a denomination. For this reason significant time has been spent during this research looking at Brethren periodicals, a source that has not heretofore been much examined by scholars. A brief summary of that material is found below.

Time and time again the theme of maintaining distinctiveness from the Babylonian world around arises in the popular Brethren magazines and periodicals of the nineteenth century. For instance in *The Christian Witness* the London Missionary Society is criticised for following 'worldly objects of pursuit', holding 'worldly association' and of going 'to the world for aid'.⁷⁶³ Again this boils down to a question of authority and of who is in charge, Christ or man, for: 'in appointing a committee or being appointed to it [they are] . . . indirectly interfering with the headship of Jesus'.⁷⁶⁴ The author of this

⁷⁶¹ Ibid., Letter 60, London, May 8th, 1833, p. 191; See also 'Paper on Genesis 22', pp. 257-258.

⁷⁶² Ibid., Letter 78. 10th November, 1836, pp. 234-235.

⁷⁶³ JLH, 'Religious Societies' in *ChW*, 1837, No. 1, Vol. IV, pp. 92-93.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 93-94.

article uses Babylon to warn any Brethren who would consider being involved in such evangelistic and socially beneficial groups of the importance of remaining 'separate' from such 'unholy and disobedient' groups for risk of world-contamination.⁷⁶⁵

Another article in *The Christian Witness* asks: '*Is the Exercise of Worldly Authority Consistent with Discipleship?*' The answer comes: 'has the scripture written nothing respecting Babylon?' In particular 'stations of power or influence in the world' are given as specific examples of boundary transgression into Babylon.⁷⁶⁶ Salvation itself is seen here as 'extrication' from Babylon and 'from the principles and systems of this evil age'. Another Brethren author, possibly C. Brunton, warns of 'the terrible danger of being of the world at all . . . Babylon is for the world, and the world for Babylon'.⁷⁶⁷

The equally popular *Northern Witness* periodical connects Babylon with the world on a variety of occasions. The editor of the magazine, Caldwell, writes an article called *Separation From the World* (1878) during which he warns the church against forming an 'alliance of any kind with the world'. The secular sectarian language can be seen further when he exhorts his readers to 'maintain the path of separation' otherwise Satan may 'entangle the child of God, and drag him into hurtful association with the world'.⁷⁶⁸ The forbidden bond between church and world that many have entered into culminates in Babylon the Great.⁷⁶⁹

Other contributors to the *Northern Witness* continue on the same lines. Bland warns those who tolerate the evil of this world that the impending judgment of Babylon

⁷⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 96.

⁷⁶⁶ BWN, 'Is the Exercise of Worldly Authority Consistent with Discipleship?' in *ChW*, Vol. IV. No. 3. July 1837, p. 258.

⁷⁶⁷ C. Brunton, 'The Land Of Shinar' in *ChW*, 1837, Vol. 4. No. 3, p. 286.

⁷⁶⁸ Caldwell, J.R. 'Separation From the World', in *NW*, 1878, Vol. VIII, pp. 81-83.

⁷⁶⁹ Ibid.

awaits them,⁷⁷⁰ whereas W.P.L. notes that just as Lot in Gen. 11-13 made a good start in his walk with God he soon fell away as he 'prospered in worldly matters'. Such 'worldly advantage . . . cost him very dear'.⁷⁷¹ There is a lesson here for the Brethren, so the author states: meeting with Brethren is more important than home, market place or work.⁷⁷² In each case a link is made between the world and Babylon. Tweedie, in a contribution to the *Northern Witness*, focuses on the carnal, worldly and sensual attractions of Babylon: 'earthly pleasures, riches, and excitement . . . Babylon claims in the flesh. Babylon rejoices in earthly prosperity . . . [Babylon is] loving the world and seeking a portion in it'.⁷⁷³ Bellett, who has above been identified as seeing Babylon in the Great Exhibition, contributes to the *Northern Witness* by urging his reader to 'retire from the world to admire Jesus . . . the secret of their victory [over the world is] retiring from the world's idolatry'.⁷⁷⁴ He is referring here to the saints who in Rev. 21 have survived the Babylonian threat of the previous three chapters. They kept away from the vulnerable margin so as not to risk the dangers of boundary transgression and pollution. Hence they are the ones whose will be like a virgin bride, beautifully dressed in white robes, both externally and internally uncontaminated.

Babylon Redivivus

The broad flow of Brethren interpretation of the Babylon motif when applied to the world that has been sketched in above has been highly literalistic. This is seen particularly in the work of Bellett, who looks for and finds, a contemporary, literal equivalent to the Biblical

⁷⁷⁰ F.C. Bland, 'Babylon', in *NW*, 1878, Vol. IX, p. 53.

⁷⁷¹ W.P.L. 'Love of the World', *NW*, 1878, Vol. IX, pp. 76-78.

⁷⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁷⁷³ Tweedie, 'Mystery, Babylon the Great', p. 94.

⁷⁷⁴ JGB, 'Revelation: A Book of Conquerors', in, *NW*, 1878, Vol. VIII, p. 86.

'Babylon'. But there were other views, even in the context of the broad parameters of the Brethren view that 'Babylon' was (among other things) a symbol of worldliness. This can be seen in the Babylon *redivivus* theme, to which attention is now turned. As we shall see this view too was highly literalistic suggesting (as in some contemporary Rapture fiction, for example the *Left Behind* novels) that literal Babylon must first be rebuilt in order to be destroyed again by God.

Such fundamental literalism can be seen in a number of Brethren authors who identify the Babylon of the Apocalypse as a literal, geographical entity, that is, as ancient Babylon *redivivus*. Bergin, for example, predicts that Babylon will be a literal city with the Antichrist for its secular king.⁷⁷⁵ He believes that Babylon must be literally rebuilt because prophecies concerning its destruction have not yet been fulfilled. He notes that '*sudden destruction*' was to come on Babylon, but no such thing has happened'.⁷⁷⁶ On the contrary, Babylon like many Eastern cities 'gradually decayed until it became almost uninhabited. But now there is a town of considerable size, called Hillah, on the ruins of ancient Babylon . . . there are bricks bearing . . . Nebuchadnezzar's name'.⁷⁷⁷ Bergin is aware that such an idea is somewhat divergent both to the Protestant norm and the emerging Brethren hermeneutic of identifying Babylon as Rome but argues that because of Babylon's commercial and maritime nature, London is closer to the city described in Rev. 18.⁷⁷⁸ Turning to the newspapers, Bergin sees that the construction work for the building of Babylon has already begun with 'engineers . . . sent down the valley of the Euphrates . . . making a railway'. The completion of the urban project of the regeneration

⁷⁷⁵ Bergin (1937), p. 161.

⁷⁷⁶ Ibid., p162

⁷⁷⁷ Ibid., p162

⁷⁷⁸ Ibid., p163

of Babylon is imminent, for 'it will not take long to rebuild the land of Shinar . . . eastern opulence uniting with western wealth, would make it a city such has never been seen, and we have no reason to think it would take many years'.⁷⁷⁹ Yet the imminent completion of this evil city brings with it the imminent threat of danger. Bergin asks: 'When there is an advertisement for clerks to go out to the railway down the Euphrates valley, will any stop? A few will have ears to hear the words, 'Come out of her my people' . . . but most will rush there'.⁷⁸⁰

An equally literalistic interpretation of Rev. 18 is purveyed by Bland and Habershon in their papers delivered at the Women's Branch of the Prophecy Investigation Society c.1915. Bland quotes *The Morning Star* of Feb. 1, 1913, which states: 'the bricks used in the construction of the Hindia Dam were everyone of them stamped with the words "Nebuchadnezzar King of Babylon"'.⁷⁸¹ Such a discovery leads these authors to examine 'Babylon' in a number of OT prophecies from which they conclude that the sudden and perpetual destruction of Babylon is as yet unfulfilled in a literalistic sense.⁷⁸² They conclude, like Bergin, that the literal rebuilding of the city of Babylon will happen very soon and may have begun already.⁷⁸³ Further evidence of this event Bland and Habershorn find in *The Sphere*, Feb. 7th 1914, which through its description of irrigation work in that area further convinces these authors that the Chaldean city of Babylon is to be literally rebuilt on the ruins of modern day Hillah.⁷⁸⁴

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 163-164.

⁷⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 164.

⁷⁸¹ E.A. Bland (n.d.), p. 5.

⁷⁸² Ibid., p. 6.

⁷⁸³ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁷⁸⁴ Note F.C. Bland (1879), pp. 51-53. Bland takes more of a moderate hermeneutical stance whereby he distinguishes between Babylon in Rev. 17 and Rev.18. The former is Rome, the centre of religious apostasy, the latter is literal Babylon the city on the river Euphrates.

Variations on this general theme are found in the work of William De Burgh and an author known only as 'F.G.'⁷⁸⁵ Similarly, the author of the article '*Is the Exercise of Worldly Authority Consistent with Discipleship?*' (1837), possibly BWN, holds a futurist and literalistic view arguing that, contrary to the views of some he mentions, Babylon is a literal worldly power and a real geographical location and city which is yet to come.⁷⁸⁶ If the author of the 1837 publication is Newton, and we have only the pencilled annotation of the original owner of the *Christian Witness* by which to go, then such a view would be entirely in keeping with Newton's massive 642 page *Babylon: Its Future, History and Doom, with Remarks on the Future of Egypt and other Eastern Countries* (1890) which is a sustained and detailed argument for the literal revival of the physical kingdom of Babylon in order for the events of Rev. 17-18 to be literally fulfilled in the future.⁷⁸⁷ This would also be entirely consistent with Newton's views on a literal kingdom of Babylon *redivivus* in the *Patmos Series* of pamphlets in which he interprets Rev. 18 along the literal, geographical lines above noted.⁷⁸⁸

Not all of the relevant literature has to this point been presented on this theme. This is inevitable. The materials in the Manchester archive are copious and the apparent interest in 'Babylon' among Brethren writers significant. There were others, for example the author of 'The Land Of Shinar' (1837) C. Brunton, who notes that 'while the attention of the Church has been much drawn to the name and nature of Babylon, little

⁷⁸⁵ William De Burgh, *An Exposition Of The Book Of The Revelation*, 5th edn. (Dublin: Hodges, Smith, 1857), p. 295. F.G. 'Babylon', in *ChW*, 1836, Vol. III, pp. 282-285.

⁷⁸⁶ BWN, 'Is the Exercise of Worldly Authority Consistent with Discipleship?' in, *ChW*, 1837, Vol. IV, No. 3, pp. 258-260.

⁷⁸⁷ BWN, *Babylon: Its Future, History and Doom, with Remarks on the Future of Egypt and other Eastern Countries* (Houlston, 1890), *passim*.

⁷⁸⁸ BWN, 'The Time of The End: A Resume of Prophetic Truth', in *PS*, No. 40, p. 7.

stress has been laid on the location of it'.⁷⁸⁹ He continues in the emerging hermeneutical trend of predicting 'a literal Babylon, to be erected in the land of Euphrates'.⁷⁹⁰ Bellett too, noted above for his identification of Babylon as the 'Great Exhibition' understands Babylon to be a commercial power, arguing along lines similar to the above noted authors.⁷⁹¹ Likewise Baines, in his *Preliminary Judgments* (1905), interprets Babylon as being religious, political and commercial in nature.⁷⁹² However he rejects the views of Bellett, Bland, Habershon, De Burgh, Rossier, Brunton, F.G. and BWN, that this will be expressed as a physical rebuilt city of Babylon on the site of Hillah, in favour of suggesting that the commercial and political aspect of the great whore is symbolic of mankind's independence of God in the world. That being said Baines adds something new to the exegesis in that he understands the judgment and doom pronounced upon the city and empire of Babylon in Rev. 17-18 inaugurated in the recent events in Europe, with 'the great French Revolution' and 'Napoleon' both being mentioned in his exegesis of Babylon.⁷⁹³

However not all Brethren authors accepted the secular interpretation of Babylon. Hugh H. Snell, for example, in *Notes On The Revelation: With Practical Reflections* (1866) argues that the Babylon of Rev. 18 'could not be understood to be a material city'.⁷⁹⁴ Although the above noted authors argue that Babylon must be both a woman and a city Snell concludes that she is literally neither, rather she is a symbol. Wolston was of the same opinion as Snell interpreting the city of Babylon in Rev. 18 in a 'figurative

⁷⁸⁹ C. Brunton (1837), p. 282.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 282-285.

⁷⁹¹ JGB (1880), p. 32.

⁷⁹² TBB (1879), pp. 114, 221.

⁷⁹³ Ibid., p. 228, 230.

⁷⁹⁴ Hugh H. Snell, *Notes On The Revelation: With Practical Reflections* (W.H. Broom, 1866), p. 171.

way'⁷⁹⁵ concluding: 'Do not suppose that Babylon is a built city, or the New Jerusalem either. Both are figures'.⁷⁹⁶

Perhaps the Brethren author most vehemently opposed to the literalistic interpretation of Babylon is William Kelly. Writing on a favourite passage for those Brethren authors who argued for a literal revival of a Babylonian superpower, that is Zech. 5, Kelly states that: 'from Shinar religious corruption came, and thither it must go . . . sent back to Babylon . . . It is all no doubt a symbolical prophecy . . . I should take the vision as a symbolical picture'.⁷⁹⁷ Thus although it has been noted many times in this thesis that Kelly reads scripture from a highly literalistic hermeneutical stance he does not do so to such an extent as Baines, Bellett, Brunton, Bland, Bergin, de Burgh, Rossier and Newton above who await a literal revival of the Babylonian kingdom in modern day Iran. For Kelly, to identify the Apocalyptic Babylon as the same as the OT Babylon would be to fundamentally misunderstand and misinterpret scripture. He gives further evidence against the above shown literalistic understanding of a physical rebuilding of the city of Babylon by arguing from a close reading of scripture but nothing further is gained here from examining such extracts in detail other than to note in passing that those who do foresee Babylon *redivivus* are, in Kelly's opinion, 'pseudo-literalists'. Such exegesis is futile and appeals only to 'the curiosity of learned men'.⁷⁹⁸ Perhaps Kelly is referring here to Newton and those above who believe Babylon will be literally revived, on this cannot we cannot be certain, however it is for certain that Kelly categorically

⁷⁹⁵ WTPW, 'The Candlestick and the Bride', p. 216.

⁷⁹⁶ WTPW, 'The New Jerusalem', Lecture 9 of 10, in *SC*, p. 198.

⁷⁹⁷ WK, 'Zechariah', in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), pp. 457-458.

⁷⁹⁸ WK, *The Prospects of the World According to the Scriptures* (Manchester: Horner, c.1872b), pp. 47-49. In the following publications Kelly explicitly denies that the Apocalyptic Babylon could be literally rebuilt as the OT city was built on a plain and the apocalyptic Babylon sits on seven hills. WK (1897b), p. 364; WK (1903), Part 2, p. 48; Part 6, p. 10.

dismisses their views saying: ‘‘Mystery’ teaches us that here it is in no way a question of a heathen city with any amount of political influence . . . Neither pagan Rome nor modern commerce, nor a future city rising on the Euphrates, can possibly answer to such a designation’.⁷⁹⁹

Conclusion

It is plain both from this chapter and the two before it that the interpretation of the Babylon motif was far from static in the Brethren movement. A satisfactory reason of why this is the case can perhaps be found in the work of the phenomenologist Wolfgang Iser. Iser’s reader-oriented approach has been examined in chapter two above and applied to the general reading of Revelation. The conclusion arrived at there was that Revelation contains many narrative ‘gaps’ or areas of vagueness. And the Babylon motif is such place of indeterminacy. All Brethren interpretation is simply an attempt to understand the ‘gaps’.

Iser states of a text that ‘one automatically seeks to relate it to contexts that are familiar’,⁸⁰⁰ and this is certainly true in the area of biblical exegesis and in particular the interpretation of the Apocalypse, whether that be the interpretation of those Brethren who had seceded from the Catholic church identifying Babylon as Papal Rome, or those who had seceded from other denominations identifying Babylon as all of corrupt Christendom, or those who, like Bellett, looked at the Great Exhibition and identified Babylon thus. Each person seeks to relate Babylon to a familiar context. The world is the example *par excellence* of that which is familiar, and the context in which each and every person,

⁷⁹⁹ WK (1872a), p. 5.

⁸⁰⁰ Iser (1978), p. 22.

Brethren or not, find themselves writing. The vilification of the world as Babylon is merely a method employed by the Brethren to maintain social and religious integrity amidst a rapidly changing world, a world which in its government, politics and commerce was at odds with the groups other-worldliness.

In chapter two three types of 'gaps' in the book of Revelation were identified. The first is the gap that is created by the author failing to name, or positively identify any of the specific motifs and symbols found there. For example the author described Babylon as a city in Rev. 17:9, but doesn't name the city, rather stating that understanding its identity calls for wisdom. Failing to provide any real detail for this city thus invites interpreters to attempt to fill in the gaps, thus becoming part of the text and composing the meaning through suggesting what the name of that place must be.

The second type of gap found in the Apocalypse is that the author fails to give specific times when things will happen, thus in participating in the composition of the text the Brethren interpreter of the nineteenth century will fill in the gaps and suggest that the prophecies are being fulfilled in his own time. We have seen in this chapter that the Great Exhibition, the French Revolution, the building of a railroad through Iran and the construction of irrigation systems from the Euphrates have all been put forward as being the fulfilment of the Babylon passages. The issue has been further complicated by those Brethren authors who sought to apply OT prophecy about Babylon's sudden and permanent downfall to the Babylon of the Apocalypse. These writers argued that as the literal geographical city of Hillah was never suddenly and permanently destroyed, then the city must be first rebuilt in order for those prophecies to be fulfilled.

The final type of gap left in the text of the Revelation is a failing to give specific places where things will happen. Again this has led to a debate between Brethren authors over the place where Babylon will arise. Some have suggested the plain of Shinar, others Rome, others have argued over the topographical details of Rev. 17:9 compared to the topography of Gen. 11.

Yet after all this has been said there are striking similarities in the ways that the Brethren authors interpret Babylon as the world. Here the work of Stanley Fish is useful. The Brethren are an 'interpretive community'. Individual Brethren interpreters cannot interpret texts by self consciously trying to figure out idiosyncratic responses but rather interpretation is a collective and sociological phenomenon bound within the context of the Brethren community. The 'right' explanation of Rev 17-18 in the Brethren movement is the one which the community accepts as 'corporately right', that is, the 'Community Interpretation'. The common link is the call to 'come out', whether Babylon be a symbol of the world, or acting in a worldly manner, or the Great Exhibition or a physical city, to be found in such places would be a form of boundary or border transgression and thus lead to ritualised pollution.

Similarly this chapter has shown how paying attention to the *eisegesis* of a religious community may be helpful in viewing the world from their perspective so one can understand something of the pressures the community faced, both from without and from within. Hence, the outline work of Newport can be seen to provide another possible impetus for the further development of the area of *Wirkungsgeschichte* within biblical studies and for a further justification of the primary importance of the reception history of the text in understanding millennial groups.

Chapter Nine

'Babylon' and the Secret Rapture of the Church

The previous chapters of this thesis have all been concerned with the identity of Babylon. In chapter five it was noted that the Brethren, like the Reformers before them, identified Babylon as the Roman Catholic Church. However, whereas the Reformers saw Babylon as Papal Rome alone, the Brethren understood Rome to be the source of other Babylonian churches through the use of the 'mother-daughter' idiom. In chapter six the Brethren understanding of the identity of these daughters of Babylon, so called, was explored. Within Brethren exegesis Revelation's Babylon motif was taken as a representation of all corrupt Christendom and none escaped this designation. In both chapters five and six it was shown that the Brethren adopted the line of interpretation that they did in order to identify the 'religious other'. Chapter seven highlighted the way that Brethren authors understood Babylon as a confused, corrupt and heretical understanding of scripture and doctrine. As such Babylon was identified as the 'epistemological other'. Finally in chapter eight, Babylon was identified as the world, either through embracing worldly values and engaging in worldly pastimes, or more literally as the ancient kingdom of Babylon *redivivus*. Here Babylon represented the 'secular other'. It is plain then that the Brethren used the Babylon motif to define themselves through vilifying the 'other'. The question remains, however, not only of the specific identity of Babylon, but also of the response that should be made towards her. It is argued in this chapter that it is concerning that response that the Brethren line of interpretation breaks substantially new ground. It is argued also that it is on this point that the text can be seen to exert an influence on the

reader, rather than the reader reading into the text. Here then, we have an example of *Wirkungsgeschichte* and not simply *Auslegungsgeschichte*.

The variety and range of interpretations held among the group have been explained to some extent through an application of Iser's phenomenological reader-oriented approach to the text and its meanings. There is however, in contrast to the variety of identities that Babylon has, only one common community response: that is: 'come out of her my people' (Rev. 18:4).

The Brethren sought to 'come out' of Babylon on a number of levels, as though through a series of concentric circles of exegesis, each hermeneutical circle being increasingly sectarian and increasingly exclusive. First, they came out of Babylon insofar as they identified themselves with the Protestant Reformers who had 'come out' of Papal Rome in the sixteenth century, then, they came out of the various Protestant denominations to form their own movement. The Brethren also 'came out' by defining their own particular doctrinal and ritual beliefs, enabling further reinforcement of the distinction between 'insider' and 'outsider'. Finally they sought to 'come out' of the world altogether and have nothing to do with, not only worldly practices and pursuits, but also nothing to do with the physical earth itself. Each time, they 'came out', they solidified and consolidated their own identity over and against that which they identified as Babylon.

Babylon was, it will be clear by now, something highly unpleasant. She is clearly an anti-Christian power described throughout Rev. 17-18 as, among other things, a prostitute, an abomination, filthy, hated, desolate, naked, a sorcerer, a drunkard, bloodthirsty, fallen, foul and unclean. She will be eaten, burned, judged, receive plagues

of death, famine and fire. Yet in the account of her downfall and destruction it is clear that the church can do nothing to destroy her. On numerous occasions in Revelation the saints are seen as either resisting or destroying their enemies who are all overcome by the saints, either through tribulation resistance, or at the post-tribulation battle of Armageddon (16:16).⁸⁰¹ Babylon, however, is not destroyed by the church, rather it is the Kings of the earth and the beast with its ten horns that turn on the whore and bring God's judgment upon her (17:16). Faced with such a prospect, the image of Babylon is terrifying indeed. She cannot be overcome by conflict or resistance, the only safety must be to escape from her. For the Brethren, then, the question became one of how to escape, not just spiritually, but physically, from this end-time foe. The answer was simple: they must leave the world.

Biological Responses to Fear

It is a well-established principle in biological and physiological studies that 'when a person is thrust in to a dangerous or unpredictable situation, hormones are involved in both the short-term and long-term responses. The short-term reaction [is] called the "fight or flight response"'.⁸⁰²

Freeman uses the example of being confronted by a dangerous animal. He describes the scenario of 'being chased by a grizzly bear'. During such an encounter 'action potentials from your sympathetic nerves would stimulate your adrenal medulla and lead to the release of epinephrine'⁸⁰³ (also known as adrenaline). Thus fear, it seems,

⁸⁰¹ See for example Rev. 2:2-6, 7:14, 9:4, 11:11 and 19:14.

⁸⁰² Scott Freeman (ed.) *Biological Science: International Edition*, 2nd edn. (Prentice Education Ltd., 2005), pp. 1082-1083.

⁸⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1082-1083.

elicits a remarkable and powerful biological change in the human body. Trump and Fagle explain how the emotional feeling of anger can have a profound physiological effect on the body. They describe the story (which is quite possibly just a medical myth or anecdote, but 'the physiology is reasonable'), of a doctor 'who saved a diabetics life by making him angry'. In a medical situation where no drugs or food were available the doctor saved the patients life by telling the diabetic: 'to stop complaining, that he was just pretending to be ill'. The effect was to make the patient angry. This 'anger caused the brain to send signals to the [adrenal] medulla . . . which responded by releasing adrenaline into the blood stream'.⁸⁰⁴ The adrenaline caused the liver to produce insulin, which converted glycogen into glucose in the blood stream, thus the anger saved his life by increasing the sugar levels in his blood.

Physical stress can cause hormones to be released into the blood having a physiological effect on the body. One cited example is that of the extended stress of the journey of a salmon moving upstream towards the ocean.⁸⁰⁵ The strenuous and dangerous journey to the sea is fuelled by stress hormones increasing muscular activity. Thus fear, anger and stress all effect the human body. Kimball has noted that 'we have all heard of heroic deeds accomplished in times of danger or other emergency. The secretion of adrenaline and noradrenaline by the adrenal medulla is an important mechanism for making this possible'.⁸⁰⁶

It is possible, particularly for a group who perceive the world to be a threatening and dangerous place and who interpret scripture literally, that confrontation with a text

⁸⁰⁴ Richard F. Trump & David L. Fagle, *Design for Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963), p. 261.

⁸⁰⁵ Freeman, p. 1083.

⁸⁰⁶ John W. Kimball, *Biology*, 4th edn. (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1965), p. 206, pp. 448-449.

describing a bloodthirsty prostitute would provoke the same reaction of fear as confrontation with the grizzly bear above, or that the Great Whore's responsibility for the torment, grief and killing of the saints would induce the same feelings of anger that doctor arose in the diabetic patient, or indeed that the physical stress or resisting her intoxicating drink and sexual advances would elicit the same physical response as that of the salmon above. In each case the 'fight-or-flight response' is triggered by a threatening stimuli, and Babylon is indeed one such threatening stimulus.

There are a number of physiological 'side' effects to this response including: 'significant increase in pulse rate, blood pressure, and oxygen consumption by the brain'. This gives the physical feeling of a 'rush', also on a more emotional level 'strong subjective feelings of anxiety and excitement' and 'a state of heightened alertness and increased energy'.⁸⁰⁷ The more visible responses to a frightening stimulus include 'the pupils of the eye dilate and there is a tendency for body hair to stand erect'.⁸⁰⁸ In relatively hairless humans this is often seen as 'gooseflesh'. The side effects include 'the 'cold sweat' and nausea often induced by a fearful situation'.⁸⁰⁹ In addition, such short-term responses to acutely stressful situations are relatively short lived. Once an adrenaline, "rush" has worn off, most people feel exhausted and want to rest and eat'.

If the stress continues for the long term, through extended periods of 'starvation or fasting, prolonged emotional distress, or chronic illness' then the adrenal cortex produces the hormone cortisol which is 'found in airline pilots and crew members during long flights, athletes who were training for intense contests, the parents of children undergoing treatment for cancer, and college students who were preparing for final

⁸⁰⁷ Freeman, pp. 1082-1083.

⁸⁰⁸ Kimball, pp. 448-449.

⁸⁰⁹ Freeman, p. 1023.

exams'.⁸¹⁰ In Brethren readers who read the Bible with deadly seriousness the hormones adrenaline and cortisol, it will be argued here, were released through a reading of Rev. 17-18. Hence biology played some role in the development of the Brethren secret rapture theory and was an ingredient in the overall interpretive response to the frightening images found in the text.

Psychological Responses to Fear

If such physiological reactions are created through responses to physical danger it is not unreasonable to presume that the same physiological responses may be created through response to psychological or emotional danger, that is, a perceived or hypothetical threat. In chapter two a brief examination of the work of Norman Holland's *Five Readers Reading* (1973) was carried out to shed light on how and why readers interpret texts in the way they do from a psychological perspective.

In particular the second principle of literary experience that Holland identifies in his book is relevant here, that 'Defences Must be Matched'.⁸¹¹ When readers, like the Brethren, interpret terrifying images like the Whore of Babylon texts there must be something in the work that reacts and responds to dangers and perceived threats in the same way that the reader reacts and responds to perceived threats. Individual readers have different defence mechanisms and different forms of verbal, physical and intellectual response in fight or flight situations. Thus in order for the reader to connect fully with the text, the literary characters must to some degree respond to danger in the same way the

⁸¹⁰ Freeman, p. 1083.

⁸¹¹ Holland, pp. 115-117.

reader responds to danger. For the Christian Brethren this involved a desire to 'come out' of Babylon, a flight or extraction response to the danger.

Holland, asked five readers to interpret William Faulkner's *A Rose For Emily* (1931) and from their different interpretations he identified five archetypal groups. Of these groups three are relevant here.

The reader named 'Saul' took particular pleasure from controlling women describing the mother figure as frightening and terrible.⁸¹² A reader from this 'Saul' archetypal group, who had an underlying obsession with being controlled by frightening and terrifying women, would become completely absorbed by Rev. 17-18, where we read of the perverse 'mother' figure: 'The Mother Of Harlots'. The grotesque nature of this 'mother' would connect with 'Saul's' fears and fantasy, his simultaneous loathing and admiration about violent, terrifying 'mothers'. In particular Rev. 17:6: 'I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints . . . I wondered with great admiration', would be a text that such a reader would find particularly absorbing. Readers of this archetypal group show 'an obsession with control . . . who is big and powerful . . . searching for anything big or vague that might pose a danger . . . [they are] threatened by large sadistic women',⁸¹³

The next archetypal group that is relevant for this study are those which Holland identifies with a reader called 'Shep'. This group appeared to read the text in light of their underlying fantasies about violence, killing and blood, and the dangers of personal injury, of being watched by 'big-brother', and of paranoia. Holland notes that 'Many of his

⁸¹² Ibid., p. 79.

⁸¹³ Ibid., p. 80.

images were hostile . . . of ripping and tearing apart'⁸¹⁴ and that 'he had to remind himself that he was not under attack . . . like a small animal, he perceived reality in terms of threat'.⁸¹⁵ Such a reader, in projecting his own paranoid fantasies about being under attack by a super-human character will find the imagery of Rev. 17-18 absorbing to the point where they may identify themselves with those people who have been killed by Babylon and had their blood drunk. Holland observes that 'Shep' felt threatened by 'mother' type characters whom he believes to control him and cause him pain, anger and resentment for some type of sexual gratification.⁸¹⁶ A reader like 'Shep' would easily identify with the kings of the earth who resent and abhor the 'mother of harlots' even though they commit fornication with her. Readers from this group also simultaneously hate yet sexualise any perceived threat.⁸¹⁷ Such a reader would be easily absorbed by the image of the Whore of Babylon, allowing the fantasy of the text to be transformed into the fantasy of the reader.

The fourth archetypal group was represented by a student known as 'Sebastian'. Holland noted that he would deal with threatening images by flight or denial or alternatively he would sexualise them, particularly aggressive material.⁸¹⁸ He often felt out of control and would often identify the controller as a 'sexually desirable woman'.⁸¹⁹ He wanted to avoid situations that could result in 'massive, overpowering violence',⁸²⁰ he needed to escape any kind of trap.⁸²¹ It is not an unfeasibly large assumption to make that a reader from this archetypal group would, upon reading of an aggressive and sexual

⁸¹⁴ Ibid., p. 82.

⁸¹⁵ Ibid., p. 82.

⁸¹⁶ Ibid., p. 85.

⁸¹⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

⁸¹⁸ Ibid., p. 91.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid., p. 93.

⁸²⁰ Ibid., p. 97.

⁸²¹ Ibid., p. 100.

prostitute called Babylon, be absorbed by the call of Rev. 18:4: 'come out', as such an exiting would be an escape and an avoidance of the dangerous trap.

The Development of Brethren Rapture Theory

If the biological and psychological 'flight' response to danger (whether real or just perceived), is taken to its absolute extreme in the context of this thesis what would that mean? It would mean that the Brethren would want not just to flee the immediate vicinity of Babylon (in her religious, epistemological and secular forms), but would want to fly physically as far away as possible. They would want to leave the world entirely, to escape completely, to be taken out of 'Babylon' altogether. The most extreme way that this could be realised is through a 'rapture' or taking up of the saints to heaven. Nebeker has noted

Political, ecclesiastical and theological factors notwithstanding, personal temperament, emotional conflicts and psychopathologies may also serve as the impulses behind one's eschatological expectations . . . some observers of Darby have noted that his life reflected a certain psychological complexity. One might suspect that the traumas of life and other psychological factors lent expression to the otherworldliness of his hope.⁸²²

Darby is widely regarded among millennial and apocalyptic historical scholars as being one of the key figures in the development of the doctrine of the 'rapture of the church'. Although Nebeker suggests that 'Darby, from the best historical evidence . . . appears to be the principle architect of . . . the pretribulational rapture'⁸²³ it is perhaps better to take a more conservative stance and state, as does Coad, that 'Darby had adopted the doctrine

⁸²² Gary L. Nebeker, 'The Ecstasy of Perfected Love': The Eschatological Mysticism of J.N. Darby', in Gribben & Stunt (2004), pp. 71-71.

⁸²³ Ibid., p. 69.

of 'the Secret Rapture of the Saints'.⁸²⁴ For certain Darby was a major player, perhaps *the* major player in the formulation, refinement and propagation of the doctrine, but it was by no means his original idea. Before some of the influences on Darby *vis-à-vis* Brethren rapture theory are examined, a definition of rapture theory must be proposed.

Essentially the rapture is the removal or translation of the saints on earth to heaven. Nebeker uses the Pauline analogy of the Church as Christ's bride to define the rapture, and uses the phrase 'nuptial mysticism' to refer to the union between the church and Christ at the rapture: 'when Christians were conformed into the likeness of Christ's heavenly glory . . . the nearness of the rapture, by virtue of its pretribulational sequence, lent urgency to one's yearnings for ultimate union with Christ'.⁸²⁵ Thus in a sense it could be said that 'rapture serves as the entryway into the consummation of love between Christ and His Church in the heavenlies'.⁸²⁶ In chapter four the Brethren concept of the 'Secret Rapture of the Church' was explained in some detail. The peculiarly Brethren take on the rapture doctrine is summed up well by Coad:

The Second Advent would take place in two stages: first would be a quiet appearance – the "presence" -- of Christ, when all true Christians, the true church, would be removed from the earth. This was the "rapture of the saints" . . . [only then] would Antichrist arise. His rule would be brought to an end by the second stage of the Advent - the public "appearing" of Christ [and the saints] in Glory.⁸²⁷

The divergence from a general 'rapture theory' to a particularly Brethren 'secret rapture theory' is essentially found in the timing of the rapture. For those who adhere to a single rapture doctrine, the saints remain on earth during the tribulation at the end of which

⁸²⁴ Coad (1968), p. 129.

⁸²⁵ Nebeker, in Gribben & Stunt, p. 84.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

⁸²⁷ Coad (1968), p. 130.

Christ appears, destroys Babylon and the antichrist, then the saints are raptured. However the Brethren secret rapture theory deviates from this view insofar as Christ appears in secret and takes the true saints from the earth. This first stage of the second coming Darby refers to as the *parousia* or 'the coming'. Only after that point is Babylon destroyed, while the saints are in the air with Christ. Some time after either three and a half or perhaps seven years the second stage of the second coming occurs. Darby refers to this as the *epiphaneia*, or the appearing'.⁸²⁸

The first influence on the development of Brethren rapture theory was that of the Jansenists. The Jansenists were a partisan Catholic sect, led by Cornelius Jansen, (1585-1638), Bishop of Ypres, who were condemned by Pope Innocent X in 1653 for believing a Calvinistic doctrine of predestination and a Semipelagian interpretation of the doctrine of Grace. The group rebelled against the anathema and attempted to remain a distinct sect *intra muros* of the Catholic Church, however, persistent condemnation from Rome combined with disapproval from Louis XIV, and persecution during the French Revolution caused the group to diminish greatly.

Whilst it is not clear whether earlier forms of Jansenism had developed a doctrine of the 'rapture' it is the case that they were to do so by the mid-nineteenth century when Darby arrived in Paris and came into contact with Jansenists, in particular, the congregation of the Sisters of St. Martha and the group '*La Petite Eglise*'. Much has been made of this visit to Paris in early 1830. On this trip Darby encountered 'a Jansenist community that had been engaged in a vigorous debate about the timing of the

⁸²⁸ JND, 'Appearing, Manifestation and Presence', in *NC*, 4.151-153; Also JND, 'Rapture of the Saints and the Character of the Jewish Remnant, shewing the Position which the Scriptures Give to the Remnant in Israel, in the Latter Day, in Prophecy, in the Psalms and in the New Testament; and the Rapture of the Saints, Gathered by the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven, Before the Tribulation of the Last Day' (1857), *CW*, 11.180. 'The rapture of the saints before the appearing of Christ'. WK, 'Answers to Questions' in *BT*, Vol. 16, Feb. 1887, p. 222.

rapture'.⁸²⁹ From within the group two major views contended for dominance. Agier (1748-1823) and some of the Jansenists, influenced by the earlier work of the Jesuits Ribera and Lacunza, had argued for a one-stage rapture. Whereas the Jansenist group, '*La Petite Eglise*', and the Dominican writer, Bernard Lambert (1738-1813) 'argued that Christ's coming must occur in two stages, with an initial gathering of believers preceding Christ's coming to inaugurate the millennium'.⁸³⁰ Although Darby could not have personally come into contact with Lambert, who died in 1813, he would have come into contact with his circle who would have promulgated his view that the 'millennial reign of the saints is yet to come – to be introduced by the personal advent of Christ, the destruction of Antichrist with his apostate church and Babylon'.⁸³¹ What is certain is that Darby would have been aware of both of these Jansenist views, as Brethren Hebraic scholar Tregelles noted: 'Lambert and Agier were the writers Mr J.N. Darby studied earnestly before he left the Church of England. I remember his speaking much about them in 1835'.⁸³²

The next significant influence on the formation of Darby's, and thus Brethren, rapture doctrine, came through contact with Scottish Presbyterian secessionist Edward Irving. Grass has noted that an 'early formulation of the concept of the rapture of the believers makes its appearance' in Irving's work,⁸³³ and Stunt has noted that there is no

⁸²⁹ Gribben & Stunt, p. 13.

⁸³⁰ Ibid., p. 13.

⁸³¹ Froom, 3.325

⁸³² S.P. Tregelles in Timothy C.F. Stunt, 'Influences in the Early Development of J.N. Darby', in Gribben & Stunt, pp. 62-63. Note, of the Jansenist group, '*La Petite Eglise*', 'one of the foremost among them was the Dominican Bernard Lambert (1738-1813)' ' . . . In 1806 he published, *Expositions des predictions et des Promesses faites a l'Eglise pour les derniers temps de la Gentilite*'. 'Lambert expects the [rapture] event to be in two stages and foresees an immediate coming . . . when Christ will first gather his saints'. Note also that 'although by 1818 Agier had abandoned a two-stage rapture hypothesis, in his earlier work he wrote of an intermediate coming before the final coming', Thus Like Lacunza, Agier espoused a one stage coming of Christ.

⁸³³ Tim Grass, 'Edward Irving: Eschatology, Ecclesiology and Spiritual Gifts', in Gribben & Stunt, p. 101.

doubt 'that at some stage in 1827 or 1828 he [Darby] read Irving's translation of *La Venida del Mesias en Gloria y magestad*'.⁸³⁴ The reading of the English version of *La Venida* would have meant for sure that Darby was familiar with Lacunza's one-stage rapture hypothesis. However, familiarity with an hypothesis and adoption of that hypothesis are entirely different things, and although it has been suggested by some that 'Darby "took" his pretribulational rapture view from Irving (or someone in 'Irving's circle')' it must be remembered that Irving's rapture theory was based on a one-stage return whereas Darby's rapture theory was based on a two-stage return. As Burnham has astutely noted: 'a comparison of the eschatological systems of Darby and Irving yields far more differences than similarities'.⁸³⁵

Another significant difference between Darby and Irving's rapture theories is based on the overall timing of the rapture. Darby, and the Brethren, it will be clear by now, were futurists, whereas Irving, through his contact with Frere,⁸³⁶ understood the rapture from an historicist hermeneutical stance.⁸³⁷ The Irvingite historicist stance in relation to the rapture can be seen in the work of the prominent Irvingite Robert Baxter who believed 14 July 1835 to be the date of 'the rapture or translation of believers before the Second Coming, but which Catholic Apostolics afterwards referred to [as] the,

⁸³⁴ Stunt, in Gribben & Stunt, p. 57.

⁸³⁵ Jonathan D, Burnham, *A Story of Conflict: the Controversial Relationship Between Benjamin Wills Newton and John Nelson Darby* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster Press, 2004), p. 124.

⁸³⁶ James H. Frere, who occupied a 'leading place' among the Historicist School of interpreters, along with Edward Irving and Lewis Way formed the Society for the Investigation of Prophecy in June 1826. See Froom, 3.499. They were all familiar with Lacunza's *La Venida*, and the one-stage rapture hypothesis, as Way, who was minister of the English Church in Paris in the 1820's, had read the Jansenist Agier's French translation of that book, See Gribben & Stunt, p. 64., and Way in his monthly publication, the *Gallican Watchman*, draws attention to 'a society of one hundred Jansenist women in Paris who shared an, 'an indubitable persuasion of Christ's second coming to establish his personal reign on earth'', Lewis Way, 'The Gallican Watchman', Oct. 8, 1831, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 47-49, 58-59. In Froom, 3.425.

⁸³⁷ See chapter one above for definitions.

“Separation of the Apostles”⁸³⁸. As such Darby cannot have taken his rapture doctrine from Irving as the specifics differ too greatly. The very most one can conclude is that Darby was aware of Lacunza, Agier and Irving’s one-stage rapture hypothesis and rejected it in favour of his own development of Lambert’s two-stage rapture hypothesis.

The importance of the Powerscourt and Albury conferences as a melting pot for the dissemination and formulation of prophetic ideas cannot be undermined. As noted in chapter four above, Powerscourt was the place where Darby first came into contact with Irving:

though the precise date remains uncertain, it appears that at some point between the 1832 and 1833 Powerscourt conferences Darby began to promote his unique view of the pretribulational rapture of the church . . . by the third Powerscourt conference, he had come fully to acknowledge a futurist perspective which included the pretribulational rapture of the church.⁸³⁹

Darby’s prominence at these conferences, combined with his ‘dominant personality and masterful will’,⁸⁴⁰ would certainly have meant that his own version of the rapture, that is a two-stage rapture beginning with a secret pretribulation *parousia* followed by a visible post tribulation *epiphaneia*, would have been promulgated and propagated successfully and forcefully.

Later on in the year 1830, Darby was yet again exposed to the two-stage rapture hypothesis that he had first come across in the ‘*La Petite Eglise*’, and the work of Lambert, when he, along with Wigram, travelled to Row (now Rhu) in Scotland to witness the controversial prophecies of Margaret MacDonald. MacDonald and her brothers, like the Irvingites, would prophecy utterances in ‘tongues’ or *glossolia* which

⁸³⁸ Grass, in Gribben & Stunt, p. 116.

⁸³⁹ Burnham, p. 122.

⁸⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

would be followed by interpretations. They were presided over by John McLeod Campbell who was originally the Church of Scotland minister in Row, but in 1830 was ejected from the Establishment for heresy.⁸⁴¹ Darby describes Campbell as ‘a very estimable person’ but overall he was very unimpressed with the exercise of prophetic tongues. He draws an analogy to the meetings in Row and Babel:

God had confounded their pride . . . There was a pretended interpretation . . . one, if not more, of the texts was quoted wrongly . . . The excitement was great, so that, though not particularly an excitable person, he [Darby refers here to himself] felt its effects very strongly. It did not certainly approve itself to his [Darby’s] judgment . . . It was too much of a scene . . . delusion . . . female vanity, and very distinct worldliness . . . the tongues . . . have allied themselves with other influences suited to the world.⁸⁴²

Regardless of Darby’s views on the authenticity of MacDonald’s prophecies, they were, nonetheless, widely circulated at the time, and were undoubtedly influential on the development of Irving’s ecclesiology in particular the Irvingite practice of *glossolia*.

It is highly unlikely though that MacDonald or Campbell’s rapture theory played any significant role in the development of Darby’s two-stage secret rapture theory. In addition to Darby’s dismissal of the authenticity of the prophecy, Campbell clearly differed to Darby on the details of the rapture. In 1830, the year that Darby and Wigram visited Row, Campbell based many of his sermons on ‘the hour of his judgment has come . . . Fallen is Babylon the Great’ (Rev. 14:7-8), thus locating the fall of Babylon in the present before the rapture of the saints, whereas, quite importantly, as we shall see in the remainder of his chapter, the timing of Darby’s rapture is crucially placed *before* the fall

⁸⁴¹ From, 3.595.

⁸⁴² JND, ‘The Irrationalism of Infidelity’ (1853), 6.447-450.

of Babylon.⁸⁴³ In addition to this, although some, such as MacPherson have suggested that the MacDonald home was where Darby learnt this teaching,⁸⁴⁴ Stunt has convincingly argued that MacDonald's prophecy: 'is so very confused that it hardly provides a basis for constructing a coherent eschatology', and there is no evidence at all from contemporary sources that she 'proclaimed a new doctrine'.⁸⁴⁵

By the middle of the nineteenth century many Christians had come to expect and wait for some kind of rapture event. Darby's two-stage rapture theory, with its initial secret rapture removing the saints before the tribulation, followed by a second appearing of Christ and the saints, was gaining wide spread support as the nascent Brethren movement itself was growing. Those outside the Brethren movement would also have been aware of a one-stage rapture theory through the work of Irving, Frere and Way. The question that remains to be answered is 'why did such a theory explode in French and English exegesis at that time?'

On one level the answer is clearly down to the social, political and religious unrest of the time, the details of which have been noted already above. Events such as the French Revolution, cholera epidemics, widespread war and the like were perceived as real and immediate dangers to everyday people at the start of the nineteenth century. Such threats must clearly be understood in light of the biological and physiological process described earlier on in this chapter.

⁸⁴³ In this respect excommunicated Brethren author Newton was closer to the one stage rapture doctrine of Campbell, Irving, Agier, and Lacunza, in that he too expected the fall of Babylon to be before the rapture of the saints. See for example, BWN, *Thoughts on the Apocalypse* (Hamilton, Adams, 1844) pp. 295-300. Also BWN (1890), p. vii; BWN, *The Harlot of Babylon: Revelation Chapter Seventeen in Conversation* (SGAT, n.d.), p. 12.

⁸⁴⁴ David MacPherson, *The Rapture Plot* (Simpsonville, SC: Millennium III Pubs., 1995), pp. 133-138.

⁸⁴⁵ Timothy C. Stunt, 'The Tribulation of Controversy', in *Brethren Archivists and Historians Network Review*, ed. by Neil T.R. Dickson, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2003, p. 93.

As such, rapture theory provides a physical escape mechanism from this dangerous world wrapped up in religious and biblical language. As Nebeker has noted, the rapture may be seen as 'the aesthetic attraction that heavenly imagery provides for those living in tumultuous social contexts, or even in states of lasting emotional deprivation'.⁸⁴⁶ For the Brethren authors such as Darby, who employed such a highly literalistic interpretation of scripture, the threat of some apocalyptic enemy such as Babylon, would be just as real as the more immediate threats of revolution, war and cholera, and would thus evoke the same biological and psychological responses. It has been noted that 'Darby's pretribulation rapture theory was nothing more than an acute form of escapism',⁸⁴⁷ and while to a certain extent this is true, tribulation escapism, is as much of an entirely valid and reasonable reaction to the apocalyptic imagery of Revelation as the physical escapism of the reader fleeing from a dangerous confrontation with a grizzly bear through fear.

The *Wirkungsgeschichte* of the 'Whore of Babylon' in the Formation of Brethren Rapture Theory

It has already been demonstrated that Darby distinguishes between a *parousia* or 'coming' and an *epiphaneia* or 'appearing'. The question to be answered here is that of the extent to which and ways in which the Whore of Babylon motif influenced his development of the Brethren secret rapture of the church doctrine. The question is not an

⁸⁴⁶ Nebeker, p. 71.

⁸⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

idle one given the truly phenomenal importance of 'Rapture Culture' in the contemporary world, particularly, perhaps in the USA.⁸⁴⁸

The destruction of Babylon plays an important role in the timing of Darby's two-fold rapture theory. The secret *parousia* of Christ occurs, and the saints are raptured, crucially, before Babylon is judged and destroyed. In general terms the whole of Darby's hermeneutical approach to Revelation is futurist insofar as he states that: 'In the third part, we have that which takes place after the church has been removed (chaps. 4-22)'.⁸⁴⁹ More specifically, in commenting on Rev. 18:4-6, Darby informs us that when the voice from heaven cries 'come out of her', it is said to inform the saints: 'come out of Babylon in order not to partake of her sins, nor of her judgment . . . This warning, though placed in the account after the judgment of Babel, is addressed to the saints before the judgment [of Babylon]'.⁸⁵⁰ Here Darby is stating that although the physical geographical entity of Babylon has already been judged according to the Genesis account, the apocalyptic Babylon will not be judged until after the *parousia* when the saints have left the earth. The distinguishing between OT forms of Babylon, destroyed in the historical past, and the destruction of the apocalyptic Babylon to be destroyed in the future, is continued when Darby turns to the Babylonian empire of the book of Daniel and states that, 'the times of the Gentiles began in Babylon . . . The times of the Gentiles [i.e. the Babylonian kingdom] will not end at the same time with the church, but go on a little after we are caught up'.⁸⁵¹ In both cases Darby describes the past destructions of Babylon, both in Genesis as the Tower of Babel, and Daniel as Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom, and goes on to

⁸⁴⁸ Amy, J. Frykholm, *Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (NY: OUP, 2004), *passim*.

⁸⁴⁹ JND, 'Notes on the Revelation', in, *NJ*, p. 126.

⁸⁵⁰ JND, 'On the Apocalypse', 28.536.

⁸⁵¹ JND, 'On the Gospel According to John, Notes of Remarks Made partly in Reply to Questions at a Conference' (1871), *CW*, 25.360.

conclude that the final destruction of Babylon will occur post-rapture, when the saints will have been gathered into the sky with Christ, safe from her bloodthirsty and pernicious threats.

He continues with this line of interpretation when he writes that the judgment and destruction of the Apocalyptic Babylon, which occurs at the hand of the beast and the ten kings, is restrained for the moment by 'God . . . [who] holds the bridle till the church is gathered',⁸⁵² at which point Babylon is destroyed and the tribulation begins. The judging of Babylon is not an event that should cause the believer to be afraid or worried, on the contrary it is something that should be looked forward to with great expectation, because the eschatological hope of the true church is that they will have quitted the earth before Babylon is judged. Thus Darby writes that for the Brethren their 'hope is, the coming of the Lord to take the saints, already called, into glory with Himself . . . [then] the nominal church, not members of Christ, will be spued out of His mouth: Babylon judged . . . and glory for the church'.⁸⁵³

This first stage of the rapture process can be understood as Darby's flight response to danger. The overall impression that one gets from his compiled works is that here is a reader who adheres to a highly literalistic interpretation of scripture. Darby would, upon reading about such destruction, sin and judgment to be imminently served

⁸⁵² JND, 'Fragmentary Thoughts on Revelation', 34.344.

⁸⁵³ JND, *Letters of J.N.D.* vol. 2, 1868-1879, p. 361. The sequence of an initial rapture before the destruction of Babylon can also be seen in, JND, 'Progress of Democratic Power, and its Effects on the Moral State of England', *CW*, 32.510-511; JND, 'On the Apocalypse', *CW*, 28.534-535. 'Hence it is finished – Nothing remains but the coming of the Son of man . . . this book shews us also the end of all things . . . the rapture . . . blessing is on high, judgment below'. JND, 'Meditations on the Acts of the Apostles', *CW*, 25.492-494. 'The rapture of the Saints to be with Jesus . . . God gathers the joint heirs with Christ, who are not of this world . . . they will reign with Him.' JND, 'The Character of Office in the Present Dispensation' (1838), *CW*, 1.142-143. The Church belongs: 'to the heavenlies . . . Christ who is our life shall appear'. JND, 'Joshua Chapters 1–13', *CW*, 19.512, 'Rome is Babylon thus viewed. The Church of God is heavenly and we Christians must have heavenly things'.

up to Babylon, understand this in literal terms, as a dangerous and unpredictable situation. On a biological level, Darby would unconsciously respond to such a text by his adrenal medulla releasing adrenal into his body causing a heightened state of alertness, fear, stress, anger, anxiety and nausea. Developing a belief that he and his Brethren would fly away from the earth to the safety of their Lord in the sky, in order to escape Babylon, can be seen simply as the most appropriate physical response to a text which describes such a dangerous entity.

The second stage of Darby's two-stage rapture theory is the visible *epiphaneia* of Christ with his saints, which occurs, significantly, after Babylon has been judged and destroyed. Thus in commenting on Revelation nineteen, that is the chapter that comes chronologically immediately after chapters seventeen and eighteen, and the marriage of the Lamb to his wife the church, Darby stresses that this apocalyptic nuptial union occurs 'after the judgment of Babylon'. The Church 'may be said to be espoused or destined for him, but the marriage is not yet come. This takes place on being united to Him in that day when He shall appear in His glory, when He calls them up into the air'.⁸⁵⁴ The chronological sequence can be seen further when Darby writes that first there is 'the complete pulling to pieces of Babylon. She is destroyed . . . [by the] different nations', Next, 'the Lamb overcomes them, but you have saints coming with Him'.⁸⁵⁵ Thus the second stage of the rapture, the *epiphaneia*, is a returning to the earth of Christ newly married to his bride the church, after Babylon's destruction, to destroy the beast, the false prophet and the kings of the earth.

⁸⁵⁴ JND, 'Scriptural Criticisms', 13.18.

⁸⁵⁵ JND, 'Further Notes on the Revelation', in *NJ*, p. 154. Further examples of the second stage of the rapture, after the destruction of Babylon, that is the, *epiphaneia*, the visible return of Christ with the saints, can be see in JND, 'Thoughts on Isaiah the Prophet', 30.339; JND, 'Psalm 93', *CW*, 30.162, 'Babylon, the Mother of Harlots . . . the Lord coming in judgment . . . we shall be caught up before He comes, and when He comes to reign we come with Him to reign'.

Stage two can be understood as Darby's psychological responses to the Whore of Babylon. On this level the text can be seen to have absorbed Darby's imagination because the author of Revelation has reacted and responded to the threat of the world around him in the same way that Darby responds and reacts to danger and perceived threats, that is 'defences have been matched'.⁸⁵⁶

The text informs us that the dangerous character of Babylon has been destroyed in a most horrific way, she has been stripped, burnt and eaten. It is possible that Darby fits into the category of archetypal reader that Holland identifies as Saul whose unconscious responses to danger involve feelings of unhappiness from, 'father's absence',⁸⁵⁷ feelings that mother figures are, 'frightening terrible',⁸⁵⁸ and that, 'he seemed to expect the threat from a large sadistic person, most likely a woman', if he could not match or overcome the woman, 'he would avoid the whole situation, physically or psychically, and look for a world of safe precision elsewhere'.⁸⁵⁹ These feelings can be clearly seen in Darby's writings about Babylon. His unhappiness about Jesus' absence from the church can only change when the church rises to meet him for the heavenly marriage, after the large sadistic whore has been avoided by leaving the world which she inhabits.

Darby's exegesis of this text also has some similarities with the archetypal reader Shep. Shep coped with the world's dangers in a way remarkably similar to how Darby copes with the danger from Babylon. When confronted with danger, usually a sexualised mother figure,⁸⁶⁰ Shep, 'either hid or he fled to a point from which he could fight'.⁸⁶¹ We have just seen Darby's responses to the Mother of Harlots. First of all he hides, through a

⁸⁵⁶ Holland, p. 115.

⁸⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 78.

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 80.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 85.

⁸⁶¹ Ibid., p. 82.

secret rapture, which will not be seen by those outside of the Brethren, then after Babylon is destroyed, an advantageous point from which he could fight arises, thus he, with his Brethren and Christ return to fight against the beast, the false prophet and the kings of the earth.

Kelly

Like Darby, Kelly also believed that there would be a two-stage rapture and differentiated between a primary *parousia* and a secondary *epiphaneia*. The first stage of the rapture is for Kelly an event that should provide comfort and reassurance to those who, upon reading about the dangerous and threatening Whore, feel a sense of anxiety or worry. He writes

In the midst of such a dreary future, what a comfort that we shall be with Him then! You, if you love the Lord, will be with Him. . . . It will not then be a question of gathering His people to Himself. Not a hint of such a removal is given in this context. The faithful are already with Him. They had been therefore caught up to Him before.⁸⁶²

Although Babylon is an object: 'of judgment . . . the great harlot . . . the Lord is leading His own to expect their removal to heaven to meet the Bridegroom'⁸⁶³ those who belong to God will be safe in the arms of the heavenly husband whilst Babylon is being judged. He reiterates this removal from danger when he writes 'the heavenly saints will be taken away before the judgment falls upon Babylon. They are not referred to in that word

⁸⁶² WK (1872a), p. 12.

⁸⁶³ WK (c.1872b), pp. 56-58.

'Come out of her, my people'.⁸⁶⁴ The Brethren will not be on the earth when the time of danger reaches its zenith.

Showing an awareness of Irving's one-stage rapture hypothesis, which was itself a development of Lacunza and Agier's eschatology, Kelly writes that Babylon will be judged in the future, after 'the translation of the heavenly saints found in Him caught up to the throne of God . . . the saints can be caught up and thus seen mystically in Him'.⁸⁶⁵ For those who held a one-stage rapture theory, Babylon was judged, destroyed and then the church were gathered out of the earth to meet the Lord in heaven.

Again, this first stage of the Brethren rapture theory, can be seen as the biological response to a physical threat. Kelly, like Darby reads scripture in a highly literalistic way. The threat of Babylon is a real and physical threat, and as she cannot be overcome by the church, that is, as a fight response would fail, then the only physical option left to maintain safety is the flight response.

Kelly may have felt the emotional rush associated with adrenaline preparing the body to react to a dangerous situation, his writings clearly show that he experienced strong subjective feelings of anxiety and excitement towards such a threat, and believing that the imminent future destruction of Babylon could only be avoided by flight, developed the doctrine of the secret rapture as a coping strategy to the text.

The second stage of the rapture for Kelly involved a visible return of Christ to the earth, with his saints, to judge and destroy the remaining powers of evil and wickedness. Kelly writes: 'the judgment of Babylon will involve in it the humiliation and punishment

⁸⁶⁴ WK (1897b), p. 387.

⁸⁶⁵ WK, 'The Catholic Apostolic Body', in *BT*, Vol. 18, 1890-1891, pp. 124-136. For further examples of Kelly's first stage of the rapture sequence before Babylon's judgment see also, WK (1870), reprinted (Bible Truth Pubs., 1970), p. 559; WK, 'The Coming' in *Three Prophetic Gems* (1970), p. 45; WK, 'The Christian Hope Consistent With Events Revealed In Prophecy', in *BT*, Vol. 9, 1872-1873, p. 366.

of all the different parts of professing Christendom . . . just before Christ appears. The downfall of Babylon is just before He comes for the judgment of the world . . . before the brightness or appearing of the Lord's coming'.⁸⁶⁶

Kelly distinguishes between the hidden and revealed aspects of the rapture. He writes of the difference between the manifestation which 'distinctly calls for 'every eye' to see it', and the rapture which 'excludes every eye'. There will be a gathering 'into the air to meet Him . . . out of the vision of those on the earth', then, after those hidden events preceding the destruction of the Great Whore, the visible events may occur, 'the final judgment on earth of Babylon . . . Only then is the visible display of the Lord and of the glorified saints who follow Him out of the opened heavens'.⁸⁶⁷

Thus the first stage of the rapture, which is hidden and secret precedes the destruction of Babylon, but Kelly asks the question 'What follows the kings' destruction of Babylon?' He answers, "these shall make war with the Lamb'. . . . The saints then come from heaven, being with the Lamb when the conflict arrives . . . being changed, they are to be forever with the Lord and thus follow Him out of heaven'.⁸⁶⁸ Thus although the saints do not fight against Babylon, there is a role for them to fight against the remaining coalition of evil that succeeds Babylon. Of the Brethren's role in judging and destroying, Kelly writes that 'Babylon's fall . . . [is] before the Lord appears from heaven followed by the glorified saints . . . to execute the closing judgment and to bring in the millennial reign'.⁸⁶⁹

⁸⁶⁶ WK, 'Micah', in *Minor Prophets* (1871b), pp. 256-257.

⁸⁶⁷ WK, 'Heavenly Hope' in *Three Prophetic Gems* (1970), p. 59.

⁸⁶⁸ WK, 'The Coming', in *Three Prophetic Gems* (1970), p. 75.

⁸⁶⁹ WK, 'The Catholic Apostolic Body', in *BT*, Vol. 18, 1890-1891, pp. 27-44. Further examples of the second stage of Kelly's rapture theory, the *epiphaneia* of 'appearing' with the saints, after Babylon's destruction, can be seen in, WK, *Christ For The Saint And Christ For The Sinner* (Weston, 1907a), pp. 19-21; WK (1906b), pp. 41-42.

This description of a second stage of the rapture reveals something of Kelly's psychological responses to reading Rev. 17-18. This text would be of particular significance to Kelly as he responds and reacts to the danger and threat of Babylon in the same way that the author, John, responds and reacts to Babylon. Kelly and John of Patmos' defence mechanisms have been matched. Kelly's archetypal reading style is the same as Holland's reader Shep, insofar as there is a dual response to the sexualised mother figure. Whereas Shep hides from her, Kelly 'excludes every eye' when he escapes her, and whereas Shep extracts himself from danger to a place from which he can fight, Kelly, visibly follows the Lord out of heaven to fight in the Lamb's army. Yet Kelly also demonstrates similarities with the archetypal reader group Holland identifies as Saul, insofar as Saul desires that the polluted devil woman be 'treated aggressively lest she prove to be destructively sexual',⁸⁷⁰ whereas Kelly, after the Whore's destruction, desires to be involved in 'conflict' and 'execute the closing judgment'.⁸⁷¹ There is also something of the Sam archetypal response to Babylon in Kelly's desire to see the judgment of Babylon expressed as the simultaneous 'humiliation and punishment of all the different parts of professing Christendom'.⁸⁷² Holland writes that a reader like Sam has a defence mechanism based around 'wishes to take in or get out, taking in passively or getting out actively'.⁸⁷³ Whilst passivity is somewhat synonymous with humiliation, Sam's simultaneous desire to 'assert power and gratify drives to express his manliness',⁸⁷⁴ particularly with regards to a dangerous sexual woman, is synonymous

⁸⁷⁰ Holland, pp. 338-339.

⁸⁷¹ WK, 'The Catholic Apostolic Body, Or Irvingites', in *BT*, Vol. 18, 1890-1891, pp. 27-44.

⁸⁷² See pp. 290-291.

⁸⁷³ Holland, p. 75.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 75.

with Kelly's description of the concurrent humiliation and punishment of the Great Whore.

Trotter

William Trotter, whom Coad describes as 'Darby's own follower',⁸⁷⁵ did indeed follow in Darby's footsteps when it came to the newly emerging, uniquely Brethren, two-stage rapture hypothesis. Trotter adamantly believed that before Babylon could be judged and destroyed the Brethren must evacuate the earth. He writes: 'from this vast system . . . the saints of God are called to withdraw. 'Come out of her, my people' . . . the true Church [is] . . . translated to its home and dwelling place in heaven [whereas] the false professing body will still be found in unhallowed alliance with the wealth and greatness of this world'.⁸⁷⁶ However we see some divergence here from Darby's other major disciple, Kelly, in that it will have been noted above that Kelly doesn't consider the call to 'come out' to be a call to the saints to be raptured literally out of the earth (although he does think that there will be a rapture, he doesn't use Rev. 18:4 to argue for it), whereas Trotter clearly does think that 'come out' is a call to be raptured.

This rapture is in itself the precursor to Babylon's judgment, that is, she cannot be destroyed until the true saints have been 'changed at Christ's coming, and with the departed saints caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Judgment will afterwards fall on the false professing body which will be left on earth [mystic Babylon]'.⁸⁷⁷ This rapture event then paves the way for Babylon's terrible and sudden demise, yet all the time this is unfolding there is no risk or danger to the Brethren as they are safe with Christ. He writes

⁸⁷⁵ Coad (1968), p. 157.

⁸⁷⁶ WT, 'A Recapitulation', p. 428.

⁸⁷⁷ WT, 'Christ and the Church', p. 119.

'the translation of the Church to heaven, at the descent of the Lord Jesus into the air . . . The removal of the true Church may be immediately followed by this judgment on the false one [i.e. Babylon] . . . The only place in which the Church is seen from Rev. 4: 1 to Rev. 19: 14, is in heaven'.⁸⁷⁸

However, for all the confidence and certainty that Darby and Kelly show towards the details of the rapture, Trotter does retain a little hesitance and uncertainty as to the exact details. He writes 'the doom of Babylon the Great . . . The crisis hastens . . . Where to place the translation of the church to meet her Lord, we know not. It may be the very first stage of the crisis. Perhaps. It will be so. Are we ready for it?'⁸⁷⁹

What Trotter is clear on is that for the duration of Babylon's destruction and judgment, the Brethren will not be on the earth, they will be out of harm's way, awaiting the heavenly union and observing events on the earth with great interest. We read: 'During this period, the true Church is in heaven . . . deeply interested in the action which takes place on earth . . . When Babylon's overthrow has taken place, the marriage of the Lamb is celebrated in heaven'.⁸⁸⁰

Trotter's views on the first stage of the rapture process, of an initial exiting from the world to maintain a safe distance from Babylon's destruction, can be understood simply as a physical flight response to a real and imminent danger. To a reader like Trotter, for whom Scripture must be literally fulfilled, the image of Babylon would be terrifying indeed, and promote feelings of anxiety and stress, as well as feelings of fear and a desire to escape to safety. The only way to escape the threat and danger of Babylon is through flight, that short term, adrenal fuelled response to danger, and for Trotter,

⁸⁷⁸ WT, 'Apocalyptic Interpretation', p. 356.

⁸⁷⁹ WT, 'The Predicted Corruption of Christianity', p. 209.

⁸⁸⁰ WT, 'Apocalyptic Interpretation', p. 360.

flight means rapture, flying (quite literally in the context of 1 Thess. 4) into the arms of Jesus.

The second stage of the Brethren two-stage rapture process begins, for Trotter, after 'He has thus taken away the true Church'. At this point we have the 'the doom of Babylon' and after that stage two begins: 'He will descend, accompanied or followed by His glorified saints, to execute the judgments . . . which will shortly burst upon an astonished and affrighted world'.⁸⁸¹ Thus, although the saints do not destroy Babylon, they do on the second stage of the rapture return with Christ to destroy the kings of the earth, the beast and the false prophet at the post-tribulation battle of Armageddon. Such apocalyptic enemies can be overcome by the church, therefore rather than promoting a flight response, a similar biological process would promote a fight response. The dual flight-fight responses can be seen in the two-stage rapture process in Trotter's writings. The *parousia* elicits a flight response to avoid a confrontation with Babylon, whereas the *epiphaneia* elicits a fight response, whereby the Brethren actually engage in conflict with the coalition of evil. Trotter writes 'the apostle distinguishes between the *parousia* (coming) of Christ, when the saints, whether raised or changed, shall be translated to meet Him in the air, and the *epiphaneia* of His coming, by which the man of sin is to be destroyed'.⁸⁸² A supernatural transformation or changing has occurred at some point between stage one and stage two of the rapture process which enables the Brethren to fully engage in the apocalyptic battle.

Eminent psychologist C.G. Jung (1875-1961) notes that when faced with all the 'horrid' images in the book of Revelation, and the 'drastic events' also contained in that

⁸⁸¹ WT, 'Approaching Judgments', p. 35.

⁸⁸² WT, 'Ecclesiastical Corruption', p. 241. See further WT, 'The Last Days of Gentile Supremacy', p. 26; WT, 'The Church Removed Before the Apocalyptic Judgments', Appendix of 8 LP, pp. 275-292.

book 'man's terrified consciousness quite understandably looks round for a mountain of refuge, an island of peace and safety',⁸⁸³ and it is to the heavens, united with Christ, that Trotter turns for such solace. Jung describes the Whore of Babylon as a symbol which can have 'several aspects of meaning and can therefore be interpreted in different ways'.⁸⁸⁴ Jung is, of course, most concerned with the psychological effect of Babylon. The psychological effect that the Whore of Babylon text has had on Trotter is similar to that of Darby and Kelly and includes personifying the enemy as an overtly sexual mother figure, which must be simultaneously hidden from and escaped from in order to recoup and fight from a place of strength, combined with a simultaneous sadness at the heavenly groom's absence coupled with a fear of a large sadistic woman. Jung describes such characters as Babylon in terms of the author's (*vis-à-vis* reader-response criticism, the reader's) own 'dark counterpart, i.e. the Shadow',⁸⁸⁵ a primitive part of the subconscious ego which symbolises both the instinct for survival and desire for sexual reproduction. A reader who belongs to the same archetypal reading group as Shep would find the 'Shadow' side of their ego coming to the surface as they read about the Great Whore and feel threatened by a 'mother' type figure who is believed to exert control, cause pain, anger and resentment in return for some type of sexual gratification.⁸⁸⁶ It is perhaps to this archetypal group that Trotter belongs.

⁸⁸³ Carl, J. Jung, *Answer to Job: How Can a Good God Countenance the Evils Apparent in the World Today*, trans. by R.F.C. Hull (Hodder & Stoughton, 1965), p. 136.

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

⁸⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁸⁸⁶ Holland, p. 85.

Wolston

Wolston takes up the Brethren two-stage rapture hypothesis in his apocalyptic writings but his focus is much more firmly placed on the first stage of the doctrine, that is, the secret rapture, which will remove the Brethren from the earth, so as to avoid the danger and destruction that the judgment of Babylon poses. In a lecture given on the Second Coming of Christ he turns to Rev. 18, and interprets the passage in terms of those who are and those who are not raptured, those who do and those who do not escape Babylon's downfall. We read of 'the fall of Babylon . . . if any of you are unsaved, and want to know what you are hastening on to, I recommend you, without delay, to read these chapters . . . you will have a very fair idea of what your portion is to be, if not caught up at the rapture. If the Lord Jesus came now, if the true saints were called up at this moment into glory, I will tell you what you would have to face immediately thereafter'.⁸⁸⁷ The clearest answer to what will happen after the initial secret rapture of the saints is found in another publication, this time on the book of Daniel, in which Wolston states: 'you will find Babylon is judged in Revelation 18 . . . when the Church has been taken away'.⁸⁸⁸ Once again the development of such a theory must be viewed in light of the biological and psychological reactions that a literalistic reading of the Revelation would promote. Wolston is clearly reacting according to a physiological flight response to danger, and even goes so far as using the threat of such danger to warn those who are 'unsaved' of what hazards are in store for them if they do not 'come out' of Babylon. It is entirely possible that in an emotionally charged and psychologically tense atmosphere, such as a Brethren lecture on prophecy would have been, that Wolston's exegesis of the text would

⁸⁸⁷ WTPW, 'The Stone Cut Out Without Hands', pp. 126-127.

⁸⁸⁸ WTPW, *Night Scenes of Scripture: Seventeen Bible Night Scenes, Illustrating and Elucidating Various Truths of the Gospel* (Nisbet, 1896), pp. 262-236.

have resulted in a release of adrenaline from the adrenal medulla of those who were listening, resulting in the classic fight-flight physiological responses of gooseflesh, hair standing on end, nausea, fear and stress.

As we have seen in chapters six and seven, Wolston identifies Babylon as the church in Thyatira (Rev. 2) thus linking the prophetess Jezebel with the apocalyptic Whore of Rev. 17-18. Concerning Jezebel he writes: 'Jezebel is going ahead with leaps and bounds in this present day in the British Isles. This will continue till the rapture of the saints — the removal to heaven of God's Assembly — and then 'Babylon the great . . . will be destroyed'.⁸⁸⁹ Thus this evil woman will continue to be successful with her seductive teaching until the rapture of the church, at which point she, as representative of Babylon, will be destroyed. Of the woman Jezebel in Rev. 2, Jung asks who 'wants to throw 'the woman Jezebel' on a sickbed and strike her children dead? Who cannot have enough of her bloodthirsty fantasies? Let us be psychologically correct: it is not the unconscious mind of John that thinks up these violent fantasies, they come to him in a violent 'revelation''.⁸⁹⁰ Trotter, in placing an importance on the destruction of Babylon is demonstrating his own desire to see Jezebel destroyed, and he like the archetypal reader Saul, shows a desire for the destruction of the 'devil woman',⁸⁹¹ and like the archetypal reader Shep shows an underlying fantasy about violence, killing and blood.⁸⁹²

Continuing with the churches in Rev. 2-3, Wolston writes: 'the moment of the Rapture . . . when the Lord takes away the candlestick . . . that frightful church-world system afterwards portrayed in Babylon and its judgment . . . all who are His are taken

⁸⁸⁹ WTPW, 'Established and Endowed', p. 98.

⁸⁹⁰ Jung, p. 144.

⁸⁹¹ See p. 188.

⁸⁹² See p. 187.

out of it . . . The rapture is before . . . Laodicea . . . [is] judged as Babylon'.⁸⁹³ It is perhaps enough to note here that Wolston demonstrates a response to danger similar to four of the five archetypal readers that Holland identifies. When experiencing the threat from a feminine, sexualised enemy, Saul, Sam, Shep and Sebastian all express emotion of fear, and respond according to their own defence mechanism. Wolston, in focussing primarily on the first stage of the two-stage rapture theory, that is the *parousia*, rather than on the second stage of the two-stage rapture theory, that is the *epiphaneia*, shows that his defence mechanism is primarily a flight mechanism, not a fight mechanism.

Other Authors

The trend in Brethren exegesis has now become clear. The Brethren adhered to a two-stage rapture hypothesis, the first stage being a hidden *parousia*, the second being a visible *epiphaneia*. Such a belief was in part the result of an exegesis of the Babylon motif, for the true church could not overcome this bloodthirsty entity, thus on both a physical and psychological level the appropriate response to her could only be rapture. Any group, when faced by a hidden risk, has to weigh up whether that danger is something that can be faced or whether risk aversion needs to occur. In Douglas and Wildavsky's essays on technological and environmental danger, those groups who perceive the world as inherently dangerous and risky see themselves as 'involuntary visitors on this planet, [where] every conceivable damage they sustain could be attributable to unwished-for destructive agencies . . . involuntary inhabitants in their own bodies, totally withdrawn to social life'.⁸⁹⁴ Although the authors of this publication are

⁸⁹³ WTPW, 'The Candlestick and the Bride', p. 197.

⁸⁹⁴ Douglas & Wildavsky, p. 20.

referring to those in the modern United States concerned with environmental and technological disaster the theory may be applied to the group here in focus. The Brethren also see themselves as involuntary visitors on this planet and they too attribute danger to an unwished-for and hidden destructive agency: Babylon.

DENNETT

A number of other Brethren authors link Babylon with the rapture but in no way as comprehensively as Darby, Kelly, Trotter and Wolston above. Dennett, for example, whose work we have seen to be of great importance within the Brethren interpretative community, uses the image of Babylon to argue for a secret rapture on a number of occasions. For him the important stage is the *parousia*, whereby on 'the eve of Babylon's destruction . . . there can be no Christians in Babylon' as 'the church is already in heaven'.⁸⁹⁵ He paints a picture of a 'left behind' world of 'mere nominal believers' after the saints have been 'caught away' from Babylon, 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air'.⁸⁹⁶ The process is 'the rapture of the Church'.⁸⁹⁷ He does not however connect Babylon's destruction with a second stage *epiphaneia* as those noted above do, although he does still in other publications adhere to the aforementioned second stage. Bellett, on the other hand, stresses the second stage of the rapture process, the *epiphaneia*, in relation to Babylon, noting that 'during the tribulation' the Brethren are with Christ, before Babylon is judged and then 'the heaven is opened to let down the

⁸⁹⁵ Dennett (1892), pp. 232, 235.

⁸⁹⁶ Dennett (1879), p. 62.

⁸⁹⁷ Dennett (1893), pp. 79, 125, 180. See also Dennett *Scripture* (1891), 18.26.

white horsed rider and his army'.⁸⁹⁸ Of the first stage *parousia* Bellett notes that: 'at any time . . . the saints may be taken up to meet the Lord in the air'.⁸⁹⁹

LINCOLN

Lincoln clearly distinguishes between the Lord's coming and His appearing and notes that it is only 'after the Lord has taken up the church to be with himself, then . . . Revelation *xiii* to *xviii* will be fulfilled' before 'at last He will come down, but not alone; but we with him'.⁹⁰⁰ In like manner Newberry sees a remnant of 'professing Christianity . . . Babylonish in its character' left behind after the 'true believers . . . are caught up to meet the Lord in the air'.⁹⁰¹ Bland notes that the church will have been raptured before the tribulational events,⁹⁰² as does Snell who notes that those who suffer will not be the Brethren for: 'we shall have been caught up, to meet the Lord in the air'.⁹⁰³

Conclusion

The biological origins, mechanisms and outcomes of extreme fear, shyness and social phobia have been studied in detail by developmental psychologists and behavioural neuroscientists who have noted a number of typical responses to extreme fear and stress.⁹⁰⁴ Of the variety of responses demonstrated there are two that are of relevance here in this thesis, namely 'withdrawal' and 'avoidance'. Social withdrawal, it has been

⁸⁹⁸ JGB, *On the Return of the Lord Jesus Christ from Heaven to Meet His Saints in the Air* (Manchester: Horner, n.d.), p. 26.

⁸⁹⁹ JGB (1880), p. 32. Christendom or Babylon.

⁹⁰⁰ William Lincoln, W. *Lincoln's Leaflets*, no. 6, 1st Series, 'The Rapture of the Church at Christ's Second Coming' (Yapp & Hawkins, n.d.), p. 1.

⁹⁰¹ Newberry (c.1890), p. 97.

⁹⁰² F.C. Bland (1879), pp. 51-53.

⁹⁰³ HHS (1866), p. 165.

⁹⁰⁴ Louis A. Schmidt & Jay Schulkin (eds), *Extreme Fear, Shyness and Social Phobia: Origins, Biological Mechanisms and Clinical Outcomes* (Oxford: OUP, 1999).

argued, develops as a result of the fear of strangers. Whereas social reticence, it has been argued, emerges from the development of a conflict avoidance strategy to cope with the fear of unknown and potentially dangerous social encounters.⁹⁰⁵ Such characteristics are clearly visible in the above examined Brethren exegesis. The secret rapture theory can be understood simply as a social withdrawal strategy developed to combat a real fear of the 'mystery' (Rev. 17:5), or 'stranger', that is Babylon. The unwillingness to engage with so-called 'worldly' pursuits, even socially beneficial ones, can be seen as a form of social reticence, which when the above theory is applied, arises as a form of conflict avoidance. The timing of the Brethren rapture, which removes the saints from the earth before the great tribulation and the destruction of Babylon, can be seen as simply a way of avoiding conflict, in order to assuage fears of what could be, if a literalistic reading of Rev. 17-18 is held, quite a bloody encounter.

The Brethren cannot fight against such a 'real' danger as Babylon, thus a biological flight response occurs: an adrenaline rush, gooseflesh, a cold sweat and nausea. This is channelled through the pen into what would become an internally coherent doctrine of escapism: the secret rapture. The Brethren also experience a psychological reaction to the danger of Babylon, as they read the text they find in it a description of their own situation. They respond to religious and secular competitors in the same way that the earliest Christians to whom John wrote responded to danger, for there are, as has been demonstrated throughout, remarkable similarities in the *Sitz im Leben* of the two groups. The Brethren fit easily into Holland's four male archetypal reading groups as they write about the threat that Babylon poses and the response which

⁹⁰⁵ Louis A. Schmidt & Nathan A. Fox, 'Conceptual, Biological and Behavioral Distinctions Among Different Categories of Shy Children' in Louis A. Schmidt & Jay Schulkin (eds), pp 48-51.

the Brethren should take. With such terrifying images and hidden dangers permeating the book of Revelation it is perhaps only to be expected that a group like the Brethren should seek out safety and protection, and this they do. They fly away from Babylon, this world with its corrupt religion and confused doctrine, to the celestial nuptial embrace of Christ in the heavens.

Concluding Remarks

In the previous chapter the central importance of the doctrine of the secret rapture of the church in the Brethren movement was noted in detail. That the Brethren had such a doctrine has of course been noted before, and others have given some account and explanation of it, although some of the authors that have been examined above have not prior to this thesis been studied in detail before. However, such explanations have been largely related to tracing the historical antecedents of the theory and have hence placed its presence in the work of the early Brethren movement in an historical context. This thesis has done more. It has explained the origin, or at least the appeal, of the doctrine of the secret rapture within early Brethren circles by showing how both biological and psychological responses to the image of the Whore of Babylon found in Rev. 17-18 have directly influenced the development of this 'escapist' doctrine.

While there is no space here to argue this in detail, one potentially important contribution to learning that this thesis makes, therefore, is that it sheds light on the wider context of, and the reasons for, the appeal of the doctrine of the secret rapture in early Brethren sources. The importance of this finding is not limited to those concerned with Brethren history alone, for it is certainly the case that 'rapture culture' (as it has become known) is a significant force in the world today, especially in contemporary North American popular biblical exegesis. What should be noted here is that a clear trajectory of ideas can be traced from Darby, and his circle, and their biological and psychological reaction to the Babylon motif, to such commentators as Scofield, Gaebelain, Lindsey and LaHaye and Jenkins, who also, it may be argued, responded on both a physiological and

psychological level to the text and desired to be 'raptured' beyond the threats and dangers of their own day.

This thesis has also made a contribution to learning in a number of other ways. Perhaps most obviously in the very extensive archival research that has been undertaken, the extent of which will by now be apparent. This has brought to the surface substantial new factual information. From this information a number of hypotheses have emerged. For example, it has been shown that the Babylon motif has a significant impact on Brethren ecclesiology. The impact of the Babylon motif on Brethren ecclesiology is by no means less profound than the impact that the Babylon motif had on the formation of Brethren eschatology and the two-stage secret rapture doctrine. Just as the early Christian community for whom the Revelation was originally written used the text as a form of vituperative rhetoric to castigate their enemies both near and distant, both external and internal, so too the Brethren turned the text against their own enemies. The use of the text in this way is analogous to a series of concentric circles. Just as the closer to the 'fixed-point' or 'centre-point' each circle gets the smaller its circumference becomes, so too the exegesis of Babylon gets gradually more sectarian and exclusive as it becomes closer and closer to the author until what was once only an external and distant threat (Papal Rome) becomes a much more imminent threat (Protestantism). The rings of exegesis tighten and Babylon is then to be found *intra muros*, within the Brethren community itself in the form of confused doctrine.

The intention of this thesis has been to examine the use made of the Whore of Babylon motif and the influence that this image exerted upon the readers of that text, namely, the Christian Brethren of the nineteenth century. Such a thesis, embodying the

results of significant primary archival research, has been presented in the material above and is an original contribution to learning in that the use of the particular text of Rev. 17-18 within the specific community of the Brethren has not beforehand been undertaken. The work presented here is hence both comprehensive and original. Furthermore it is hoped that the data procured from the archive has been presented clearly, coherently and systematically. It should be noted that the Brethren authors were not short of things to say about Papal Rome, other Christian denominations, heresy and the world in which they lived. However, this thesis has been confined solely to those publications which explicitly connect such things with 'Babylon the Great'. Thus whilst the strength of the scope of the thesis is in its broadness and comprehensiveness, some claim to exhaustiveness can be made as every reference made to Babylon from Brethren authors in the specified time period has been examined in terms of what may reasonably be expected within the confines of the appropriate period of research required for the degree.

Whereas traditional historical-critical writings on Revelation follow a somewhat standard outline, this thesis has foregone such a structure, for the argument has centred upon a well-defined community of readers and the use made of a specific text by those largely non-critical, albeit intelligent, readers. Thus traditional historical-critical issues relating to the origin of the book of Revelation and its own *Sitz im Leben* have been of only limited importance and little space has been given over to them. It is, however, of utmost importance to note that the Brethren writers examined above had a *Sitz im Leben* that was, in many ways, similar to that of the community to which John originally wrote his Revelation, and because of this the Brethren were drawn into John's apocalyptic, visionary world in such a way, and to such an extent, as to see the great end-time enemy

called 'Babylon' all around them. John Wesley's remarks on the book of Revelation are relevant here: 'It was given to a banished man; and men in affliction understand and relish it most'.⁹⁰⁶ The Brethren also perceived themselves both spatially and temporally (i.e. as a true remnant, end-time church) as a banished and afflicted community.

No claim to absolute originality can be made for the first two chapters of the thesis. Rather, these narrowly focused chapters were designed primarily to set the context of that which followed so that the Brethren readings examined later in the thesis could be placed in a much broader theoretical framework. However, the use of reader-response theories when applied to the Revelation in general and Babylon in particular has enabled the connection of previously unrelated facts and methodologies in a novel way. As such the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis comes to the fore even at such an early stage of the work.

In chapter three, a systematic overview of the exegesis of the Babylon text, an historical survey of the afterlife of the Whore of Babylon motif from the second to nineteenth century CE was carried out. In that chapter all the various ways (but by no means all the various interpreters) in which the text has been historically interpreted have been elucidated, and the conclusion was made that the standard interpretation was, historically, of Babylon as a cryptogram for Pagan or Imperial Rome in the Pre-Reformation time period, and of Papal Rome in the Post-Reformation era. A number of less common interpretations did exist, and these were investigated as they arose. Such a chapter helped us note the similarities and differences in the underlying thought patterns of Christian writers throughout the history of the church and then enabled us to see precisely where the Brethren writers fitted onto the hermeneutical map.

⁹⁰⁶ John Wesley, *Wesley's Notes on the New Testament* (Nicholson & Sons, n.d.), p. 622.

Chapter four briefly tracked the major people and events associated with the origins of the Christian Brethren movement in order to make the *Sitz im Leben* of the readers there examined plain. This was an important chapter for in the overall process of reading it was noted that the reader approaches the text from within a very specific social, religious and historical context and that this context will affect in significant ways how the text functions within the community. These preliminary chapters also enabled the question of how Brethren exegesis related to that of those who went before them to be answered.

Chapters five to nine of this thesis are its heart. These chapters have yielded the fruits of a detailed examination of the archival material and, it is suggested, are an original contribution to learning. Chapter five revealed that, for the Brethren authors, Babylon was Papal Rome. The conclusion made from such an identification was that this exegesis enabled them to identify themselves with the broader Protestant interpretive community's normative hermeneutical schema. A form of Fish's reader-response critique was used to explain why the Brethren identified Babylon in this way. However, the Brethren authors did break some new ground insofar as they did not identify Babylon as *the* Pope or *a* Pope in an individualistic sense, but rather as the whole Papal system. Furthermore the Brethren projected the fulfilment of the passage into the future, albeit very near future, unlike the Protestant Reformers before them, who, although interpreting this passage as being Papal, did so according to a historicist rather than futurist framework. A futurist hermeneutic made such an identification rather vague, unspecific and difficult to prove wrong on an historical level. It was shown in that chapter that the Brethren used the Whore of Babylon motif as a form of vituperative rhetoric, to castigate

the extreme outsider: Papal Rome. The language of 'Babylon' was extremely useful to the Brethren in this vitriolic activity.

In chapter six the concentric hermeneutical circles tightened, for in that chapter it was shown that the Brethren also interpreted Babylon as all of corrupt Christendom. Babylon, for the Brethren, was not just a symbol of the Roman church but of every other church (except the Brethren church of course). Textually, the reason for this was to be found in a literalist reading of the word 'mother' in Rev. 17:5, which the Brethren presumed must mean that Babylon had given birth to other corrupt churches. The reason for such an identification, it was suggested in that chapter, was because of a highly sectarian ecclesiology. Chapters five and six, when taken together, demonstrated how the Brethren used the Whore of Babylon motif, *extra muros*, to define the 'self' through vilifying the 'religious other'. However, whereas in the previous chapter the distant outsider (Papal Rome) was the Babylonian enemy, in chapter six the accusation becomes closer, directed at the nearest outsider, other Protestant denominations, whom the Brethren traduced using the convenient language John had provided in Rev. 17-18.

Chapter seven examined the identification of Babylon in Brethren writings as doctrinal confusion. Babylon was, for the Brethren, a metaphor or symbol for either believing, holding onto or accepting corrupt or heretical doctrinal teaching. For Darby and the Exclusives this identification of Babylon became the basis for the 'Doctrine of Contamination' theory, which gave biblical sanction to that group to excommunicate individuals and whole congregations who held onto any perceived unorthodox teachings. This interpretation had strong implications in the formation of Brethren sectarian factions who placed a high importance on the 'correct' interpretation of Scripture. In that chapter

we saw the way that the Brethren used the Whore of Babylon motif, *intra muros*, to define the 'self' through vilifying the 'epistemological other' or the enemy within. Babylon was contagious and her germs of heretical doctrine could be transmitted from individual to individual and congregation to congregation, and thus she must be avoided at all costs.

Chapter eight was devoted to secular identifications of Babylon in Brethren sources. In general terms it became clear that Babylon represented worldliness, but a number of authors took up a few more specific secular interpretations, including the antitypical idea of the geographical kingdom of Babylon *redivivus*, and indeed some were so specific in their interpretation that contemporaneous events such as the Great Exhibition were held to be the literal fulfilment of prophecy. It was concluded in that chapter that due to a high priority placed on the corruption of the world, and the perceived corruption of all other churches, the call of Revelation 18:4: to 'Come out of her' formed something of a *Clavis Interpretum* to understanding Brethren Ecclesiology. The findings of this chapter were related to the general body of knowledge in the subject insofar as anthropological and sociological theories, normally used for examining cultures, were applied to explain how the Brethren used the Whore of Babylon motif to define the 'self' through vilifying the 'secular other'. In that chapter it was shown that in the interplay between the text, the reader and the context in which the reading takes place, it is often far from clear which has the upper hand in the determination of presumed 'meaning'. What was clear was that Brethren eschatology was feeding Brethren ecclesiology to the extent that a picture developed of an end-time, true remnant

church who have to stand against the world in order to retain their status as a pure bride awaiting Christ's imminent return.

Chapter nine focused on the response that needs to be made to the previously identified religious, epistemological and secular 'other'. The key, again, is Revelation 18:4: 'come out of her'. It was suggested that the secret rapture doctrine which was developed and popularised to a wide audience through Brethren authors, emerged as a direct result of Brethren exegesis of the Babylon motif. Although the rapture doctrine may not have had its sole origin with the work of the Brethren, it was they who gave it a real presence in the millennial marketplace and a solid, internally logical and consistent scriptural basis through their use of Babylon. Here we see a real example of the *Wirkungsgeschichte* or 'impact' of a text on a community, rather than simply 'use' or *Auslegungsgeschichte*, for the reason this eschatological doctrine was formulated and developed by the Brethren can be understood as a direct 'fight or flight' response in biological terms to the Whore of Babylon and also as a psychological 'fear-fantasy' response to the text.

These archival chapters do not, therefore, break new ground only by presenting new information from previously unexamined sources; they also contribute to knowledge in that various methodologies have been applied to the reading of Rev. 17-18 connecting together previously unrelated facts in an interdisciplinary way. Methodological approaches from anthropology, sociology, psychology, and even biology have been applied to both the text examined and the group studied.

Throughout this thesis the Brethren have been in focus, though much of what has been said above will have been of value in the broader context of 'sectarian' biblical exegesis more generally.

For modern students of theology, steeped in the techniques of the historical-critical school, and who have learnt to maintain a professional distance from the text, the question of how Brethren exegesis may be of relevance to the present day and of what can be learnt from those Brethren authors is a difficult question to answer. One may learn from their zealous inaugurated eschatology that to live one's life on earth as though each day may be the last is to bring purpose and reason into each day, whilst to live one's life with the heartfelt assurance that death is not the end of life may bring hope to those who are suffering or have been bereaved. One may learn from the passion of early Brethren ecclesiology something of the fellowship that can come from breaking down denominational barriers and joining together in an ecumenical celebration of faith. From their sectarian ecclesiological tendencies, however, one may learn something of how quickly such utopian ideals can disintegrate and of how the language of Revelation can be used, not to bring hope and comfort, but to castigate and vilify those who practise a different form of Christianity or hold different beliefs about their faith. The thesis has raised some difficult questions regarding the ethics of reading, for those who would argue that the 'true' meaning of the text is in no way confined by the intentions of the author have to contend with the moral problem of the text being used in such vitriolic ways.

And so to conclude; notable Baptist author C.H. Spurgeon long ago remarked: 'Ye men of Plymouth, why stand ye gazing into heaven?'⁹⁰⁷ This thesis has at least given a partial explanation for such a heavenly preoccupation. As the authors examined above

⁹⁰⁷ C.H. Spurgeon, 'Lectures to my Students', 2nd series (1893), p. 36. In Coad (1968), p. 265.

struggled to find their place in this world, replete as it was with danger, risk and fear, they too, like the first apostles in the book of Acts (cf. Acts 1:11) turned their eyes skywards, and believing that there would be no amelioration of the current world situation, they awaited their rapture and consequent millennial bliss.

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