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Imagining the Apocalypse

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Different portrayals of visions from the Apocalypse exhibit particular 'readings' of the text and reflect some of the contrasting exegetical approaches familiar to biblical exegetes. The article surveys the various ways in which artists have sought to enter into, and re-express, the content and character of the visions of John, offers synchronic interpretations of the Apocalypse, gives varying interpretations of the four horsemen, explores the dialectic between heaven and earth in ecclesial and eschatological readings, and engages in political interpretations of the Apocalypse. Historical analogies are offered in order to compare the exercise of imagination in art with other examples of visualizing biblical texts.

Working on the reception history of the Apocalypse over the last five years has underlined for me that there are few biblical books that have been illustrated more than the Apocalypse, and the reasons why it has an important place in art history.[1] The text, full as it is of indicators of colour and movement, as well as images themselves, has understandably prompted translation into visual representations. The visions of the Apocalypse are, to quote Mary Carruthers's translation of an illuminator of a Beatus Apocalypse commentary, 'picture-making words' (*verba mirifica storiarum*).[2]

The different portrayals exhibit particular 'readings' of the texts. Painters read the text, and their translation of the text involves visualizing objectively the problem posed by their reading of the text. The image in a painting is in a sense a

1 G. Schiller, *Ikonographie der christlichen Kunst* (5 vols; Gutersloh: Gerd Mohn, 1990) 5, part 1; R. K. Emmerson and B. McGinn, eds, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1992); J. F. Hamburger, *St John the Divine: The Deified Evangelist in Medieval Art and Theology* (Berkeley: University of California, 2002); J. F. Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York: Zone, 1998); F. Van der Meer, *Apocalypse: Visions from the Book of Revelation in Western Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978); F. Carey, ed., *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come* (London: British Museum, 1999); K. Lewis, 'John on Patmos and the Painters', *ARTS: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies* (1993) 18–23; J. Kovacs and C. Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004).

2 M. Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought: Meditation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1998) 152–3.

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solution to the interpretative problem posed by their reading of the text. For those of us who see the artists' pictures, we encounter the result of their reading and pictorial exegesis. How the image affects us is the result of what the painter enables the beholder to discern about the meaning of the text.[3] Consideration of pictures of biblical subjects suggests some of the contrasting exegetical approaches familiar to biblical exegetes. This essay is, therefore, an essay on the character of biblical exegesis through the medium of pictures.[4] The pictures are not shown in chronological order; they are taken entirely from Western Christianity (there is nothing reflecting the iconography of the Southern hemisphere or the East); and the latest is dated 1809. Only one of the artists, William Blake, might be considered a representative of the popular culture of his day.[5] In only two cases have I paused over the social and political context, not because I think such questions are unimportant, but because it would be impossible in the space available to have attended to such issues in the case of all 14 pictures.

I shall consider first the various ways in which artists have sought to enter into, and re-express, the content and character of the visions of John (the seer). I shall then consider four different interpretative approaches to 'imagining the Apocalypse': synchronic interpretations; varying depictions of the four horsemen and the influence of the work of Albrecht Dürer; the dialectic between heaven and earth in ecclesial and eschatological readings; and Joachim of Fiore's *figurae* and related political interpretations of the Apocalypse. The essay finishes with some brief suggestions that offer historical examples by way of analogy. The philosophical and hermeneutical questions are also important, and I am grateful for the issues that have been raised by experts in aesthetics and art history, as well as for the suggestive comments by Eva Maria Räpple in her recent book on art and the Apocalypse.[6] By means of my historical analogies I wish to compare the exercise of imagination in art with other examples of visualizing biblical texts.

1 John, the seer

Jean Duvet was court goldsmith to the French kings. His illustrations of the whole of the Apocalypse were completed at the end of his life. They are, to vary-

3 P. Berdini, 'Jacopo Bassano: A Case for Painting as Visual Exegesis', *Interpreting Christian Art* (ed. H. J. Hornik and M. C. Parsons; Macon, GA: Mercer University, 2003) 169–86.

4 The pictures included in this article (pp. 317–23) are of images which are not freely available on the web. Location references are given, but users of Google's image search will know how easy it is to find most of the images discussed. Thanks are due to the British Museum, the National Gallery, London, the Stadtbibliothek, Trier, and Corpus Christi College, Oxford, for permission to use the images contained in this article.

5 E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993); J. Mee, *Dangerous Enthusiasm* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

6 E. M. Räpple, *The Metaphor of the City in the Apocalypse of John* (New York: Lang, 2004).

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ing degrees, inspired by Dürer's sequence. In some ways, in their relationship to Dürer's sequence, they parallel the representation in visionary art of the way prophetic texts such as Ezekiel and Daniel are reproduced in the Apocalypse. Yet unlike Dürer's engravings, Duvet's are a jumble of figures and the confusion of things earthly and heavenly. In the opening engraving of his Apocalypse sequence, 'Duvet as John on Patmos' (Fig. 1; British Museum, 1555), Duvet imagines himself in the role of the ancient visionary as he attempts to give objective expression in his engravings to the way in which he 'sees' John's visions. Duvet represents himself as John on Patmos, with a particular affinity with the aged John: 'Jean Duvet aged seventy has completed these histories in 1555 . . . The fates are pressing; already the hands tremble and the sight fails, yet the mind remains victorious and the great work is completed.'[7] While this is most obviously a reference to his age, one cannot exclude the possibility that, like many others in the sixteenth century, he thought that the eschatological events were likely to happen in his own day. On an open book near Duvet is the Apocalypse of St John, and in the bottom left corner is written: 'the sacred mysteries contained in this and the other following tablets are derived from the divine Revelation of John and are closely adapted to the true letter of the text with the judgement of more learned men brought to bear'. Note the reference to the 'true letter of the text', which Duvet hoped to expound in his Apocalypse engravings, perhaps a reflection of the fact that he spent time in Calvin's Geneva and was well acquainted with protestant exegesis. His illustrations, then, involve a 're-seeing' of John's vision, as one old man enters into the visions of another, and into that sense of crisis and impending doom.[8]

The depiction of John's call experience by Hieronymus Bosch ('St John on Patmos', Berlin Gemäldegalerie, *c.*1460/1510) contrasts with the Duvet engraving.[9] A young-looking John, with a background of fifteenth-century Netherlands, looks up at the Woman Clothed with the Sun. The vision of the Woman (Rev 12.1) appears in a circular form in the top left corner of the picture, as with several other contemporary depictions.[10] John gazes in rapt attention while around him, just visible over his shoulder, are scenes of destruction inspired by the various destruction sequences in the Apocalypse (Rev 6.8–9, 16). The scenes are restrained compared with other Bosch pictures, and indeed contrast with the reverse of this

7 Cf. Eusebius, *HE* III.23.1–4.

8 Similarly, among twentieth-century painters mention should be made of the apocalyptic character of the painting of Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944). Kandinsky felt himself led by a prophetic vocation in his artistic work: R. Heller, 'Kandinsky and Traditions Apocalyptic', *Art Journal* 43 (1983) 19–26; Carey, *The Apocalypse and the Shape of Things to Come*, 276–9.

9 http://www.apocalyptic-theories.com/gallery/patmos/boschjohn.jpg.

10 J. Drury, *Painting the Word: Christian Pictures and their Meanings* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1999) 174–5.

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picture, where what appear to be sea monsters surround a depiction of the crucifixion.

Within the structure of the painting itself, the tree establishes the vertical relationship between heaven and earth. Contrasts are evident in the picture, for example between light and darkness, between the celestial vision (top left) and the demonic (bottom right), and between the pale angel and the dark tree. John is accompanied by creatures, a bird (a raven, perhaps a link with the Elijah story) and a little wasp-like figure. The bird and the figure appear to be in a kind of stand-off, eyeing each other. The former is seemingly keeping guard over the means whereby the revelation will be communicated in pen and ink. The sublime moment appears to be, therefore, also one of threat. The insect-like figure wears spectacles, evincing the air of a gently sceptical observer who might have a question about the authenticity or validity of the vision. The potentially diabolical threat arising from such openness to prophetic inspiration is something very much to the fore in several of Bosch's depictions of the lives of saints. In 'The Temptation of St Anthony' (Museu Nacional de Arte, Lisbon), for example, the saint's spiritual torments are even more graphically displayed.

Diego Velázquez's work ('St John the Evangelist on the Island of Patmos', National Gallery, London, 1618) is one of a pair of pictures.[11] In this picture the focus of attention is on John the visionary. John's vision of the Woman Clothed with the Sun, only barely visible in the top left, is given full pictorial presentation by Velázquez in a companion picture, the Immaculate Conception. This he painted for the Convent of the Carmelites in Seville at around the same time he painted 'John on Patmos'.[12] It is a young, virile John who confronts us in the portrait. The characteristic depictions of the eschatological events are replaced by allusions to the ecstatic nature of John's experience. The picture illustrates two different aspects of the vision: John as the medium of the visionary experience, and John as the great authority of the writing of the heavenly revelations from Jesus Christ. Velázquez depicts John 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day', with eyes suggesting a visionary trance.[13] Gone is the general, social backdrop of northern Europe evident in the Bosch painting. All we have is the ecstatic prophet with a bare background, with the tree which appears in so many of the pictures of John on Patmos. The attendant eagle is on John's right, with the prophet illuminated by the light of vision. John fills the whole picture, indicating a focus on John's psyche as the context for the vision.[14]

11 http://www.biblical-art.com/artist_artwork.asp?id_artist=772&alt=2&pagenum=1.

12 Drury, *Painting the Word*.

13 Cf. *Asc. Isa.* 6.10.

14 H. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002) 44–50.

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Velázquez's picture seems to reflect the command to write in the ecstatic state. It may indeed suggest a form of automatic writing, as the words are written on the empty page. These words are, of course, the divine words, as the near-final words of the Apocalypse indicate (Rev 22.18). What are the books we see at John's feet? Are they part of the revelation that he saw, or other books, perhaps the other Johannine texts, or even biblical books, now made obsolete by the new revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev 1.1–2; cf. 22.18)? This may indeed be suggested by the dead tree standing behind John, from which some new growth is just evident, symbolic of the new prophetic revelation that has come to this new prophet.

2 Synchronic interpretations

I turn now to two depictions which illustrate the way in which artistic interpretations exemplify a familiar exegetical approach to the Apocalypse. Synchronic reading, in which the sevenfold sequences of chapters 6–9 and 16 are considered to overlap in some way, has been advocated by many interpreters down the centuries. It was championed by the influential English interpreter of the Apocalypse Joseph Mede in his *Clavis Apocalyptica* at the beginning of the seventeenth century.[15] Pictorial representations can capture this way of reading by allowing the eye to comprehend the visionary scenes together. This is particularly well illustrated by Hans Memling's altar piece ('St John on Patmos', Altar Piece of St John, Bruges, 1479). This also includes the beheading of John the Baptist on the left panel, and, in the centre, features the Virgin and child attended by John the Baptist and John the Evangelist, as well as St Barbara and St Catherine.[16] In the right panel we have several scenes from the early part of the vision of John on Patmos. These embrace chapters 1–12 only. The four horsemen of chapter 6 are evident in the foreground, while the vision of heavenly worship in chapter 4 dominates the picture. The apocalyptic panorama leaves the visionary confronted by the welter of images, recording what he sees in the best order that he can, moving from the origin of divine purposes in heaven, via the four horsemen, and back up to the Woman pursued by the dragon in heaven in the top right part of the picture.

In the first of two of his pictures of the Whore of Babylon (Fig. 2; British Museum, 1809), the English artist, engraver and poet William Blake underscores the close links between the iniquity of Babylon and the death and destruction described in the previous chapters, especially the trumpet (Rev 8–11) and bowl (16) sequences.[17] In Rev 17.4 we read: 'The woman was holding in her hand a golden cup full of her abominations and the impurities of her fornication.' The cup which

15 J. Mede, *Clavis apocalyptica* (Cambridge: Buck, 1632).

16 http://www.brugge.be/Musea/en/mmemec.htm.

17 http://www.ldolphin.org/whore.jpg.

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Babylon holds in her hand is full of the violence and destruction described in the bowls sequence which immediately precedes Rev 17. The sequence of disasters that has been described by John earlier in the vision is linked with the political violence caused by the culture of Babylon and outlined in chapters 17–19. The picture suggests – and Babylon points in this direction – the retrospective character of the reading of the Apocalypse, in which the violence of the bowl and trumpet sequences is read in the light of the imperial pretensions and oppressive activity of Babylon and the Beast. The Apocalypse offered Blake, a self-styled prophet, the inspiration to challenge the political apathy of his own day and what he considered the blasphemous link between religion and violence (what he called 'religion hid in war').

3 The four horsemen and the influence of A. Dürer

Alternative exegetical possibilities connected with the opening of Rev 6 may be discerned in both Albrecht Dürer's 'The Four Horsemen' (1497–8) and, from a much earlier period, the Trier Apocalypse (ninth century).[18] Dürer's sequence separates image and text, so that the former becomes a self-contained version of John's Apocalypse, a new imagining of its contents, rather than just a guide or illustration of the written text. In the Dürer engraving, the four horsemen ride together. His undifferentiated depiction of them as harbingers of doom has been influential on the interpretation of the four horsemen ever since (although Dürer was probably dependent on the Koberger Bible, 1483). For example, Luther's interpretation in his 1530 Preface parallels Dürer in interpreting the four horsemen as different aspects of the future tribulations.[19]

In the Trier Apocalypse, however (Fig. 3), things appear to be different. The ninth-century Trier Apocalypse is one of the earliest illuminated Apocalypse manuscripts. Its roots may take us back to sixth-century Italy, meaning that the manuscript may reflect accurately the iconography of three centuries before.[20] The rider on the white horse stands alone, receiving a crown of honour (Rev 6.2), similar in shape to those cast down before God by the elders around the throne in the depiction of Rev 4. This differentiation distinguishes the work from other depictions. It reflects ancient Christian commentary on this figure, dating back at least to Victorinus's commentary. Here the opening of the first seal prompts the going forth of the first of the horsemen, which is said to refer to the coming of the

18 http://www.apocalipsis.org/artwork/durer4horse.html.

19 M. Karrer, 'Ein optisches Instrument in der Hand der Leser: Wirkungsgeschichte und Auslegung der Apokalypse' (forthcoming).

20 P. Klein in Emmerson and McGinn, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, 176.

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Christian gospel into the world.[21] With this it links with Rev 19.11–16, with which Rev 6.2 has so much in common.[22]

4 The dialectic of heaven and earth in the ecclesial and eschatological reading of Revelation

Apocalyptic dualism offered early Christian writers the opportunity to portray existence under God as a two-level drama in which things in heaven are in dialectical relationship with things on earth.[23] This heaven/earth dialectic is nowhere better seen than in Rev 12.10–12. Trier's depiction of the heavenly vision of the Woman Clothed with the Sun (Fig. 4) indicates this 'two-level' drama in the way the picture is divided by a line into two parts. What happens in heaven reflects, and indeed may affect, those on earth: note that the tail of the dragon swishing towards John results in the persecution of the seer by the soldiers, who move towards him.

A similar interplay between heaven and earth is suggested by the lead figure in El Greco's 'The Opening of the Fifth Seal' (Museum of Fine Art, New York, 1604–8).[24] The need for clothing of the martyred souls under the altar (Rev 6.9) reflects the concern about nakedness that Paul expresses so much horror about in 2 Cor 5.2. The synergism between the martyr and heaven is an important martyrological theme and one that permeates the Apocalypse.[25] Whether or not El Greco intended this, we may discern that his main figure stretches between earth and a forbidding-looking heaven, a heaven permeated with an increasing sense of foreboding engendered by the opening of the previous four seals.

Another example of the creative interaction between earth and heaven is found in van Eyck's altar piece 'The Adoration of the Lamb' (Cathedral of St Bavo, Ghent).[26] This is part of a backdrop to the eucharistic celebration, a complex of

21 'Christ's coming is the revelation of the meaning of the Old Testament in the person of Jesus Christ: . . . after our Lord ascended into heaven, he opened all things and sent the Holy Spirit, whose words, like seals, reached the human heart through preachers and overcame unbelief . . . [T]he white horse is the word of preaching sent to the world with the Holy Spirit . . .' (A. Roberts and J. Donaldson, eds, *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (10 vols; Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, 1994) 7.350). This is largely Jerome's revision of Victorinus's commentary. See further, Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation,* 79.

22 The Douce Apocalypse has a Christ-like rider on the fourth horse, harrowing hell. (S. Lewis, *Reading Images: Narrative Discourse and Reception in the Thirteenth-Century Illuminated Apocalypse* [Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1995] 85).

23 J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991) 381–405.

24 http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/exhibitions/default.htm.

25 A. Y. Collins, 'The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John', *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996) 187–217.

26 http://members.lycos.nl/manchicourt/images/Van_Eyck_Gent_Polyptych_Adoration_Lamb_opened.JPG.

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pictures which includes God enthroned in glory attended by the Virgin and John the Baptist, and Adam and Eve. Below this scene, and including side panels, crowds converge on the Lamb on the altar, who pours forth his blood for the faithful. In the foreground is the fountain of life, explicitly identified by words around its edge in Latin inspired by Rev 22.1 and 7.17: 'hic est fons aque vite de sede dei et agni'. Inscribed on the altar are the words of John the Baptist in John 1.29. This interpretation roots the relevance of the Apocalypse for the church in the present time and represents a version of the ecclesial reading of the Apocalypse prevalent from the time of Origen, and particularly well exemplified in Tyconius's apocalyptic hermeneutic.[27]

Sandro Botticelli's 'Mystic Nativity' (Fig. 5; National Gallery, London, 1500) is unlike all the other paintings, with the possible exception of the Joachim *figurae*, to which we shall turn in a moment.[28] It is an allegorical reading of the text rather than an attempt at literal depiction. The picture is a nativity scene – not, apparently, anything to do with the Apocalypse. But appearances can be deceptive. A closer look reveals something without parallel in Botticelli's other works: an explanation. The heading, in Greek capitals, explicitly links the picture with Rev 11–12, in addition to the political upheavals in Italy and specifically Florence which came about as a result of the apocalyptic preaching of Girolamo Savonarola:

> ΤΑΥΤΗΝ ΓΡΑΦΗΝ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΤΕΛΕΙ ΤΟΥ Χ ΣΣΣΣΣ ΕΤΟΥΣ ΕΝ ΤΑΙΣ ΤΑΡ[ΑΧΑΙΣ] ΤΗΣ ΙΤΑΛΙΑΣ ΑΛΕΞΑΝΔΡΟΣ ΕΓΩ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΜΕΤΑ ΧΡΟΝΟΝ ΗΜΙΧΡΟΝΩ ΕΓΡΑΦΟΝ ΠΑΡΑ ΤΟ ΕΝΔΕΚΑΤΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΑΠΟΚΑΛΥΨΕΩΣ Β· ΟΥΑΙ ΕΝ ΤΗ ΛΥΣΕΙ ΤΩΝ Γ ΚΑΙ ΗΜΙΣΥ ΕΤΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΔΙΑΒΟΛΟΥ ΕΠΕΙΤΑ ΔΕΣΜΟΘΗΣΕΤΑΙ ΕΝ ΤΩ ΙΒ ΚΑΙ ΒΛΕΨΟΜΕΝ [ΤΑΦΗΣΟΜΕ-/ΠΑΤΟΥΜΕ-] ΝΟΝ ΟΜΟΙΟΝ ΤΗ ΓΡΑΦΗ ΤΑΥΤΗ
>
> I, Alexandros, was painting this picture at the end of the year 1500 in the [troubles] of Italy in the half time after the time according to the chapter of St John in the second woe of the Apocalypse in the loosing of the devil for three and a half years. Then he will be chained, and we shall see him [about to be buried/trodden down] as in this picture.[29]

27 Such eucharistic piety is paralleled in the central role Dürer gives to the Lamb, whose blood is shed into a chalice held by a cardinal (Plate 12, illustrating Rev 14; Van der Meer, *Apocalypse*, 301). Cf. the Bamberg Bible, 339, where the lamb is juxtaposed with a chalice. On Tyconius, see W. S. Babcock, *The Book of Rules* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1989).

28 http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/WebMedia/Images/10/NG1034/mNG1034.jpg.

29 Davies rejects the suggestion of the reading ΠΑΤΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ as he believes that the first letter is an Σ and the third likely to be Φ; *National Gallery Catalogues*, 104–5. Close examination of the picture suggests that the opening letters are either ΠΑ, ΤΑ, or ΤΥ, with the possibility of the third letter being Φ, which may later have been expunged. Nigel Wilson, therefore, prefers the reading ΤΑΦΗΣΟΜΕΝΟΝ ('Greek Inscriptions on Renaissance Paintings', *Italia medioevale e umanistica* 35 [1992] 215–52), and it is this reading that has

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'The Mystic Nativity', like the damaged 'Mystical Crucifixion' (Fogg Art Museum, Harvard), reflects the critical challenge that Botticelli believed faced Florence in 1500. The time in which Botticelli found himself, 1500 years after the birth of Christ, was, he believed, one which stood on the brink of the new age. The inscription implies that, within a period of perhaps two years, a reign of peace would occur. Three years before Botticelli painted the picture, Savonarola had been executed and burnt at the stake in the streets of Florence for prophesying 'new doctrines'. Though the section dealing with the witnesses is not explicitly mentioned in the inscription, this might have been taken as the martyrdom of the faithful witnesses predicted in Rev 11. Admittedly, there is no contemporary evidence that links Savonarola with the two witnesses of Rev 11, despite him often being identified with several biblical prophets.[30] The effects of Savonarola's preaching nonetheless lived on. Botticelli's brother was an enthusiastic supporter, and Sandro may have been influenced, at least in general terms, by the Dominican's eschatological preaching. There is little in the picture linking it explicitly to Savonarola's doctrines. Indeed, Savonarola preached the need for penitence as a condition for the coming of eschatological bliss. The general tenor of the inscription does, though, relate in general terms with Savonarolan Florence. What is more, there is some evidence that the painting may have been done for a family that was sympathetic to Savonarola.[31]

Botticelli reads Rev 11–12 as a prophecy of the eschatological realities of his day, in which the period of the Antichrist prefigures the return of the Messiah and the overcoming of the powers of darkness.[32] In the inscription he links the ascent of the beast from the bottomless pit in 11.7 with the loosing of the devil after the millennium (20.3, 7). In this he may also be drawing on the Augustinian interpretation of Rev 20.2–10 in *The City of God*, where the binding of Satan (20.1–3) has already taken place, with the first coming of Christ. Botticelli writes of the second woe of 11.14, after which, in Rev 11, the loud voices in heaven proclaim that the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of the Lord and of the Messiah. It is the coming of this kingdom that is signified in the vision of the woman in Rev 12

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been used in most recent translations. Another possibility is that there may have been a correction of an original ΤΑΦ– to ΠΑ–. On this see also D. Weinstein, *Savonarola and Florence: Prophecy and Patriotism in the Renaissance* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 1970) 334; R. M. Steinberg, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola, Florentine Art, and Renaissance Historiography* (Athens, GA: Ohio University, 1977) 79.

30 Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 105.

31 Ibid., 103–6; Steinberg, *Fra Girolamo Savonarola*, 77–81.

32 Davies misses the obvious sense of eschatological fulfilment evident in Rev 12: Davies, *National Gallery Catalogues*, 105.

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who gives birth to the Messiah.[33] The bruising of the serpent's head of Gen 3.15 may be depicted in the form of the little beaten devils which crawl away into their holes, reflecting Rev 6.15.[34]

Compared to the depictions in his other paintings, one can see something very stylized in Botticelli's depiction of the nativity scene. Here, the antique style may be a way of suggesting the picture's allegorical character. The picture relates Christ's first coming to his imminent, eschatological coming. In it, we the viewers are led up the path to the central scene, framed by the dawn sky. The appearance of the morning star, a familiar messianic symbol (Rev 22.16; Luke 1.78), is now focused on the birth of the Woman Clothed with the Sun in the centre of the picture. The embrace of angels and humans sees Florentines rejoicing with the heavenly world at the millennial glory that is to be revealed, and the inscriptions on the scrolls, where legible, link with Luke 2.14 particularly, as well as lauding the Blessed Virgin Mary. The demons scurry to find their holes in the ground in which to hide (Rev 6.16); past and present are brought together as Florence becomes the epicentre of the apocalyptic deliverance that is about to come upon the world. Like Milton after him, Botticelli interprets the first coming of Christ as itself an eschatological event, in which the powers of darkness are overcome and a new age begins.[35]

5 Joachim of Fiore and political readings of the Apocalypse

Joachim of Fiore is one of the most remarkable exegetes of the Apocalypse, and his influence after his death at the end of the twelfth century has been immense.[36] Joachim restored to the theological agenda a reading of the

33 The millennial significance of Rev 12 as a fulfilment of Gen 3 and a reversal of the fall can be found acted out much later in the way the English prophetess Joanna Southcott believed in 1814 that, as the Woman Clothed with the Sun, she was about to give birth to the Messiah and act out that peculiar role reserved for a woman in bruising the serpent's head. See J. K. Hopkins, *A Woman to Deliver Her People: Joanna Southcott and English Millenarianism in an Era of Revolution* (Austin: University of Texas, 1982).

34 This connection would have added weight if we reconstruct the missing words in the damaged last line of the inscription in the way I have conjectured reading ΠΑΤΟΥΜΕΝΟΝ.

35 Milton writes of 'dissolv[ing] / Satan with his perverted world, then raise / From the conflagrant mass, purged and refined / New heav'ns, new earth, ages of endless date / Founded in righteousness and peace and love, / To bring forth fruits, joy and eternal bliss' (*Paradise Lost*, xii.546–51). Cf. 'Ode on the Morning of Christ's Nativity', xviii.168: 'The Old Dragon under ground, in straiter limits bound'.

36 An introduction to Joachim's thought may be found in Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Later Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1969) 3–132. On the later appropriation of the Apocalypse in circles influenced by Joachim, see D. Burr, *Olivi's Peaceable Kingdom: A Reading of the Apocalypse Commentary* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1993).

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Apocalypse, discredited since the abandonment of the this-worldly eschatology of early Christianity, that saw its images as relating to the scheme of human history. In so doing, Joachim challenged the hegemony of the Augustinian reading of the Apocalypse, which had more or less held sway from the fifth century. This saw much of the Apocalypse as referring to events beyond history, or to the life of the Church.

Apart from his commentary on the Apocalypse, in his later years Joachim complemented his written expositions of the Apocalypse with pictures and diagrams (*figurae*), which encapsulate his beliefs about history and salvation.[37] Most of Joachim's remarkable representations concern the nature of history, and apply particularly to his distinctive typological interpretation. Rev 12.3 provided the inspiration for one of Joachim's most graphic *figurae*, The Red Seven-headed Dragon (Fig. 6; Corpus Christi College, Oxford, late twelfth century).[38] This is an example of the reading of John's visions sequentially, in which the order of the text of Rev 12 relates directly to historical events leading up to the eschatological age. In this approach, Joachim anticipates the consistently sequential interpretation of the Apocalypse pioneered by Alexander the Minorite in the thirteenth century, evident iconographically in a fifteenth-century German altar piece by Master Bertram, now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.[39]

Joachim's dragon has seven heads, the sixth of which is Saladin.[40] Saladin is singled out as contemporary, since only this head is crowned, with one yet to come. The tail of the dragon is Gog. Between the long necks of the dragon's heads appear captions detailing the seven persecutions of the church and suggesting a millennial period of peace after Christ's defeat of the last head, before the final mysterious appearance of Gog, the tail.[41] The millennium is placed between the two last and the final, worst manifestation of Antichrist, symbolized by the tail of the dragon. This roughly corresponds to the pattern in Rev 20. Joachim relates the pressing crisis of his own time to eschatological times, when the Church's tribulation would reach its height. In his interpretation there is a recognition that the threat from Antichrist is both eschatological and historical. What will be the case at the end time has always been a constant part of human history.

The second of Joachim's *figurae* offers an example of the way in which the eschatological future of Rev 21–22 is construed. In it we have a monastic-inspired

37 M. Reeves and B. Hirsch-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972).

38 http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/apocalypse/explanation/joachim.html.

39 C. Kauffmann, *An Altar Piece of the Apocalypse from Master Bertram's Workshop in Hamburg* (London: HMSO, 1968).

40 The first four are Herod, Nero, Constantius and Cosdore, king of Persia; the fifth is a king of Babylon, a Muslim king.

41 Reeves and Hirsch-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore*, plates 21 and 146–152; cf. B. McGinn, *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism* (3 vols; New York: Continuum, 2000) 2.302.

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'heaven on earth' evident in the New Jerusalem (Fig. 7; Corpus Christi College, Oxford, late twelfth century). It is a plan for the new society of the third age.[42] In the centre is the four-square pattern of John's city (21.16). The arms of a cross contain four quarters for the monastic residents of the celestial city; each is associated with one of the four living creatures of Rev 4.6–7, which also appear in Joachim's diagrammatic depiction of Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision, which Joachim had read allegorically.

This *figura* and its commentary, with its inclusion of practical details of food and clothing and religious practices, as well as its spatial measurements, is very much 'this worldly' and reminds us of the historicizing of eschatology that is at the heart of the Joachite apocalyptic legacy. It evokes the kind of ideal society outlined, for example, in the Temple Scroll (11QTemp). In Joachim's New Jerusalem people live in their own homes, but according to a lay religious rule, fasting, working with their hands, giving to the poor and obeying their spiritual mentors. In its recognition of the importance of the laity, this vision was prophetic of future developments: in the age of the friars there were many lay fraternities of various kinds. This picture of a future society might be called utopian were it not for the fact that Joachim clearly believed that such a state of bliss on earth was a clear future reality. Such interpretative moves initiated the extraordinary outburst of self-aware eschatological enthusiasm of the centuries following Joachim's death, in which various persons and events became signs of hope. This was especially true of the emerging mendicant orders. This kind of reading parallels the reading of the present as a *Kairos* portending a time of renewal that we saw also in the Botticelli painting.

Returning to Blake, we have already looked at an overt, political reading of the Apocalypse in Blake's depiction of Babylon seated on the seven-headed beast.[43] A second picture is found in a design which illustrates Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* (Fig. 8; British Museum, 1797).[44] The picture of Babylon glosses 'Virtue's Apology, in which are considered, the Love of this Life, the ambition and Pleasure, with the Wisdom of the World'. These words prompt Blake to understand this socially and politically, not just in terms of personal morals.

At the time he painted this picture, Blake was acutely aware of the culture of repression in war-torn England. It was a situation in which, to quote his words,

42 Reeves and Hirsch-Reich, *The Figurae of Joachim of Fiore*, plate 31.

43 http://library.uncg.edu/depts/speccoll/exhibits/Blake/Nighttp.jpg.

44 M. Butlin, *The Paintings and Drawings of William Blake* (2 vols; London: Yale University, 1981) 1.344; D. V. Erdman, *William Blake's Designs for Edward Young's Night Thoughts* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980). Young himself died in 1765. Richard Edwards (*b.* 1768), a conservative Bond Street bookseller and publisher, commissioned the illustrations from Blake. G. E. Bentley, *Stranger from Paradise: A Biography of William Blake* (New Haven, CT: Yale, 2001) 162. On the wider apocalyptic context in English literature, see M. D. Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium in English Romantic Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999).

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'The Beast and the Whore rule without control'.[45] Indeed, Blake was to be accused of treason as a result of an unfortunate encounter near his Suffolk home with an English infantryman.[46] This second picture of Babylon picks up on a long tradition of political interpretation of apocalyptic images rooted in Daniel and the Apocalypse going back to the radicalism of mid-seventeenth-century England. In it the heads of the beasts function as a way of understanding political oppression, and do not refer just to eschatological prediction. This very much resembles how his English predecessor Gerrard Winstanley, at the time of the English Civil War in 1649, used the beast to describe the fourfold oppressive aspects of contemporary political and economic power. Like John's visionary interpretation of Daniel, these interpretations are therefore not a succession of empires, but a fourfold imperial oppression taking place all at once and with differing dimensions.[47] This is similar to Rev 13 where the Danielic vision is recast synchronically rather than diachronically. It is not a succession of empires, but a sevenfold, contemporary, imperial and cultural oppression. Blake very pointedly depicts the heads of the beast as contemporary military, royal, legal and ecclesiastical powers. He took the opportunity of this commission to register his protest against the political repression in the England of the 1790s.

The representation of Babylon is, for Blake, curiously literal. Blake was usually extraordinarily sensitive to issues of economic oppression and race, but not often to gender. Perhaps in the context of illustrating another's book he dared not risk too much of a departure from the Bible. Nowhere is this more true than in the attitude to women in the Apocalypse. Clearly, the Apocalypse poses a real problem for modern readers because of its negative attitude to women.[48] The book portrays women as either whores or brides. Women are viewed in terms of a patriarchal culture and its attendant economy, and are either idealized or demonized. Whatever its radical political attitude towards empire, in terms of gender it presents ideological problems for a modern reader – yet another reminder of the complex nature of a text's ideological position. Nevertheless, the history of interpretation reminds us that, as a prophetic book, down the centuries the Apocalypse has offered space for women as well as men to enable their spirituality to flourish in the midst of a society permeated with patriarchy.[49] They have found

45 William Blake, *Annotations to Richard Watson, An apology for the Bible* (London, 1797).

46 Bentley, *Stranger from Paradise*, 254–7.

47 See further, A. Bradstock and C. Rowland, *Radical Christian Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002).

48 T. Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993).

49 This is especially evident in the visionary prophecy of Anna Trapnel. See H. Hinds, ed., *Anna Trapnel: The Cry of a Stone* (Tempe: Arizona University, 2000). Also, P. Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth Century England* (Berkeley: University of

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in this allusive text a licence to resist received religion and practice precisely because a canonical text opened a door for an experience of God that enabled them to transcend the boundaries imposed by what was conventionally possible.

6 Reflections

6.1 *The pictorial representations*

The pictorial representations of the Apocalypse have shown different facets of the understanding of the text. Joachim's *figurae* exemplify what is perhaps most typical in interpretations of the book: an insight into the understanding of history and the utopian horizon for a better world. Botticelli's work is a theologically complex attempt to depict hope for his generation in the light of the time-frame of the Apocalypse, utilizing the past to evoke the second coming of Christ, which he believed was near. Botticelli's work reflects an important strand in the interpretation of the Apocalypse down the centuries: he and his contemporaries were the fortunate ones on whom the end of the ages had come (cf. 1 Cor 10.11) and might even be agents in its coming. Diarmaid MacCulloch has rightly commented of the men and women of the Reformation period, that 'The Reformation would not have happened if ordinary people had not convinced themselves that they were actors in a cosmic drama plotted by God' and 'the momentous events through which they were living signified that the visible world was about to end'.[50] I have suggested that Duvet's work may also be seen in this light. In addition, Duvet had an understanding of his artistic task, the vocation to 'see again' what had appeared to John. Here an ageing artist identifies with the aged seer in his portrayal of what appeared to John on the island of Patmos. In all these pictures the artists bring to visual expression the suggestive words and images of the Apocalypse, that most pictorial of writings.

As I indicated at the outset, much of the comment I have made on these pictures has been determined by my interests as a biblical exegete. Conversations with my artistic colleagues have been a reminder that the effects of a picture on the beholder are of key importance, transcending the effectiveness of words to communicate what pictures do to those who see them.[51] There is a peculiar grammar of iconography to which I have alluded briefly from time to time. It is different

California, 1992); H. Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth-Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester: Manchester University, 1996); E. Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1649–88* (Anne Arbor: University of Michigan, 1988).

50 D. MacCulloch, *Reformation: Europe's House Divided, 1490–1700* (London: Allen Lane, 2003) 550.

51 This brings to mind the comment of the distinguished American philosopher Donald Davidson, who wrote: 'Words are the wrong currency to exchange for a picture'. D. Davidson, 'What Metaphors Mean', *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1984) 245–64.

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Figure 1: Jean Duvet, 'Duvet as John on Patmos', 1555. Copyright British Museum, London.

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Figure 2: William Blake, 'The Whore of Babylon', 1809. Copyright British Museum, London.

from the interpretative concerns of the biblical exegete, even if it complements that task. William Blake, perhaps more than any other artist and poet since the Middle Ages, explored the overlapping effects of words and pictures, with the latter not functioning as illustrations but as independent components of the aesthetic moment.[52] Words and pictures offer different modes of expression which

52 On Blake's biblical interpretation, see C. Rowland, 'Christology, Controversy and Apocalypse: New Testament Exegesis in the Light of the Work of William Blake', *Christology,*

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Figure 3: Trier Apocalypse, Fair Riders. Trier Stadtbibliothek, MS 31, fol. 19v.

complement each other in the interpretative task. There is an opportunity in a picture to have several conflicting ideas, as it were, in suspension without resolution. Different aspects can engage the reader, without necessarily offering any sense of resolution in the aesthetic experience.

Controversy and Community: Festschrift for David Catchpole (ed. D. Horrell and C. M. Tuckett; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 355–78.

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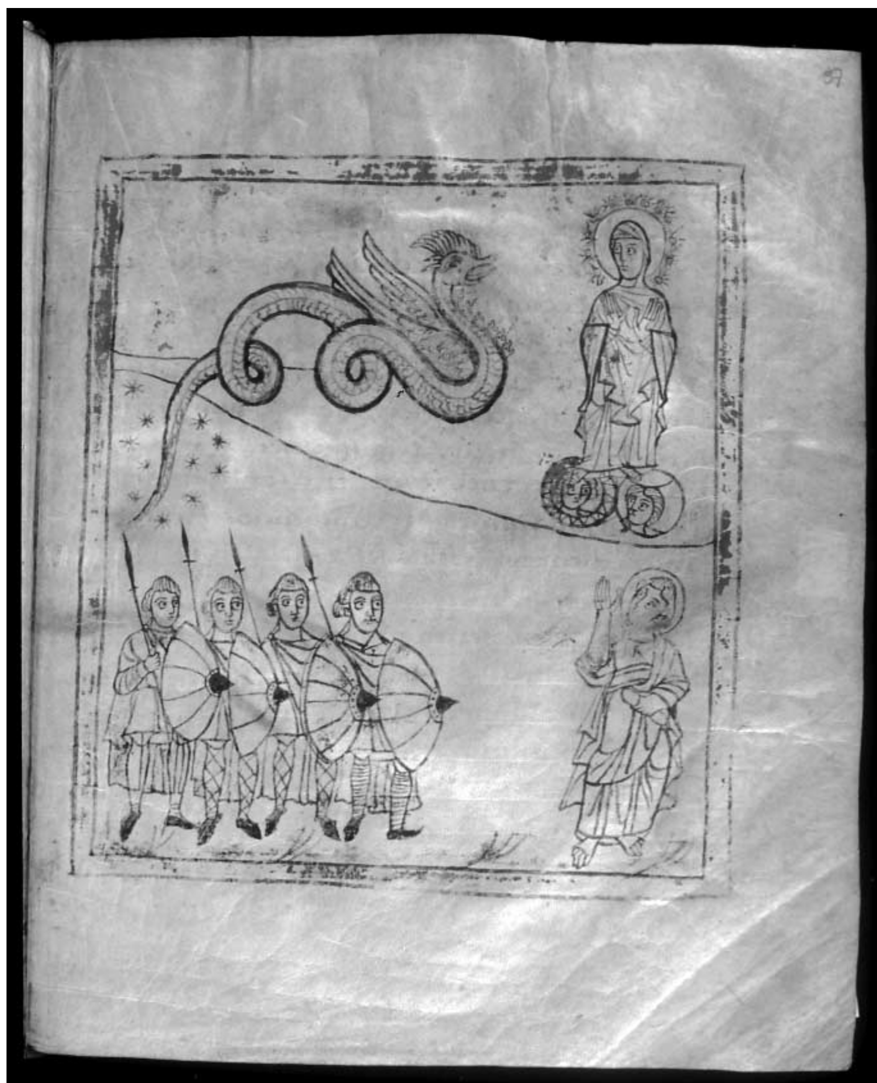

Figure 4: Trier Apocalypse, Woman Clothed with the Sun. Trier Stadtbibliothek, MS 31, fol. 37r.

6.2 *Receiving and meditating on the text*

In the last part of this essay I want to explore the way in which visualization, whether of biblical image or as a means of memorization, has played a part in the interpretation of the Bible, and in particular of visionary texts. My three brief examples are diverse culturally and chronologically, but offer contrasting ways of imagining apocalypse.

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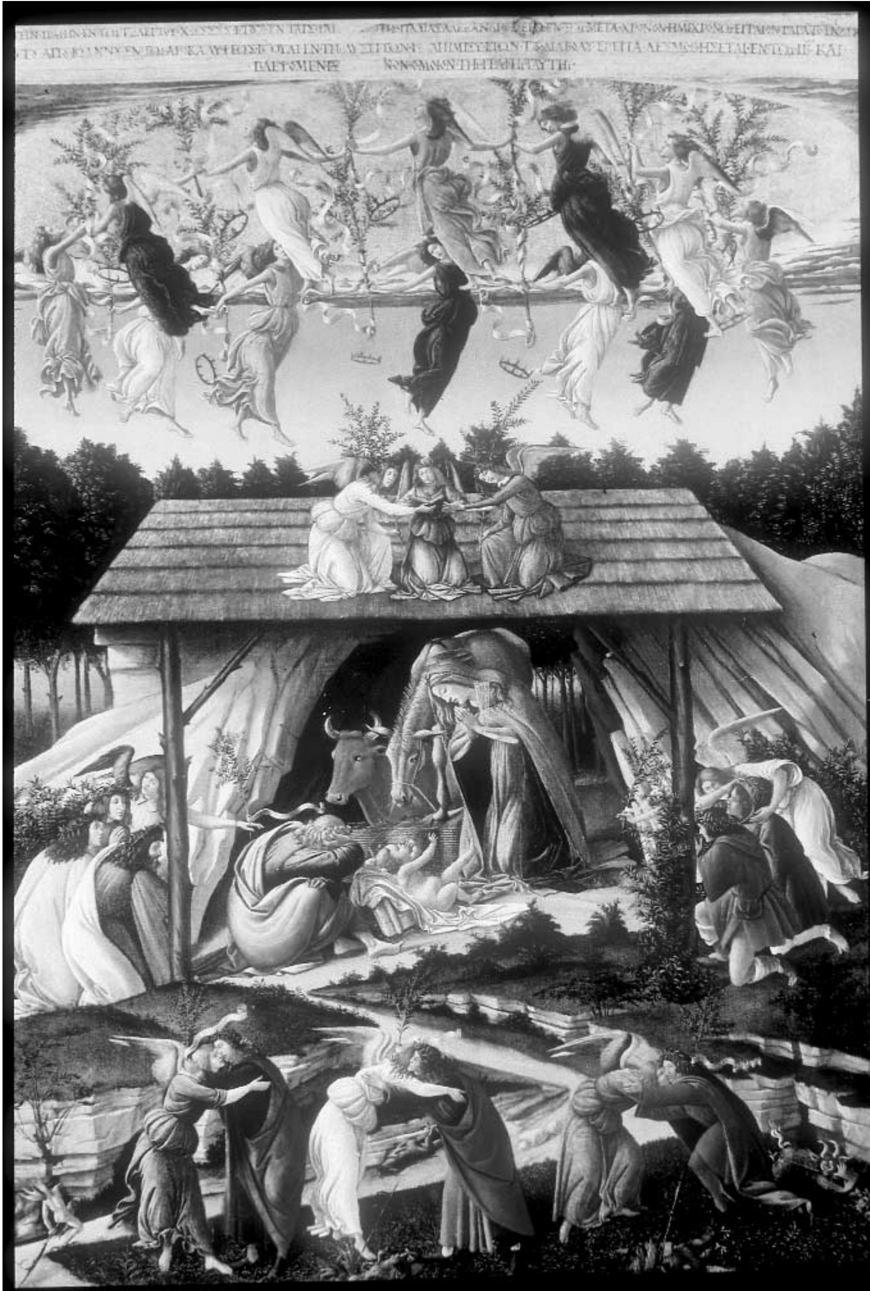

Figure 5: Sandro Botticelli, 'Mystic Nativity', 1500. Copyright National Gallery, London.

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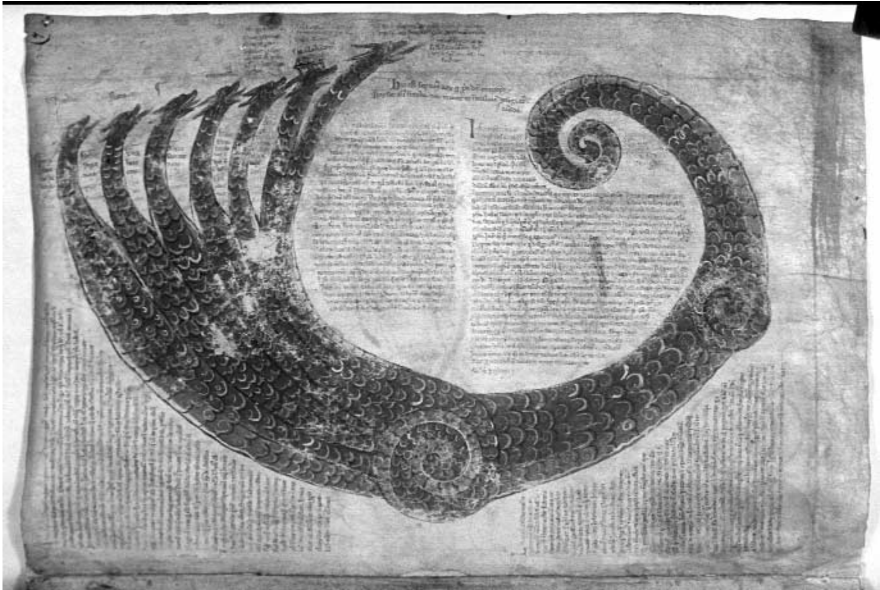

Figure 6: Joachim of Fiore, The Red Seven-headed Dragon. Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 255A, fol. 7r. Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

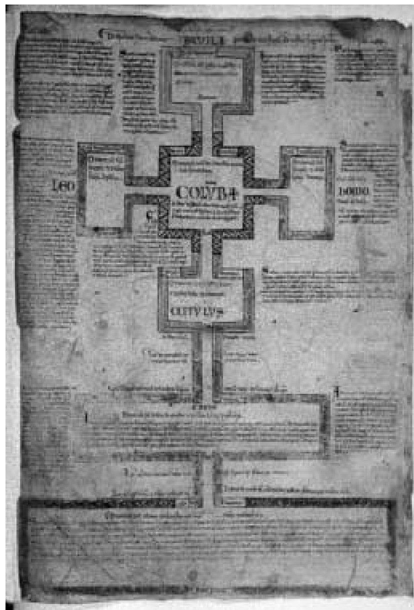

Figure 7: Joachim of Fiore, The New Jerusalem. Corpus Christi College, Oxford, MS 255A, fol. 17r. Reproduced by permission of the President and Fellows of Corpus Christi College, Oxford.

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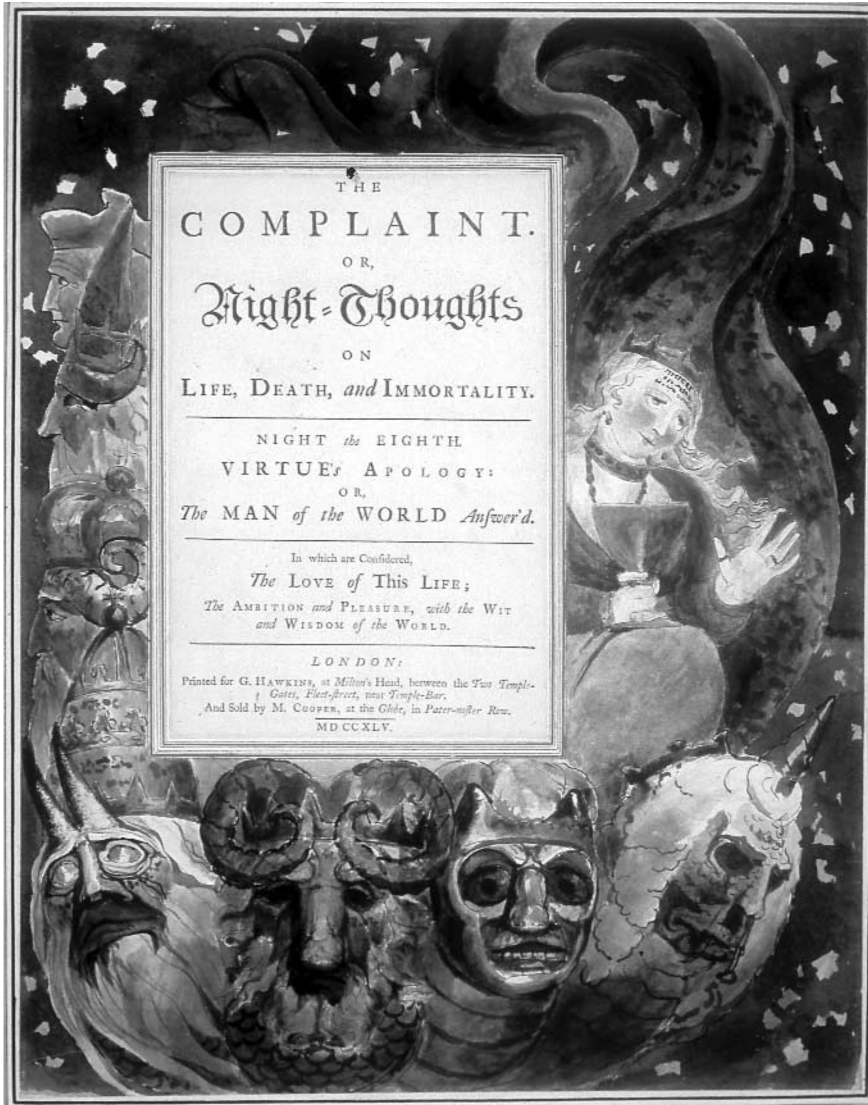

Figure 8: William Blake, 'Whore of Babylon', part of illustration for Young's Night Thoughts, 1797. Copyright British Museum, London.

An exercise of imagination, perhaps involving the visualization in the mind of objects, has historically been an important part of the reading of Scripture.[53] Mary Carruthers has pointed out, in two books about memory in the medieval period

53 A. R. White, *The Language of Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990); Räpple, *The Metaphor of the City*.

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and in antiquity, that the differentiation between memory, which is concerned with the recollection of the real, and the imagination, which is not, is a modern construct and does not apply to medieval pedagogy, nor to much earlier notions of memory. Carruthers has shown how, in the process of memorization and the recall of memory, there is a creative process of interaction of images. The medieval scholar remembers things by making a mental vision, a 'seeing' of things that are invisible from the matters in the memory, thereby embracing the present and the future through their likeness to that which is past.[54]

Ancient readers and hearers of texts could thus seek to 'visualize' what they read (or heard), and that seeing or listening would frequently involve the creation of mental images. Such meditative practice was the result of a sophisticated process of memorization of scriptural texts, in which, in imitation of Ezekiel's and John's digestion of the scroll passages (often mentioned in medieval treatises on the reading and interpretation of Scripture), the one meditating was able to recall and envision. According to Hugh of St Victor in the *Didascalion,* meditation opened up the gateway to a network of allusions and personal context to effect a memory of Scripture that yielded an elaborate and existentially addressed meditative *lectio.*[55] Recalled biblical texts yielded new meaning by process of spontaneous interconnections, through meditative recall.[56] As part of this, illuminated manuscripts stimulated an affective experience in which an encounter with the divine came about through meditation. The pictures often shaped the reader's understanding of the book. They aided understanding and facilitated meditation. With the rise of private reading, such illuminated books offered what Susan Lewis describes as 'fuller access to a subjective, interiorized conception of "seeing God"'.[57]

6.3 *Roots in the merkabah*

Mary Carruthers points out in passing links between the medieval material imaginative exegesis and Jewish exegesis, based on Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision, where a similar kind of imaginative exegesis may have included visualizing the

54 Carruthers, *The Craft of Thought*, 68–9, 304.

55 Hugh of St Victor writes: 'Meditation is a regular period of deliberate thought. [It] takes its start from reading but is not at all bound by rules or precepts of lecture (lectio), for it delights to run freely through open space . . . touching on these, now those connections among subjects . . . Whence it is that in meditation is to be found the greatest pleasure and amusement' (*Didascalion* 3.10).

56 This kind of imaginative activity has affinities with the kind of exegetical ingenuity that is presupposed by rabbinic legends in which fire is said to play around a tannaitic teacher, such as Simeon ben Azzai, renowned for his skill in relating one biblical text to another (*Shir ha-Shirim*, I.10.2).

57 Lewis, *Reading Images*, 336.

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biblical images afresh, perhaps as early as the Second Temple period.[58] This *merkabah* tradition was maintained over centuries, particularly in Judaism, but also in some parts of Christianity.[59] John's Apocalypse is itself part of the story of the visionary appropriation of Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision. We cannot be sure how visions took place among ancient Jews and Christians, but an educated guess might point to a form of engagement with Scripture when Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision offered the springboard, either for visionary experience, or for an imaginative process of connecting scriptural images from related texts. It may have involved the visualization in the mind of some of the various objects described in Ezekiel's vision. Most obscure, however, was *ḥashmal*, an enigmatic word which occurs three times in the early chapters of Ezekiel (Ezek 1.26 and 8.2). In *bHagigah* 13b warnings are given by means of stories about the effects on the inexperienced of imaginative engagement with aspects of Ezekiel's text.[60] Sight of the *ḥashmal* was regarded as a potentially threatening experiential moment. Legends circulated about children who dared to dabble in the mysteries of Ezekiel and found that the experience was damaging (*bHagigah* 13a; cf. *jHagigah* 77a).

So, in some examples of the interpretation of Ezek 1 the meaning of the text may have come about as a result of the interpreter's own creative and experiential appropriation of the text, a 'seeing again' of what Ezekiel had seen. David Halperin captures this aspect of *merkabah* exegesis well when he writes: 'When the apocalyptic visionary "sees" something that looks like Ezekiel's *merkabah*, we may assume that he is seeing the *merkabah* vision as he has persuaded himself it really was, as Ezekiel would have seen it, had he been inspired wholly and not in part.'[61]

6.4 *Imagination*

Finally, to a rather different analogy. Discussions with colleagues while exploring the nature of apocalypticism together in seminars on reception history over the last three years have shown me that, aside from Blake, among the English Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century the exercise of the imagination was a central creative activity, though now no longer confined to meditation on religious texts.[62] In perceiving imagination as a creative act, divinely

58 I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1978).

59 M. Lieb, The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics and Cultural Change (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University, 1991).

60 D. J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1988) 130–6.

61 Ibid., 71. See further on visionary experience, M. Stone, 'A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions', *HTR* 96 (2003) 167–80.

62 M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: Norton, 1971). Abrams stresses the eschatological character of apocalypse rather than its revelatory quality.

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inspired,[63] William Wordsworth could describe its effects as an 'apocalyptic' experience every bit as overwhelming, and in some sense even more vivid and real, as experience of the real world. In Book VI of 'The Prelude' he describes the way he has been steadily making his way across Europe towards Italy, full of anticipation of the moment when he and his companions will cross the Alps. Yet he discovers that he has actually missed this eagerly anticipated event, and, in place of the actuality of the experience, Wordsworth's imagination takes over and creates the vision in his mind's eye. This exercise of creative imagination enables him to have an experience of the physical sight he had missed – one that was every bit as overwhelming as the actual experience itself, and indeed of proportions akin to that experienced by John in his apocalyptic vision:

> The unfettered clouds, and region of the Heavens,
> Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light –
> Were all like workings of one mind, the features
> Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
> Characters of the great Apocalypse,
> The types and symbols of Eternity,
> Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.[64]

In this act of imagination, the last book of the Bible offers the poet a framework for his visualization, and is the most appropriate way in which he can grasp and explain the enormous significance of what has happened to him. Nature itself expanded the horizons of the interpreter as the poet sought to express the meaning of 'the great Apocalypse'.[65]

7 Conclusions

The 'picture-making words' of the Apocalypse have stimulated the imaginations of many and led to its translation into visual images and representations in paintings. We have seen the ways in which painters have read the text and offered their understanding of the problems posed by the text in visualizing objectively. In pictures we encounter the result of the reading in pictorial exegesis. As a result, pictures offer another stimulus to the imagination, parallel to the ways in which the Apocalypse, and indeed other biblical texts, functioned to stimulate the imagination, particularly through visualization as a path to interpretation and application of Scripture.

63 S. T. Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria* (ed. N. Leash; London: Everyman, 1997) Chap. 13.

64 Similarly, Byron, travelling near Interlaken, compared a great torrent he had seen with the tail of a white horse streaming in the wind – such as that of the 'pale horse' on which Death is mounted in the Apocalypse might be conceived: Paley, *Apocalypse and Millennium*, 193.

65 Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, 105–7.

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In this essay I have tried to explore interpretations of the Apocalypse in art. It has afforded a glimpse into a rich variety of pictorial interpretations which nevertheless offer a sample of what is a significant part of the reception history of this most influential biblical book. They are examples of the importance of imagining the Apocalypse. Botticelli describes his 'Mystic Nativity' as a *graphe*, and one might construe the ambiguity in that word to see his picture as a writing in pictorial form, itself a creative exegesis of Rev 11–12. Pictures are indicative of the way in which the biblical text has been a stimulus to the exploration of the imaginative space that Scripture may offer.[66] Of course, there is a complex relationship between textual image, visualization, and the objectification of that in the pictures; in some cases the pictures can close down meaning and focus the attention of the reader.[67] The pictures are, however, more often a gateway for the imagination, focusing the mind yet opening up the text to new interpretative possibilities. The text may be the starting place but the pictures manage to offer interpretations which open up different perspectives because of the difference of medium. By enabling us to imagine visually the Apocalypse they offer a parallel way of exegeting this, the most pictorial of biblical texts.

66 Lieb, *The Visionary Mode*.

67 This may well have been what was happening in the medieval illuminated manuscripts and perhaps also in Luther's Bible, where Lucas Cranach's pictures directed early sixteenth-century new readers of the Bible in the way they should approach this most allusive of texts. R. W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular Propaganda for the German Reformation* (2nd edn; Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

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