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*Intercultural Hermeneutics: A Step Towards Its Effective Practice as
a Clash of Perspectives on John's Revelation*

Abstract

This paper calls Christian biblical scholars to engage in rigorous intercultural hermeneutics for the edification of the worldwide Church by careful appropriation of adverse perspectives. It proposes a method whereby scholars implement their interpretive method of choice and then, within boundaries thus set, carefully read from the perspectives of other scholars toward the enrichment of their own work. By way of illustration, the paper offers an example of such an interpretive struggle by the author with postcolonial scholar Stephen Moore. Thus the author's approach of choice (Inductive Biblical Study) both informs, and is informed by, a postcolonial view.

Keywords: intercultural hermeneutics, postcolonial criticism, inductive Bible study, Revelation, biblical interpretation.

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Introduction

My field of study is the NT, specifically the book of Revelation and its interpretation. My PhD studies are preparatory to what I hope will be a future in training pastors and Bible teachers the world over in the practice of responsible and rigorous Bible-engagement. This essay, then, is a personally welcome opportunity to think about the process and principles governing the kind of intercultural Christian hermeneutics in which I hope to participate.

An overarching contention of this paper is that all Christian approaches to the Bible should be aimed at the edification of the Body of Christ if they purport to promote the Bible's own agenda. Further, the process wherein this kind of edification can occur often includes discomfort of a particular kind.¹ So, because meaningful intercultural encounters are almost always places where the right kind of unease exists, if approached properly intercultural biblical hermeneutics is an important source of church-wide edification. With this in mind I have selected for conversation a biblical scholar with a widely different perspective from mine. The aim is to display edifying intercultural hermeneutics in the scholarly setting. For this reason, in this essay differences in culture manifest themselves primarily in differences of perspective.²

Stephen D. Moore is a postcolonial biblical critic and his outlook is thoroughly disparate from mine both in terms of background and methodological approach. My goal has been to write in as equitable a way as possible, and that has included a candid acknowledgment of things like disagreement. It is important to acknowledge here that whether or not something is respectful has a great deal to do with its particular cultural context, and so my work reflects what I consider appropriately deferent in my current setting. The details of other edifying encounters will vary depending on their situation while the basic principles displayed may not. So this paper is a meeting of perspectives, and in some ways, a clash. In all ways however it is meant to be an opportunity for mutual edification. The question is: "How can we do the delicate, personal, reverent work of Bible exploration in the company of others with whom we may have little in common but with whom we are forced to engage by the fantastic force of the Holy Scriptures?" What follows is an attempt at such an edifying encounter.

My Perspective

My setting is that of a white African, born and raised in Zimbabwe, labeled most often a "European," and now an American citizen. Unlike many of my white friends as a youth I was a fairly fluent Shona speaker. Unlike many of my black friends I lived on a commercial farm as the son of the hard working, and well-

liked manager of the thriving property. As a result we were fairly well off compared to the vast majority of the population which was, and is, very poor.

I judge this situation to have positioned me to entertain certain empathy for both sides of the obvious cultural boundaries around which I grew up. I understood more of both than many but less of each than most. That is, while I was white, I never felt as if I fitted in fully to the white community in part because of my perspectives on race. I also did not fit into the black community because of obvious and wide cultural differences, but I was certainly not an outcast of either society. I have good, long lasting friends from both backgrounds.

One consequence of being white in Zimbabwe was that it was clear to all that my ancestors had colonized the country. This, I felt at the time, had little to do with me and I thought nearly nothing about it. I did not know much about the war of independence, which ended when I was three, apart from the fact that my dad sustained some long term, but not debilitating, ill effects as a result of his participation in it. We, I assumed, were on the losing side but in my young childhood it didn't feel to me as if we had lost or as if anyone had.

I was and am evidently privy to certain aspects of life but unaware of others precisely because of my background. I have a western mind, and I feel most like a westerner. This is true in spite of the fact that my parents were born in Africa (they are still there), as were most of my siblings and I. Finally, I identify most readily with the once vigorously colonizing country of England. These are realities that follow me into my scholarly endeavors and certainly contribute to my outlook for better and worse.

My hermeneutical approach is called Inductive Biblical Study (IBS) espoused and described most recently by Drs. David Bauer and Robert Traina in *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics*. For the IBS practitioner the work of interpretation is never done. There is always room for improvement, deeper understanding, and further fruitful engagement with the text, available evidence, and the God to whom it points. This aspect of IBS obviously presents a significant challenge to the interpreter. It requires him/her to be perpetually open to new evidence as it comes to light, to be on a quest for ever fuller understanding, and most challengingly to judiciously embrace adverse perspectives. This paper is an attempt to take that last point seriously.

A Different Perspective

Stephen Moore is a postcolonial biblical critic. He was born and raised in Ireland, a country long affected by domination by protestant England.

Moore's family, although of white western origin, has therefore experienced the "manhandling" of their people by another nation. Moore has done significant work in Revelation and so is a fitting dialogue partner. In line with other postcolonial scholars Moore engages in no small measure the work of Homi Bhabha.³ He does so to the extent that I cannot avoid offering a preliminary acquaintance with Bhabha here.

Homi Bhabha is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of English and American Literature and Language, the Director of the Humanities Center at Harvard, and one of the most influential figures in post-colonial studies today. He was born into a Parsi family in Mumbai in India in 1949 and saw some effects of the English colonization of that country. Bhabha has introduced three important concepts to the study of postcolonial contexts: ambivalence, mimicry and hybridity. Moore describes it thus:

For Bhabha, colonial discourse is characterized above all by ambivalence. It is riddled with contradictions and incoherences, traversed by anxieties and insecurities, and hollowed out by originary lack and internal heterogeneity. For Bhabha, moreover, the locus of colonial power, far from being unambiguously on the side of the colonizer, inheres instead in a shifting, unstable, potentially subversive, 'in-between' or 'third' space between colonizer and colonized, which is characterized by mimicry, on the one hand, in which the colonized heeds the colonizer's peremptory injunction to imitation, but in a manner that constantly threatens to teeter over into mockery; and by hybridity, on the other hand, another insidious product of the colonial encounter that further threatens to fracture the colonizer's identity and authority. (Moore 2006:90)

It is noteworthy that my reaction to Bhabha's *The Location of Culture* was in a way similar to Moore's: one of general agreement and instinctive assent.⁴ By way of brief illustration, Bhabha asserts the following regarding comprehensively grasping what he calls "colonial dislocation": "...the jagged testimony of colonial dislocation, its displacement of time and person, its defilement of culture and territory, refuses the ambition of any total theory of colonial oppression. The Antillean évolué cut to the quick by the glancing look of a frightened, confused, white child..." (Bhabha 2004:59). He goes on to give other examples of loci and manifestations of the dislocation he describes. His point, I think, is that the moment at which the white child (colonizer) registers consternation at the sight of the black native (colonized) is poignantly where colonial dislocation happens/has happened and shows itself. This process and its effects are so complex and diverse that they defy ready definition or explanation.

I have experienced moments like this albeit from a different vantage point, and cautiously affirm the accuracy of Bhabha's description of awkward human intercultural interaction. This precise point will ultimately prove particularly important to the current project. In the end, Bhabha's question is, "How can the world live its difference; how can a human being live Other-wise?" (Bhabha 2004:91) In my view, his observations are often insightful and helpful. Moore clearly agrees and offers an angle on Revelation that attempts to deploy some of Bhabha's central thoughts. His contribution is a rather "big picture" one, so I will begin by matching a presentation of my thoughts to his in that particular.

My Interpretation of Revelation the Book

One major contribution IBS makes to literary analysis is an emphasis on the labeling of structure within a text. Analysis of logical and rhetorical flow has become a foundational aspect of all interpreting I do. That is important because my view of the "big picture" meaning of Revelation is driven to a significant degree by a concern for structure defined as the relationships between one swath of text and another. Notably all communicative art forms exhibit (structural) relationships between one portion of the art and the other. In literary studies one way of labeling these relationships is by means of words like "substantiation" (effect to cause), "comparison" (emphasizing similarity), and "instrumentation" (means to end) among others.

Applying these and other principles to the book of Revelation one can argue that in a nutshell it most nearly says: "Seven churches, be holy and faithful to God and the Lamb (ch. 1-3), because (effect to cause) Babylon the spiritual whore didn't and was destroyed by the beast at God's bidding (ch. 4-19:10), just as (comparison) the beast also will be bound and destroyed along with Satan, so that (means to end) God and the Lamb can make their home amongst humanity forever (19:11-22:21). The book first of all commands the Christians to whom it was written to live faithful lives, warns them of the consequences of not doing so, and then invites them to revel in the hope of a future as part of the temple in the New Jerusalem in tremendously close communion with both God and the Lamb. If that is John's (Revelation's author) overarching message then further conclusions within the book will presumably fit into that line of reckoning if it is a coherent piece of work.⁵

An important question with which Revelation scholars have grappled, that Moore addresses, and that I am forced to face is: "What is the meaning of the Babylon entity in Rev 16:21-19:10?" In order to apprehend in any detail the message

of Revelation as a whole one must contend with this question. Based in part on the overarching message just described it is likely that on the most immediate level, Babylon = Jerusalem of John's time.⁶ It can be argued that the capital of 1st century C.E. Palestine was committed to exhibiting loyalty to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but that this same Jerusalem and her civil and religious leadership joined themselves to Rome in a religiously promiscuous manner⁷ during and prior to that time. It is further true that Rome turned on Jerusalem and thoroughly destroyed the temple in 70 C.E. It is entirely feasible, then, that John (probably writing after Jerusalem's destruction⁸) sought to persuade his congregations to holiness and faithfulness by appealing to unfaithful Jerusalem's destruction by Rome (the beast⁹) as inducement to heed his exhortations.

My view is not without difficulties. Some scholars have questions about this view of Babylon. One is that the label "Babylon" when taken in isolation was most likely to have been heard by John's audience as "Rome." An aspect of my answer is that this idea requires that Rome (usually the city) prostitute herself to Rome (usually the empire at large) until Rome the empire turns on Rome the city at God's bidding. Then Rome the empire is removed along with Satan so that God and the Lamb can dwell amongst humanity. This logic fails to explain the details of the flowing communication as a whole, and significantly scuttles some rhetorical moves I consider John aspired to. It is somewhat convoluted when carefully considered.

While I grant that logical convolution is to some degree "in the eye of the beholder," I propose that of the two options evidence suggests that the one involving Babylon = Jerusalem is preferable to the one involving Babylon = Rome. This is because it accounts for a greater number of literary (and other) features of the text. So "Babylon" means "an entity that exhibits shameful faithlessness to the God whom she once professed to serve." John saw Jerusalem of his time following in the footsteps of the Jerusalem of OT times and cloaked his description of that city to a significant, but not comprehensive, degree in Roman clothes for rhetorical reasons. Revelation as a whole then exhibits redemptive, cleansing and comforting aims, and certainly anti imperial Rome perspectives. It will be clear that my hitherto largely empire-consciousness free view of the book is a result of my own perspective, laden as it may be with particularities. It will similarly be obvious that Stephen Moore's view has been shaped by his background.

Moore's Interpretation of Revelation

To begin with, Moore in *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament*, says that postcolonial biblical criticism oscillates between two poles. "On

the one hand the biblical text is read as unequivocal and exemplary anti-imperial and anti-colonial resistance literature. On the other hand, the biblical text is read as covertly imperialist and colonialist literature - or more precisely, as literature that, irrespective of the conscious intention of its author, insidiously reinscribes imperial and colonial ideologies even while appearing to resist them.” (Moore 2006:14) Moore’s work aspires to “navigate between this Scylla and Charybdis.” (Moore 2006:14) On this point Bhabha’s contention that ambiguity is poignantly present when colonizer and colonizee meet is especially attractive because it ostensibly offers a middle way. Moore’s concern is: “Whether or to what extent Revelation merely inscribes, rather than effectively resists, Roman imperial ideology.” (Moore 2006:99)

Central to Moore’s argument is the concept of ‘catachresis’ and he employs it in the following way. Catachresis, says Moore, designates,

...a process whereby the victims of colonialism or imperialism strategically recycle and redeploy facets of colonial or imperial culture or propaganda. Catachresis, in this sense, is a practice of resistance through an art of creative appropriation, a retooling of the rhetorical or institutional instruments of imperial oppression that turns those instruments back against their official owners. Catachresis is thus also an act of counter-appropriation: it counters the appropriative incursions of imperialist discourse - its institutional accouterments, its representational modes, its ideological forms, its propagandistic ploys - by redirecting and thereby deflecting them. (Moore 2006:106)

His assertion is that John, an outspoken member of the colonized population, sought to engage in precisely this kind of resistant action. Unfortunately, says Moore, the enterprise fails because the ambivalence espoused by Bhabha is manifestly extant in the colonized John and his followers. The kind of ambivalence presumably wherein as Bhabha says, “The fantasy of the native is precisely to occupy the master’s place while keeping his place in the slave’s avenging anger.” (Bhabha 2004:63-64)

Moore’s conception of Revelation includes centrally that the book embodies a kind of mimicking chain. In his view Revelation mimics (in a way that parallels Moore’s postcolonial definition of ‘mimic through catachresis’) the empire while asserting that faithful Christians should mimic the Christ who is to mimic the Father who is represented by Revelation as mimicking the emperor.¹⁰ This conception places the emperor at the head of the mimicking “food” chain, and Revelation and its replacement empire in a sort of ironic subservience to Rome,

which is the ultimate and controlling model. This is Revelation's implicit stance of which it, its author, and its readers are likely unconscious, asserts Moore. John-the-colonized's desire to be in his oppressor's shoes cripples his attempts to be other than them.¹¹ To clarify the position further on two major points Moore posits that, "Parody of the Roman imperial order permeates Revelation, reaching a scurrilous climax in the depiction of the goddess Roma, austere and noble personification of the *urbs aeterna*, as a tawdry whore who has had a little too much to drink (17:1-6)... [and] The most fundamental instance of catachresis in Revelation... is its redeployment of the term 'empire' (*basileia*) itself" (Moore 2006:106). Here Moore asserts that "Babylon" is an intentionally degrading name for "Rome" and that John's insulting tirade climaxes in his disparagement of the "drunk" city. Further, John's use of *basileia* (often translated "kingdom" but rendered not unjustifiably by Moore "empire") betrays most poignantly his unconscionable (in Moore's view) favorable stance toward "empire."

Revelation then sets one empire up against another, and this is where the book's well-known dualism resides. Ultimately though Moore claims, "In Revelation's hyper dualistic cosmos... Christian culture and Roman culture must be absolutely separate and separable (cf. 18:4: 'Come out of her, my people...'). But are they? This is where Bhabha's strategies of colonial discourse analysis come into their own." (Bhabha 2006:63-64) Moore's construal rests upon the assumption that Revelation's critique of Rome is a rejection of Roman culture in the sense that every aspect of Roman culture must be jettisoned. It is only in this frame, wherein Roman culture as a whole = detestable imperial tendencies that should be discarded, that Moore's argument potentially holds together.

My Response to Moore

In the first place, I am not convinced that Moore succeeds in finding a middle way between the two extreme opinions of postcolonial biblical critics (that on the one hand, Revelation is exemplary and uncompromising anti-imperial literature, and on the other it is "covertly imperialist and colonialist literature... that irrespective of the conscious intention of its author, insidiously reinscribes imperial and colonial ideologies even while appearing to resist them" (Moore 2006:14)). It seems that he has decisively advocated the latter stance.

Secondly, in answer to his driving question regarding "whether or to what extent Revelation merely inscribes, rather than effectively resists, Roman imperial ideology," (Moore 2006:99) I propose that the Revelation scholar Stephen Friesen has offered a more satisfactory answer. In *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John*,

Freisen suggests that John pits his Christian eschatology against the Roman status quo retaining cosmology. This is one way of naming the location of the true crux of the clash between Revelation's ideology and Rome's. Their confrontation is in the overarching religious outlooks and the resultant propagandas they respectively espouse. It is not in their conceptions of whether or not empires should exist.

Thirdly, one of Moore's core proposals is that John's rhetorical strategy, which he has labeled "catachresis," includes setting up a parodic empire as a rival to Rome. He asserts that, "The success of the strategy is evident from the fact that this binary opposition has been endlessly (and unreflectively) replicated even in critical commentaries on Revelation." (Moore 2006:108) I agree that John's actual rhetorical moves have not generally been sufficiently scrutinized. While there are many forays into the realm of John's rhetorical maneuverings, there is still a great deal of work to be done on exactly how he used his source material and what his rhetorical motives might have been.

Moore's logic is flawed regarding this "mimicking chain" rhetorical strategy because it exhibits the fatal fallacy of equivocation.¹² What Moore has failed to account for is that whereas it is possible that the author of Revelation might set God's kingdom in direct opposition to the emperor's in part by means of parodic literary presentations, and whereas the faithful are taught to imitate the Christ as He follows the Father, it does not follow either that God therefore mimics (to mock) the emperor or that the faithful are ultimately called to do so as well. The word "mimic" is used by Moore to describe both his conception of John's aim and John's representation of the characters, but the contexts of the word are different in each case¹³ and their meanings necessarily vary accordingly. Here is a condensation of his position on this point:

Revelation's attempted sleight of hand ensnares it in a debilitating contradiction. Christians are enjoined to mimic Jesus, who in turn mimics his Father... who, in effect, mimics the Roman Emperor, who himself... is a mimetic composite of assorted royal and divine stereotypes.... But if the Roman Imperial order is the ultimate object of *imitation* [emphasis mine: this is precisely where the fallacy inheres] in Revelation, then, in accordance with the book's own implicit logic, it remains the ultimate authority, despite the book's explicit attempts to unseat it. (Moore 2006:112)

If Moore is aware of the logical problem here he fails to clarify. The text "mimics to mock" (according to Moore) the empire, but surely none would say that the faithful are called to "mimic to mock" Jesus the Christ or that God merely "mimics

to mock” the emperor. To make this claim, one has to do violence to the “implicit logic” of the book to which Moore appeals by imposing a meaning of *mimic* in one setting (Moore’s description of what Revelation does to the empire) on that word (or a cognate) used differently elsewhere (Revelation’s implied description of what truly “faithful” people do to their God). Moore makes mimicry in his own sense the governor of Revelation’s rhetorical operation. In addition it is by no means certain that Revelation’s main aim is to “mimic to mock” the empire. So the equivocation, in my view, presents itself even within (and possibly because of) the framework of which Moore has conceived for Revelation’s rhetoric.

Fourthly, another fatal flaw in Moore’s argument surfaces regarding Revelation’s purported attempt to thoroughly reject Roman culture as a whole. John does not critique Rome’s culture *per-se*, but he critiques her character. He also does not critique that aspect of her culture that is heavily ‘imperial,’ rather he points his disapproving finger at her religious faithlessness. At the basic level (the level on which Moore purports to operate) her faithlessness, not her imperialism as such, is what must be excluded from the celestial kingdom.

Finally, it has yet to be settled that Rome itself is the most primary target of John’s “Babylon critique.” Rome is to be resisted but not because it is an empire. Rather because it is a religiously destructive institution. It is those who were supposed to be God’s own people but who glibly turned away from Him against whom John rails most vehemently. So his letters to the churches demand non-violent steadfast faithfulness not egalitarianism (as desirable as that might, or might not, be), and they promise ultimate salvation and life in close communion with a thoroughly benevolent God, not in subservience to a Roman emperor copycat.

It is possible that the lack of empire aversion *per-se* is what Moore senses with distaste. It is also possible that in his mind a critique of any empire should include a critique of its existence. Is it not, however, theoretically plausible that an empire exist and be run for the benefit of all and that it be a holy institution? Even if this is not possible in this world might it not be in another reality where things are fundamentally different in one key sense: faithfulness to God is universally operative?

My Interpretation as Improved by Contact with Moore’s

In spite of the difficulty of welcoming Moore’s work as it stands into my approach to Revelation, I am obliged to wrestle with how it is valuable to an engagement with that book. It seems to me that reading with a reading strategy in the way Moore does, as his primary approach, runs counter to uncovering the

text's meaning from its perspective, and as such is not a comprehensively useful hermeneutic. However, I propose the following procedure. Having used some other method to account for fixed features of the text like its logical flow, the exegete could then read with a strategy such as Moore's through eyes sensitized by Moore's concerns searching for John's perspective on empire and colonization.

Proceeding in this way should introduce a level of confidence that the text itself drives the investigation rather than primarily the reader's goals.¹⁴ The result should in the first place, be an alleviation of the most important difficulty with reading strategies that are permitted to do significant violence to the text without careful attention to limits imposed by its observable features. Secondly this approach appropriates the most important strength of such a strategy: its perspective. This melding of tactics exemplifies what I deem to be the core of properly intercultural hermeneutic practice.

Although I do not see Moore's conception of catachresis in Revelation as he does, it is feasible that John's state of having been colonized, and therefore the presence of ambiguity, is visible in a different way. If he does indeed fantasize about the emperor's throne being usurped for the benefit of oppressed Christians in the way Moore suggests, then he proposes a counter empire that is in actual opposition to the colonizing force. This is only recognizable though from a certain perspective. It would seem that far from John's being unconscious of his replacement fantasies, he gives them full sway. Not by means of a "mimicking to mock" stratagem but by espousing a "testifying to overcome" tactic, which claims colossal victory for itself, but which, would likely seem idiotic to the empire. Herein perhaps lies the middle road Moore purports to pursue.

Bhabha's thoughts on illusive awkwardness in the meeting of colonizer with colonizee may be useful in imagining that were John the oppressed to come before the emperor and vehemently proclaim, "Emperor, your empire will be destroyed as thoroughly as your predecessors crushed Jerusalem and for similar lack of acknowledgment of the Christian God. Know this will come about by means of the faithful non-violent witness of God's people and God's mighty hand!" It is quite possible that the emperor would scornfully dismiss John as just another coerced subject kicking vigorously, but uselessly, against the goad of Roman domination.¹⁵

From the standpoint of John's Christian hearers however, it is precisely this "otherness" (the "misunderstandability") of the message that characterizes Christ and his kingdom and offers them hope. So Revelation is a hard-hitting shot of promise to the oppressed, but a mere supremely frustrated rant by a powerless subject to the oppressor. Here the ambiguity of cultural dislocation is in view. In the

act of communication, Revelation itself turns out to be both an effective anti-empire piece of propaganda, and a pro-empire plug for Christian nonresistance with futile illusions of a future replacement empire attached. The status of the reader/hearer as either Christian colonizee or Roman colonizer makes all the difference. Where these readings clash with one another is Bhabha's zone of cultural dislocation, and understanding between the parties involved is all but nonexistent. So we can go behind Moore to Bhabha for insight on precisely what might be going on when John's worldview collides with the empire's worldview.

Reading Revelation with this and a heightened awareness of imperial matters in mind, the bird's eye picture with which we have been dealing might go something like this: "Seven churches, be faithful to God by non-violently resisting the efforts of your oppressors to seduce you into those aspects of their empire that smack of the worship of other gods. If you do not, and you allow yourself to become your oppressor like Jerusalem has done, God will see to your destruction quite possibly by means of your adulterous lover, Rome. Similarly, your beloved will eventually be destroyed so that God and the Lamb might bring about a righteous, self-sacrificial, and benevolent kingdom, wherein justice is done and wherein you will be free to remain completely true to your God through eternal communion with Him. That communion will free you from the death dealing oppressive empire who now seems to have the upper hand, and will bring you into eternal life and freedom." This view of the book could be more robustly set against other interpretations than could either Moore's or my prior propositions. My reading has been significantly deepened, although that is impossible to display comprehensively here. I am therefore indebted to Moore and Bhabha for the insight they have afforded. Conversely, I consider that Moore's view could gain reliability through appropriation of an approach that gives the text itself prioritizing sway over interpretation.

Conclusion

This process has highlighted some important ideas regarding the practice of hermeneutics interculturally. Even though I found Moore's argument for the unconscious self-contradictory nature of the book of Revelation to be flawed at its core, I now affirm its perspective as a point of refinement for the intercultural exegete seeking edification for the kingdom. Here are some principles I deem to have surfaced.

1. I am particularly challenged by the existence of a perspective on what my ancestors did that causes me to question the legitimacy of my own outlook. Can I really claim to be a responsible exegete if I am blind to certain potentially nourishing views on the Word of God that I study? I answer this in the affirmative but more cautiously and with renewed awareness of the need for other exegetes.
2. This act of intercultural hermeneutics highlights a fundamental need that one part of the body of Christ has for another. Both Moore and I could benefit from one another's endeavors, but I cannot simply adopt willy-nilly a postcolonial perspective *per se* though I try with the best of intentions. I cannot do for an interpretation of Revelation what a postcolonial interpreter could because his/her perspective cannot be thoroughly shared. Some sort of a rigorous co-operation with a willing postcolonial scholar would seem to be the ideal objective.
3. In this paper, intercultural hermeneutics is the meeting of different perspectives whatever the actual cultures of participants might be. This does not fully account for different traditions and norms that should be understood and observed whenever a scholar deals across cultural boundaries. That would constitute the subject of another project. However, it does highlight the value this approach could have for discussion among scholars of even similar cultural backgrounds.
4. If biblical studies must be for the edification of the church at large and a particular kind of nourishing interpretive struggle is at the crux of the fruitful interpretive endeavor, then this sort of conversation between widely differing perspectives should be encouraged generally within Christian scholarship. Further, this should be done not so much with a view to "overcoming" one another, but with a view to "appropriating" one another thoughtfully.
5. One's interpretation is personal. Exposure of the results to the scrutiny of another, especially one of a widely different perspective, is properly uncomfortable. If this is true, and it is the right kind of discomfort, then surely the rigorous pursuit of the kind of communal hermeneutics this paper has tried

to exemplify could be an especially rich source of church edification.

6. The primary job of scholars in an intercultural setting may not be to persuade but rigorously and graciously to offer up perspectives for communal scrutiny and ultimate edification with a view to carefully appropriating especially the thoughts of differing viewpoints.

This paper then, calls for more consciously interculturally collaborative, but rigorously argued, scholarship. Perspectives will clash, but my position is that the scholarly community could and should appropriate that very phenomenon at the point of collision for its growth and ultimate edification. This could be a step toward “living Other-wise,” in Bhabha’s sense (Bhabha 2004:91).

End Notes

¹ It is not true that all discomfort results in edification, but it does seem that under the right conditions, an essential kind of edification takes place especially when adverse perspectives are present and are engaged carefully.

² This is important because scholarly cultural differences, in settings of intellectual contest, might be described helpfully as differences in especially perspective.

³ In Moore’s own words: “I have no desire to downplay the extent to which [my work] is informed and enabled by a sensibility that owes much to Bhabha specifically - a predisposition to construe life under colonization as characterized less by unequivocal opposition to the colonizer than by unequal measures of loathing and admiration, resentment and envy, rejection and imitation, resistance and co-option, separation and surrender.” (Moore 2006: x).

⁴ That is a preliminary judgment based on readings for this project.

⁵ This paper assumes that he does, but whether or not that is actually the case is a matter for another time and place.

⁶ By this I mean that John meant to reference Jerusalem most pointedly to his audience, but he also referred (by extension) to all apostate cities the world over including Rome.

⁷ Conceived of in the way many OT prophets (ex. Ezekiel, and Hosea) conceived of Israel’s inappropriate consorting with other nations and their gods.

⁸ This dating is the majority view of scholars, although the combination of a late date with the notion that Babylon = Jerusalem is not one I have come across. The question of dating though is one for another project.

⁹ Most scholars agree that the Beast is indeed Rome.

¹⁰ In the sense that many have asserted that Revelation uses Roman throne room imagery, for instance, to conceptualize God on His throne. There are other places where scholars argue for a similar phenomenon and this is what Moore calls “catachresis.”

¹¹ Moore’s argument then, apparently entails the assumption that John indeed innately desired to be like his oppressors. This is a tremendously difficult thing to be sure of, and is indeed a blatant imposition of Bhabha’s perspectives on John the author. This “psychologizing” does not in my view constitute a solid foundation upon which to base assertions about John’s literary output, and is in the end a significant weakness of Moore’s argument.

¹² The ambiguous use of a word with two senses, ex. “all banks are beside rivers, therefore the institution wherein I deposit my money is beside a river.” Moore says, “Revelation imitates the empire, therefore the action Christ elicits from his followers in Revelation is to imitate both Him and God.” Moore asserts that both uses of “imitate” mean, “mimic to mock.”

¹³ I cannot tell that John uses the word at all, but he does call the faithful to testify faithfully as Jesus does.

¹⁴ Regarding the possibility that IBS/other exegetical methods themselves have driving concerns and goals that manifest themselves in the process of analyzing text: this project affirms the reality and validity of boundary setting features of the text like word meaning, structure and other purportedly observable aspects of it. Whether or not these things do indeed set meaningful boundaries around an investigation is a matter for debate in a different forum. It is to be readily admitted though that the IBS practitioner is not “perspectiveless” and that his/her outlook will have an effect on assumptions regarding interpretation at every level, even of course at the level of initial observation/preliminary “boundary setting.” So I am not arguing for interpretive work that is utterly free of reader perspective. Instead I am advocating an approach to the text that consciously works to let the text guide its own interpretation.

¹⁵ It is to be noted that this hypothetical proposition is merely an illustration and not a historical claim of any sort.

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