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978-0-521-06845-1 - Apocalypse and Millennium: Studies in Biblical Eisegesis
Kenneth G. C. Newport
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APOCALYPSE AND MILLENNIUM

Studies in Biblical Eisegesis

This book is about the various ways in which the Book of Revelation (the Apocalypse) has been interpreted over the last 300 years. It examines in detail Methodist, Baptist, English Anglican, and Roman Catholic uses of Revelation from 1600 to 1800, and then American and Seventh-day Adventist uses from 1800 on.

Apocalypse and Millennium argues that far from being a random sequence of bizarre statements, millennial schemes (including the setting of dates for the second coming of Christ) are more often characterised by highly complex and internally consistent interpretations of scripture. Such interpretations do not always result in positive outcomes. As an example, the work of David Koresh is examined at length. Koresh, styled by some the 'Wacko from Waco', clearly had views which some would find odd. However, his interpretation of scripture did not lack system or context, and to see him in that light is to begin to understand why his message had appeal, particularly to those of the Seventh-day Adventist tradition. The final three chapters in this book outline Koresh's thinking on end-time events and trace the line of his interpretative tradition from nineteenth-century Millerism through Seventh-day Adventism and Davidianism (which began in 1929).

KENNETH G. C. NEWPORT is Reader in Christian Thought at Liverpool Hope University College and serves on the board of the Charles Wesley Society. He is a regular presenter of papers at meetings of the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion, and his publications include *The Sources and 'Sitz im Leben' of Matthew 23* (1995) and numerous papers in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands University of Manchester*, *Methodist History*, the *Baptist Quarterly* and the *Wesleyan Theological Journal*.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSIGY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521773348

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First published 2000
This digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Newport, Kenneth G. C.
Apocalypse and millennium: studies in biblical eisegesis/Kenneth G. C. Newport.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 0 521 77334 2
1. Bible. N.T. Revelation – Criticism, interpretation, etc. – History. I. Title.

BS2825.2.N485 2000
228'.06'0903–dc21
99–051375

ISBN 978-0-521-77334-8 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-06845-1 paperback

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For Rose-Marie, a true companion and friend

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Preface

The writing of any book is in practice a team effort. The members of my team include Ursula Leahy, my former student and now research assistant, who has put in many hours preparing this book for publication. Her seemingly inexhaustible goodwill, hard work and eye for detail have left their mark on virtually every page. Other co-workers include Malcolm Bull, whose friendship and support over many years have been a source of great encouragement. Chapter 9 could not have been completed without the assistance of Mark Swett, an individual to whom all Waco researchers will be indebted. The reason for that indebtedness will quickly become apparent to the reader. Particular thanks are due also to Livingstone Fagan, a Branch Davidian and survivor of the Waco siege, who, despite his difficult circumstances, has been generous in answering my questions and providing me with some insight into the centrality of the biblical text in the tradition to which he belongs. Chapter 8 owes much to the kind assistance of Lynda Baildam of Newbold College in Berkshire, who generously gave of her time in locating some of the more obscure Millerite and early Seventh-day Adventist literature. Earlier chapters reflect the similar goodwill of librarians and archivists across the United Kingdom. These include Gareth Lloyd at the John Rylands University Library of Manchester and the staff at the Gradwell Library in Upholland, at Ushaw College in Durham and at St Deiniol's, Hawarden.

My colleague Professor Ian Markham is due particular mention for encouraging me to write this book in the first place. As a friend he has supported, as a scholar he has criticised, and as a line manager he has enabled. At Liverpool Hope University College I have been provided with ideal working conditions. These include superlative office space and computer provision, and the award of several generous travel grants which have enabled me to present some of my findings to the broader scholarly community at conferences overseas. Sue Harwood first trans-

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formed my old and poorly formatted computer files into something approaching the state-of-the-art electronic text required by the publisher.

The two anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press provided a mass of stylistic improvement, factual detail and theoretical insight, most of which has been incorporated. Kevin Taylor at Cambridge University Press first encouraged me to submit the typescript and to say that he has been understanding in extending the original intended limit by some 35,000 words is nothing if not an understatement.

My wife Rose-Marie and children Matthew, Stephen and Sarah have supported me throughout.

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