

# Drawing Aside the Purple Curtain

*The Papal System Today: an Analysis of the News*

## “Mystery Babylon” is Rome, Not Mecca!

### Joel Richardson’s Arrogance and Error

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by Shaun Willcock

In my article, *The “Islamic Antichrist” Deception*,<sup>1</sup> exposing the Futurist theory that the Antichrist will be a man from the Muslim world, I stated that a prominent author promoting this error, who many consider to be a Bible teacher and “prophecy expert”, is Joel Richardson. Well, in 2017 he brought out his latest book, *Mystery Babylon*, in which he went even further into error, not only continuing to push his “Islamic Antichrist” deception, but sharply criticising the truth regarding the Roman Catholic institution’s connections to ancient Babylon, and arrogantly mocking and belittling Alexander Hislop, the nineteenth-century author of *The Two Babylons*<sup>2</sup> (in which he proves that the Papal system is the true “Mystery Babylon” of the New Testament period); a man whose research so far exceeds that of Richardson as to make the latter appear to be a pygmy standing in the shadow of a giant.

#### ***Richardson a “New York Times Bestselling Author” – So What?***

In an article about his book, Joel Richardson is praised as a “*New York Times* bestselling author and biblical teacher”.<sup>3</sup> This is how he is described on his own website as well. It is deeply disturbing when professing Christians fall for this lie that because someone is a “*bestselling author*”, he is somehow correct, or that he somehow deserves to be regarded as knowledgeable, intelligent, and sound in the faith. Yet being a “bestselling author” means nothing more than that a large number of people have been persuaded to buy and read his books. And large numbers of people may read an author’s book for a variety of reasons.

One reason may be that he writes well. But “having a way with words” is not the same as being sound in the faith. In fact, when an author attracts a vast readership, this usually means the *very opposite* – that he is *not* sound in the faith! For biblical truth is never popular with the world. And if it is argued that his books are popular among multitudes of “Christians”, this, too, is a danger sign. For we live in a day when *true* Christians are a very, very small minority. They are not sufficiently numerous to turn an author into a “bestselling” author. The only way for this to happen is if his books are bought by the “mixed multitude” filling the pulpits and pews of the vast majority of “churches” today – goats pretending to be sheep, who have departed from the true faith and are proclaiming all kinds of unbiblical errors. What did the Lord Jesus Christ say? “*Woe* unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Lk. 6:26).

Another reason why large numbers may read an author’s book is that publishing houses know how to “puff” a book up, with slick advertising and all kinds of gimmicks, thereby turning it into a “bestseller”. But this has nothing to do with its *contents*.

Now it would be bad enough for a professing “Christian” publishing company to have a “bestselling” list – as if, because a book is a “bestseller”, it is somehow doctrinally sound and of value to the Church. But note: Richardson is a “*New York Times* bestselling author”. And not only is the *New York Times* a secular newspaper, but its “bestseller” list has been criticised by authors, publishers and others for *not* providing an accurate picture. A report in *Book History* found that many professionals in the industry “scoffed at the notion that the lists are accurate”.<sup>4</sup> *Manipulation* of the list by authors and

publishers has been known to occur. In 2013 *Forbes* magazine published a story entitled “Here’s How You Buy Your Way Onto *The New York Times* Bestsellers List.”<sup>5</sup> And in 2014 the *Los Angeles Times*, in a story entitled “Can Bestseller Lists be Bought?” described how heretical “pastor”, Mark Driscoll, contracted a company to place his book on the *New York Times* bestseller list for a fee of \$20 000. The contract stated that the company “will be purchasing at least 11,000 total orders in one week.”<sup>6</sup> It worked – Driscoll’s book reached No.1 on the hardcover advice bestseller list in January 2014.

Besides, the list itself becomes self-fulfilling in determining which books sell in large numbers and remain on the list. “Each week millions of readers look at the New York Times bestseller list to see what everybody else in the country is reading. And as soon as a title hits the list, booksellers typically push the book to the front of the store and slash its price by as much as 40 percent. So it seems reasonable to assume that once a book makes the list its sales will really take off – if not for the lower price then because readers might view bestseller status as a sign of quality or because they don’t want to miss the action.”<sup>7</sup>

Given these facts, describing Joel Richardson as a “*New York Times* bestselling author” is nothing but an attempt to make gullible readers believe that he has something really worthwhile to say. Modern man worships at the idol of celebrity. The truth, however, is that being a “*New York Times* bestselling author”, or any other kind of “bestselling author”, means that every true Christian should regard the book with suspicion even before opening it.

As for Richardson being a “biblical teacher”, his false doctrine concerning an “Islamic Antichrist”, and his arrogant dismissal of the careful scholarship of Alexander Hislop, is a refutation of that claim. Let us examine what he says.

### ***Does Richardson Possess Special Knowledge, Hidden from Believers Through the Ages?***

Apparently he thinks so! – or at least, those who sit at his feet, agog with awe, think so. The author of the article praising Richardson’s book, *Mystery Babylon*, writes: “Richardson believes he has solved the enigma surrounding the city of evil which will arise in the last days and host an empire which will persecute believers. However, to solve this mystery, Richardson needed to debunk some of the most widespread fallacies which exist among Christians.”<sup>8</sup> Another sentence in the article, advertising Richardson’s book, says, “One of the greatest mysteries in Scripture – solved at last!”

Warning signals should flash in our heads when we read statements like this. When a man comes along, telling us that he has definitively “solved an enigma” which has supposedly stumped and baffled Christians through the ages, he is claiming to possess special knowledge which was not granted to anyone before him. This is a very dangerous claim to make. Essentially this would mean – if it were true, which it is not – that what sound Christians have known, believed and taught through the centuries was all false, and that we had to wait until the twenty-first century for a new “prophet Joel” to arrive and put us all right.

Through the centuries Christians have maintained, for very sound, biblical, and historical reasons, that the Roman Papacy is the biblical Antichrist,<sup>9</sup> and that the religion of Antichrist, “MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT”, described in such detail in Revelation 17 and 18, is the *Roman Catholic institution*. The evidence is simply overwhelming, and I have dealt with this evidence elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> The Holy Spirit has given us all the identifying marks in His prophetic Word, and they are absolutely conclusive, as has been recognised by the Lord’s people through the ages. The “great city” is Rome; it arose centuries ago, and will not (as Richardson and others believe) merely arise in the final days of earth’s history; and it has persecuted the saints of God for centuries. But now along comes a certain Joel Richardson and says, “No! All those Christians were wrong. *I* have solved the enigma!” This is sheer arrogance, so typical of so many in today’s professing “Church” who have no understanding of Church history and no real interest in it, believing themselves to be the most enlightened Christians of all time.

## ***Richardson Wiser in His Own Eyes Than All Who Have Believed that Rome is “Babylon”***

Richardson contends that “theories about ‘Mystery Babylon’ being rooted in a secret religion or the ‘Illuminati’ are demonstrably untrue. Theories about the Vatican being behind the Antichrist are similarly rooted in deception, or even, as Richardson argues, madness.”<sup>11</sup>

Note that! Not only does Richardson maintain that “the Vatican being behind the Antichrist” is a belief “rooted in deception”, but that it may even be *madness!* We will see, in a moment, how he comes to this conclusion, by accusing Alexander Hislop, author of *The Two Babylons*, of possibly being “mentally ill”. But first, it must be pointed out that it is certainly untrue that “Mystery Babylon” is rooted in some secret religion or in the Illuminati. Secret religions are very real (such as the Freemasons, among many others), but they are not the root of “Mystery Babylon”. And the Illuminati is very real, but it falls under the Jesuits of Rome – it is a mere branch of Jesuitism.<sup>12</sup> Those who see “Mystery Babylon” as being rooted in such secret religions or organisations are missing the truth. *“Mystery Babylon” is the Papal system!* It is this, and nothing else.

To claim that it is a deception to tie the Vatican to the Antichrist, is to deny the evidence of history, known and understood by men of God through the centuries and based on solid and overwhelming evidence, that the Roman Papacy is the biblical Antichrist, and that the Vatican is the headquarters of the religious system known as the Roman Catholic institution.

It is bad enough that Richardson thinks of this as deception. But to call it madness! This is truly shocking. Wittingly or unwittingly, he is doing the Jesuits’ own work.

### ***Richardson Claims Alexander Hislop was Probably “Mentally Ill”***

Let us come to what Richardson says about Alexander Hislop, the author of the great classic work, *The Two Babylons*, and about the book itself:

“The same thing with the Roman Catholic Church, if you read the work of Alexander Hislop, a Scottish minister who wrote in the late 1800s. He wrote *The Two Babylons*. The entire foundation for his book, again, is The Nimrod Myth. But then he takes it about 10 steps further and he claims the Roman Catholic Church today, and not just the Roman Catholic Church but Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism, really any number of any liturgically based or traditional denominations; he says their whole foundation is in Babylon, is in Nimrod’s ancient religion. Many, many Protestants have latched onto this, but there’s no historical basis for it whatsoever.”<sup>13</sup>

In this one paragraph, Richardson has done wonders for the Roman Catholic harlot, as well as for its sister-harlot Eastern Orthodoxy and its daughter-harlot, Anglicanism! He has merely called them “liturgically based or traditional denominations.” In other words, he recognises them as churches in some form. But *none* of these are true churches! They do not worship God in the true manner; they do not proclaim the true Gospel; they do not teach the true doctrines of the faith. They are false religious systems. And – despite Richardson’s airy wave of the hand, denying any historical basis for it – the foundation of Roman Catholicism certainly *was* in ancient Babylon! As Hislop so conclusively demonstrates in his monumental and thoroughly researched work, the doctrines of the false religion of Nimrod’s ancient Babylon have been carried over, lock, stock and barrel, into Roman Catholicism.

What Richardson fails to appreciate, also, is that Hislop is not the only one to whom we can go to find the necessary information which proves these things. He did a most admirable job of putting a vast amount of the historical, archaeological and other evidence together in one place; but one can study these same things by making use of many other books, without reference to his work at all, if one so desires. In *The Two Babylons* itself is a very long list of works quoted or referred to in the book; and many more could be added today.

But then comes this man’s shocking statement regarding Hislop himself:

“But to make matters worse, Alexander Hislop, I’d actually go so far as to say that a careful analysis of his work probably shows he was suffering from some type of mental psychosis, that he probably had

a mental illness.”<sup>14</sup>

This is not the place to go in-depth into the fact that the concept of “mental illness” is nothing but a myth, invented within the religion of psychology which has so permeated western society.<sup>15</sup> The immaterial mind, which is not the same as the brain, cannot be *ill*; only a material body can. Richardson was clearly using the term as so many do in society today, having been thoroughly indoctrinated in the lies and myths of psychology, as meaning that Hislop suffered, in some sense, from *madness*. And his use of the words “crazy” and “craziness” in the paragraph quoting him below, prove this to be, indeed, the case.

What sheer arrogance, what heights of haughtiness, to take a book as well-researched as Hislop’s, a book whose immense value has been recognised by Christians ever since it was written, and dismiss it not just as being inaccurate, but as being the work of a madman!

See how he justifies his “diagnosis” that Hislop was “mentally ill”:

“He [Hislop] actually says that the very cross itself is thoroughly pagan, that no Christian should have any association with the symbol of the cross. He says that every single symbol or liturgy that you can find or imagine in the Catholic Church is all thoroughly pagan. And when you start looking at how did he come to these conclusions, this crazy stuff, he says polka dots are completely pagan, circles are completely pagan, crosses are pagan, on and on it goes. And it’s all based on these ‘connections’ he finds in these ancient pictorial sourcebooks from the 1700s or whatever or a similarity in some name, and it ends up being craziness. This is material that needs to be rejected by careful students of the Scriptures and history, and we need to get back to the Bible and what the Scriptures say.”<sup>16</sup>

Firstly, the cross *is* a thoroughly pagan symbol, and no Christian should use it in any way.<sup>17</sup> Hislop is not the only one who has demonstrated this fact, and claiming that it is not a pagan symbol just shows up Richardson’s ignorance. Secondly, Hislop never said that every symbol or liturgy “that you can find *or imagine*” in the Papal system is thoroughly pagan. That would be a nonsensical statement. Thirdly, why is Richardson defending the symbolism and liturgy of the blasphemous, pagan, antichristian Roman Catholic institution anyway? *Why would he even want to?* Fourthly, Hislop does *not* state that mere polka dots and circles are pagan. This is Richardson doing his best to make Hislop look “crazy” to people. Fifthly, Richardson’s dismissal of “ancient pictorial sourcebooks from the 1700s or whatever” again reveals his own ignorance. Any reader of Hislop’s work will see the sound historical sources he used. This statement also shows Richardson’s arrogance again – “from the 1700s or whatever” – as if men who conducted careful research centuries ago were really just backward, ignorant types because they did not live in these more “enlightened” times (when we have Richardson’s own “wisdom” to supposedly guide us!). Sixthly, his statement that we need to get back to what the Bible says has a very hollow sound to it, considering that *he himself* has failed to follow his own good advice.

### ***So What is “Mystery Babylon” According to Joel Richardson?***

“My position,” says Richardson, “is that Mystery Babylon is an end-time reality, it’s an end-time entity, it’s an end-time city. And biblically speaking, Babylon represents, if you will [well, no, Joel, we won’t, actually], the spiritual stronghold of Satan in the earth at any given time. So all the way back to Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon – that is the prototype, that is the basis for the end times Babylon.”

No, “Babylon” does *not* represent Satan’s stronghold at any given time. This is to wrench the teaching of Revelation 17 and 18 out of its context, and to ignore the very, very specific identification marks given within these chapters themselves, which can *only, ever* be applied to the city of Rome, and to the religious system which has its headquarters there: the Roman Catholic institution.<sup>18</sup> In addition, the prototype was not Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon (although this typified much regarding Rome, the New Testament “Babylon”), but *Nimrod’s Babylon* just after the flood! But Richardson mocked what he derisively termed “The Nimrod Myth”.<sup>19</sup>

So then, what is “Mystery Babylon” today, according to Richardson’s theory, having (in the eyes of his supporters) “solved at last” the “enigma” which, they fondly imagine, has baffled Christians for centuries, until the modern “prophet Joel” came along to explain it all to us?

“Well in the last days, the question is, what is the reigning beast empire?... What is the empire of our day, where Satan’s stronghold is over the Earth?... The answer is that it’s the Islamic empire. Islam is the last beast empire. The system of the Antichrist, the religion of the Antichrist is Islam. And so if we look to the spiritual and financial capital of the Islamic world, it’s the city of Mecca and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

No Christian denies that Islam is a massive threat to Christianity and the world. But that does not make it the system and religion of the Antichrist! For Islam to fit that bill, it would have to fulfil all the prophecies relating to the Antichrist; and it simply does not.<sup>20</sup> The Antichrist is one who claims to *take the place of Christ*; a supposed “vice-Christ”. He is a *false “christian”*. And no Islamic leader ever makes such a claim! The Antichrist of Bible prophecy is each and every pope of Rome. Mecca cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, fit the description of “that great city” in Revelation 17 and 18. *Only Rome can.*

Richardson says: “The city of Mecca, quite simply, is the greatest city of idolatry that mankind has yet to produce.” He continues to display his ignorance of the Bible, and of Church history, by making such a statement. Does he really think that Mecca exceeds Rome as the greatest city of idolatry in all history? Then he knows *nothing* of Rome, and has no true understanding of the false religious system that has ruled over Rome, and from Rome, for so many centuries. And indeed, this is shown by his next sentence: “Every day, 1.62 billion people, the world’s second largest religion after Christianity as a whole, bow five times towards that city and pray towards that great pagan idol called the Kaaba”. The only way Richardson can claim that Christianity is a larger religion than Islam, is if he includes the Roman Catholic system as part of “Christianity”! For Roman Catholics number well over a billion people. So then, he is claiming that Roman Catholicism is part of “Christianity as a whole”! And making this claim displays such ignorance, not only of what Roman Catholicism is but even of what *true Christianity* is, that he forfeits any remaining claim to being a teacher of Bible prophecy – a claim that lies in tatters anyway, given what we have analysed above.

He also claims that Saudi money is the greatest single financially corrupting force in Washington. “There is not a single lobby, there is nothing that compares to the corrupting power of the Saudis in Washington.”<sup>21</sup> Oh, yes, there is – it’s the Roman Catholic lobby. *This* has been, for much longer than Saudi money, the greatest single financially corrupting force in Washington! But Richardson would ignore this, because he believes that Roman Catholicism is “Christian” – and because he just has not done his research properly. But the evidence is overwhelming for anyone who looks.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Richardson says: “Saudi Arabia is the financial source and the spiritual source of the greatest Antichrist religion that mankind has ever produced.” Again he completely overlooks Roman Catholicism. *This* is the true religion of Antichrist. And *this* religion is even more deadly than Islam, because, unlike Islam, it presents itself to the world as the one, true Christian Church. And it has succeeded in convincing the world that this is so.

Joel Richardson has done the professing “Church” a grave disservice by his books, which are misleading, inaccurate, and consequently extremely harmful. They will serve to turn away the attention of multitudes from where the Lord, in His prophetic Word, has directed believers to look: to the seven-hilled city of Rome, and to the religious monstrosity that rules from there.

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## **ENDNOTES:**

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1. *The "Islamic Antichrist" Deception*, by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries, 2016. Available on our website: [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk)
2. *The Two Babylons, or the Papal Worship*, by Alexander Hislop. Loizeaux Brothers, Neptune, New Jersey, 1959.
3. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist." [www.wnd.com](http://www.wnd.com).
4. *Book History*, Vol. 3, pgs. 286-304. Penn State Press.
5. *Forbes*, February 22, 2013, art. "Here's How You Buy Your Way Onto the New York Times Bestsellers List".
6. *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 2014, art. "Can Bestseller Lists be Bought?"
7. Stanford Graduate School of Business, July 1, 2004, art. "The Surprising Impact of the Bestseller List." [www.gsb.stanford.edu](http://www.gsb.stanford.edu).
8. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."
9. See *Antichrist Exposed*, by Ronald Cooke. Pilgrim Brethren Press, Petersburg, Ohio, 2002. A monumental study of the position held by Christians through the centuries, that the Roman Papacy is the Antichrist of Bible prophecy.
10. See the following materials by Shaun Willcock, all available either for purchase or as free downloads on our website: books: *Trappings of Popery* and *Satan's Seat*; pamphlets: 1) *The Great Whore of Revelation*; 2) *Bible Prophecy Speaks of Popery*; 3) *The Antichrist*; 4) *The "Islamic Antichrist" Deception*; MP3s/CDs: 1) *The Antichrist*; 2) *The Book of Revelation* (a verse by verse study of the entire book of Revelation). Website: [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk)
11. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."
12. See *"Holy War" against South Africa*, by Shaun Willcock. Bible Based Ministries, 2011. See our website for purchasing details: [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk)
13. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."
14. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."
15. For a comprehensive study on this matter, see *The Myth of Mental Illness*, by Thomas S. Szasz, Perennial Library, Harper and Row Publishers, New York, 1974; and *Psychoheresy*, by Martin and Deidre Bobgan, EastGate Publishers, Santa Barbara, California, 1987.
16. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."
17. See *Trappings of Popery*, by Shaun Willcock, pgs.41-48. Bible Based Ministries, 2007. See our website for purchasing details: [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk)
18. See *The Great Whore of Revelation* (pamphlet), by Shaun Willcock, available as a free download on our website; and *The Book of Revelation: Chapter 17* (MP3s or CDs), by Shaun Willcock, available for purchase from our website: [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk)
19. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."
20. See the following pamphlets by Shaun Willcock: 1) *The Great Whore of Revelation*; 2) *Bible Prophecy Speaks of Popery*; 3) *The Antichrist*; 4) *The "Islamic Antichrist" Deception*. All available for free downloading from our website: [www.biblebasedministries.co.uk](http://www.biblebasedministries.co.uk). See also the following MP3s/CDs by Shaun Willcock, available for purchase on our website: 1) *The Antichrist*; 2) *The Book of Revelation* (a verse by verse study of the entire book of Revelation).
21. *WND*, February 5, 2017, art. "Author Believes He's Identified City of Antichrist."

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