

Throughout this book there are useful insights on Genesis. It will be a good textbook for upper-level undergraduate students.

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Aune, David. *Revelation 1-5*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52. Dallas: Word Books, 1997. 600 pp. Hardback, \$32.99.

_____. *Revelation 6-16*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52B. Ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Ralph P. Martin. Dallas: Word Books, 1998. 500 pp. Hardback, \$32.99.

_____. *Revelation 17-22*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 52C. Dallas: Word Books, 1998. 592 pp. Hardback, \$32.99.

The publication of David Aune's Word Biblical Commentary on *Revelation* is a long-awaited event, eighteen years in the making. It is literally a monument to the kind of patient, detailed, rigorous, and thorough research that fewer and fewer biblical scholars take time for anymore. Aune has provided a work of reference quality that I believe will be of major significance, not only in our generation, but for many generations to come.

The commentary fills a huge gap in recent study of the book of Revelation. In particular, Aune provides a wealth of detailed information about the Greco-Roman environment of the Apocalypse, an area that has been relatively neglected in recent years. This information is presented in detailed comments and excursuses scattered throughout the three volumes. Word studies and discussions of the Greco-Roman setting for the ideas, events, and geographical references in the book of Revelation range widely through the primary and secondary literature and the archaeological evidence as well. Since most readers of Revelation are far more familiar with the biblical texts than with the environment of the first Christian century, Aune's commentary will be a treasured resource for pastors and lay students of the Bible who want a deeper understanding of the original setting for the visions described in the book.

On pp. 104-105, for example, a long paragraph compares Jesus, the key-bearer of Rev 1:18, with a Hellenistic goddess called Hekate, who was very popular in first-century Asia Minor. Based on more than fifty pages of unpublished research (presented as a paper to the Society of Biblical Literature more than ten years ago), Aune notes that Hekate was thought to possess the keys to the gates of Hades. She was considered both the source and ruler of heaven, earth, and Hades, and the agent by which they come to their end. She was called the beginning and the end, the eternal one, the key-bearer, and the mistress of the cosmos. The description of Jesus in Rev 1:13-18, therefore, was deliberately intended to evoke parallels to a popular concept in the minds of ancient readers.

On pp. 617-619, Aune presents in another long paragraph an outstanding summary of the archaeological evidence for the street layout of first-century Jerusalem (with reference to Rev 11:8). The single summary paragraph is grounded on twenty-six separate references to eleven different archaeological publications as well as the fruits of personal discussion with at least one key player. Anyone

who has ever done a thorough tour of the old city of Jerusalem and its environs will find the brief discussion intensely illuminating. This type of thoroughness, even in minor details, is not unusual in Aune's commentary.

Aune's thoroughness extends to painstaking observation of the text of the Apocalypse. He notices obscure details like the series of similes in Rev 6:12-14 (388, 391) and the 3-2-3 pattern of reference to earth, sea, and trees in Rev 7:1-3 (431-432). In addition to an outstanding, twenty-seven-page summary of the text-critical issues in Revelation as a whole (cxxxiv-clx), he offers detailed comments in support of his own textual choices on a verse-by-verse basis at the beginning of each section (6-7, 24-25, 41-43, 63-68). He also offers what I consider the best overview of the syntax of Revelation available (clx-ccvii).

Aune's mastery of the secondary literature is amazing, considering the overwhelming proliferation of studies in recent years. In addition to eighteen full pages of commentaries and other works related to the Book of Revelation as a whole, there is additional bibliography presented at the beginning of each section that relates to specific issues in that portion of the Apocalypse. As an example of thoroughness, note the five-page review of literature on the ordering of the twelve tribes in Rev 7 (461-465)!

Are there weaknesses in this invaluable work? Yes, but they do not diminish its value. They are actually the result of choices by the author to limit the scope of this massive piece of work. For example, the very wealth of detailed information results in a large amount of repetition in different settings. Because the commentary is focused directly on the individual trees that make up the Apocalypse; one rarely gets a glimpse of the forest as a whole. This makes the commentary difficult cover-to-cover reading. I suspect, therefore, that most purchasers of the commentary will use it as reference for specific research rather than attempting to devour the whole, and in fact Aune has indicated to me that this was his intention.

It might seem advantageous, therefore, that Aune produce a brief follow-up volume focusing on how his detailed research affects broader issues of interpretation. But the commentary itself is atomistic rather than synthetic in character, so a summary of interpretation based on it is probably not realistic. The details of Revelation come through clearly but the big picture is usually lost.

An upcoming article in *Biblical Research*, vol. 43, (1998), details the grounds for another major weakness of the commentary, Aune's analysis of John's use of the OT. With the exception of some introductory comments regarding Semitic influence on the Greek grammar and syntax of Revelation, Aune does not address the issue directly. In the course of the commentary, however, he offers comments on specific instances of allusion that are inconsistent and not always reliable. He rarely offers any explanation of the basis for collecting and evaluating OT allusions. This aspect of his commentary, therefore, seems to have been relatively neglected in comparison to others.

A third major weakness of the commentary is Aune's theory of source criticism. Contrary to the majority of scholars today, Aune felt compelled by the evidence of the text to posit a series of twelve relatively-independent textual units the author produced over a period of time. These were then brought together over a process of two editions, resulting in the book as we know it. Aune believes, also contrary to most scholars, that

the beginning of that process started as early as the time of Nero. Few will feel compelled by his argumentation to take up the theory in the form that he has presented it. On the other hand, however, reading the arguments upon which his source theory is based highlighted many details of Revelation that readers will find fruitful for their own approaches to the Apocalypse.

In conclusion, I believe that this monumental work offers a major contribution to our available resources with respect to the general environment in which Revelation was written, its text, grammar, and syntax. From now on no one who has not consulted Aune should be taken seriously. Aune has given us the most in the areas where Revelation scholarship has been the weakest. Other commentators, including G. K. Beale in the NIGTC series, have majored in the areas of OT use, unity, and synthesis, where this work is weak. This commentary will play a strong contributing role in the ongoing attempt to make sense of a fascinating and frustrating ancient work. Although we live in a time of information overload, Aune's contribution to that overload is well worth the steep investment in time and money.

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Baker, David W., and Elaine A. Heath, with Morven Baker. *More Light on the Path: Daily Scripture Readings in Hebrew and Greek*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998. 384 pp. Paperback, \$21.99.

More Light on the Path is a daily devotional with readings from the OT in Hebrew and from the NT in Greek. Each text is accompanied by a brief set of vocabulary and grammatical helps. This devotional seeks to provide daily exercise in the two languages for those who have studied Hebrew and Greek but do not normally use them in daily life. The book begins with an explanatory Foreword and Preface, a table of Abbreviations, and a Calendar of Weekly Readings for the years 1998-2007. There is an index of biblical texts in the back.

More Light on the Path is the successor to Heinrich Bitzer's *Light on the Path*, also published by Baker Books, now out of print. For those familiar with the earlier devotional, *MLOP* differs in many respects. *LOP* provided Greek and Hebrew texts only, but *MLOP* provides additional devotional introductions for each day in English. The English daily devotions may be distracting to some, as they are not themselves scriptural passages. However, these English homilies are usually short and easily ignored by those so inclined.

LOP was arranged by calendar dates (e.g., February 26), but *MLOP* is arranged by week and day with a theme for each week (e.g., Week 9 Self Control. Day 1). *MLOP* has fifty-two complete weeks plus "Week 53," which has two days of readings for leap year or any other adjustment needed to keep the devotional in step with the calendar year. In *LOP* the Hebrew texts are given in 16-pt. type, but in *MLOP* they are in 12-pt. type. Both devotionals have the Greek texts in 12-pt. type. The Hebrew typeface size is significant for two reasons. The Hebrew vowel points are far more difficult to read in any typeface than the accents and breath marks of the Greek, and in *MLOP* the Hebrew typeface has thin upright strokes, making even the consonants difficult to read. Overall, *LOP* was justified in giving its Hebrew text a substantially