

fundamental principle of a loving relationship—ask, seek, and knock” (111).

The final chapter presents suggestions for becoming an effective Christian, cross-cultural teacher. Important among these are those that indicate ways of creating a place for oneself in the community, finding fellowship with locals, and coping with culture shock.

The book is a readable combination of scholarship (in-text references and bibliography) and story (the authors' own and that of others). Each chapter closes with research and reflection questions. Useful figures help to visualize information presented.

From my perspective of years of international teaching, the Lingenfelters are right on target. Those planning to teach cross-culturally—especially those who wish to do so from a Christian perspective—would do well to carefully study this delightful and useful volume.

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Maier, Harry O. *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002. xvi + 271 pp. Paperback, \$18.00.

This book is refreshingly different from anything I have ever read on the book of Revelation. Maier does not offer readers a commentary on the Apocalypse; neither does he offer a treatise on exegesis, theology, backgrounds, or even the many popular versions of Reader Response. Instead he explores the Apocalypse in service of a basic thesis, that the book is an indispensable resource for helping first-world Christians understand the true role of the church in a secular society. In other words, Revelation is a call to radical discipleship. To achieve this reading, Maier integrates elements of all the above approaches.

Maier argues that in its original context the Apocalypse was written as a critique of the economic and political order of the Roman Empire. John was urging his readers to view the attractions of “empire” as antithetical to God’s intentions for the human race. Maier goes on to argue that the message of Revelation, as he outlines it, is just as relevant today as it was in the first century. He sees the position of Christians in the Western world as analogous to their situation in John’s day. Like John’s audience, Christians today are faced with a choice; they can uncritically participate in “empire,” ignoring the suffering it unleashes on the world, or they can seek out a more costly kind of discipleship, one that goes against the tide of commercialism and political power.

To reach this point, Maier departs from the traditional consensus that the Apocalypse was written to comfort Christians facing Roman persecution. He believes that the book addresses a situation where there “is not too much persecution, but too little.” The Christians of John’s day, he believes, had become all too comfortable with their position in society (he calls his approach to the book “reading Revelation as a Laodicean”). The Apocalypse, then, becomes an “unveiling” of the Empire in all its domination, tyranny, and idolatry. The face of empire is a lie, and John’s readers are called to stir up trouble rather than get comfortable with their situation.

Maier’s standpoint on the Apocalypse is informed by his own family’s experience. He grew up German in post-World-War II Canada. His older relatives remembered the suffering and privation of being German in Eastern Europe at the close of the war. As a result, they never felt truly at home in the Englishness of Western Canada or in its peace, prosperity, and material comfort. In the context of this double alienation, the book of Revelation spoke to these expatriates as if it had been written just for them. The problem with Canada was not persecution of Germans, but its foreignness to both the language and the values these Germans had brought with them from the East.

Reading Maier’s book is far too rich an experience to summarize adequately here. I will attempt, however, to briefly categorize the seven main chapters. In the first

chapter ("Apocalypse Troubles"), the author suggests that Revelation ought to be seen as a "troublemaker" that afflicts the comfortable more than it comforts the afflicted. The tool the book uses to do this is memory. The empire built great monuments to the past so that imperial history would govern the way people thought and lived in the present. The Apocalypse, likewise, used reminders of the cross and its OT antecedents to create a contrasting view of the present. The Maier family brought nothing with them from Eastern Europe but their memories, and those memories kept them from being truly at home in the Canadian West. So at a time in history when memory seems redundant (in light of hard drives and internet data bases), Revelation calls readers to challenge the empty and repetitive material consumption of the present with the memory of Apocalypse and its alienation from the contemporary culture.

The second chapter ("I, John") focuses on the kind of person who could write an apocalypse like the Revelation. Maier first traces depictions of John through centuries of classic paintings. Earlier painters depict John roaming free on Patmos; later ones confine him to a cave, or is it a psychiatric clinic? Maier then surveys more recent attempts to psychoanalyze John. The Apocalypse seems to welcome such analysis, for John and his emotions are cleverly embedded in the vision he describes. First-person narrative draws us into the story line of the Apocalypse. We witness what John saw. His eyes become our eyes and his ears become our ears.

This analysis leads to the themes of the next two chapters ("Seeing Things" and "Hearing Voices"). If one thinks of the Book of Revelation as a play, the audience of the play (readers) quickly discovers that they are not only watching the play; they are part of the show themselves. John's eyewitness reports draw the audience to adopt his point of view about God and about the ethical responsibilities of those who follow God. Conversely, in an honor-shame culture, the concept that all creation is under God's all-seeing eye elicits shame from those inclined to take up the viewpoint of Jezebel, Balaam, or the Nicolaitans.

The Apocalypse not only lets you see things you hadn't seen before; it also makes you hear things: hymns, woes, and heavenly discourse. According to Maier, the Apocalypse is "the New Testament's noisiest book." It is a blend between the oral and the written; it is intended to be heard as well as read (Rev 1:3). Originality in oral situations is more like variations on a theme rather than an invasion of bold, new melodies. It is the nature of orality to rehearse the same idea in different words and from differing viewpoints. It is also natural in orality to be flexible in regard to narrative time. All these characteristics are abundantly "heard" in Revelation (e.g., 7:4-8; 9-17).

The fifth chapter explores the "Games with Time" that are found in the Apocalypse. A. A. Mendilow has noted that third-person novels write a story forward from the past. First-person novels write them backward from the present. Maier notes, however, that the Apocalypse is first-person narrative that spans from the past all the way into the future. In a sense, time in Revelation is on two levels; in the earthly realm time seems to rush on ahead of itself; in the heavenly realm it slows down virtually to a stop (Rev 4:8-11). At various points in the book (such as 7:4-8) one is catapulted into the future, only to plunge back into cycles of earthly destruction that precede in point of time (e.g., 8:7-9:21). But the Apocalypse, in spite of all this rushing around in time, does not end with the End, but returns to the world of the seven churches, placing before them the decisions they need to make (Rev 22:16-21).

In the sixth chapter ("The Praise of Folly"), Maier takes up the hot issue of violence in the Apocalypse. Following the lead of David Aune, Sophie Laws, Eugene Boring and others, he sees the violence of the Apocalypse more in terms of an action comedy (such as the movie *True Lies*) than a violent and depressing tragedy (such as *Apocalypse Now*). He argues that

those, such as Tina Pippin, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, and Robert Royalty, who focus on the dark side of Revelation's violence, have missed an important element. Taking a cue from John's comedic double stupidity near the end of the book (Rev 19:10 and 22:9), Maier sees the irony in Revelation working to undermine standard ancient models of irony. Instead of poking fun at the "other" from a distance, as irony was and is wont to do, he sees John poking fun at himself and his perceptions as well. Ultimately, this is "unstable irony," where the reader is led to question all pretensions to absolute knowledge and power. John does not replace one empire with another; he turns the concept of "empire" inside out. While Jerusalem resketches the images of Babylon, it is everything that Babylon is not; it is a reversed image.

In chapter 7 ("Remembering Apocalypse"), this reversed image focuses on a slain Lamb at the heart of the final Paradise (Rev 21:22-23; 22:1, 3). The consummation of the Apocalypse contains the images of Roman wealth and power but with a decisive difference. The Roman goal of wealth, status, and dominance is replaced by what Maier calls "cruciform irony." To remember "Apocalypse" is to view everything from the perspective of the cross of Jesus of Nazareth. Cruciform irony denies cultural urges to be greedy, idolatrous, and self-centered. It invites disciples of the Lamb to stop trying to control secular society or conquer the world for Christ. Cruciform irony considers the earthly transformations of both revivals and the social gospel as temptations to unbelief and faithlessness. It is satisfied instead with the abundance that comes from loving God and one's neighbor as oneself.

The whole book is provocative. Readers from all sides of the Christian spectrum will certainly find plenty to be offended about. Many "liberals" will be offended at Maier's seeming disinterest in projects for earthly reform, his advocacy of Christian withdrawal from attempts to transform this world (205-206). Many conservatives, on the other hand, will be offended at his apparent dismissal of any inevitable ending to history (xi) and his relative disinterest in the heavenly realities that most Christians have seen in the book. I too did not agree with everything I read in this book. But I somehow sensed that I was a better person for having read it, and for me, that was enough.

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Mathewson, Steven D. *The Art of Preaching Old Testament Narrative*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002. 288 pp. Paper, \$16.99.

The title of this volume accurately summarizes its content. Its author is a practising preacher with a passion for expounding narrative texts, and that enthusiasm is clearly evident as he unfolds the homiletical possibilities of OT stories. The book is well organized into three main sections. In the first, "From Text to Concept," Hebrew narrative conventions are explained and guidelines given for sensitive exegesis. The second, "From Concept to Sermon," outlines strategies for moving from exegesis to exposition. This is followed by a third section composed of five sample sermons, the first by Mathewson himself, aimed at exemplifying the preceding theory. Two appendices deal with advanced plot analysis and recommended Old Testament commentaries.

Mathewson's explanation of the nature of Hebrew narrative, covering, e.g., plot analysis, characterization, and point of view, is a fair summary of current scholarship. There is nothing here that is original, however, and one would not expect a book of this type to break new ground. This section is clearly for the uninitiated evangelical preacher. Those who have read Alter, Bar-Efrat, Berlin, or Gunn and Fewell will not have their understanding of Hebrew narrative enhanced. The author's evangelical background, and an assumed evangelical readership, mean that he gives hardly any space to ways of reading narrative that counter his presuppositions. So while Mathewson is a congenial