

no reason whatsoever to assume a date any later than the final years of Cyril's episcopate for this interpretation. This, it would seem, is an *interpretation* of a rite, perhaps at least as old as the 330s in Jerusalem, not the development of a *new* postbaptismal ritual *after* the time of Cyril of Jerusalem himself!

This is a work of first-rate scholarship and merits wide attention from scholars in various disciplines. I highly recommend it!

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Tonstad, Sigve K. *Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation*. Library of New Testament Studies, no. 337. London: T. & T. Clark, 2006. xvi + 232 pp. Hardcover, \$168.00.

Sigve Tonstad is Associate Professor in the School of Medicine and Associate Professor of Theological Studies in the School of Religion at Loma Linda University. Judging from the eloquent prose in *Saving God's Reputation*, he could also be an associate professor of English or journalism. The book was a pleasure to read not only for the way in which he unpacks the essence of the book of Revelation, but also for the articulate way in which he expresses the ideas in beautiful prose. He clearly has a gift for writing.

Tonstad takes a unique approach in this study. Instead of beginning with a careful exegesis of his major passage, Rev 14:12, he first develops the narrative context by tracing the storyline of the book of Revelation to demonstrate that "the meaning of *pistis Iesou* in Revelation is best understood when Revelation is read as a theodicy of God's handling of the reality of evil from its inception to its demise" (3). He aims to show that "within this comprehensive narrative context, the term *pistis Iesou* expresses 'the faithfulness of Jesus' in the unveiling of the character of evil and his faithful disclosure of God's character" (ibid.). The key to understanding the call for *pistis Iesou* in 14:12 is understanding God's method of unmasking the deceiver in the drama who has challenged God's ways and authority. "Since the issue in the conflict revolves around the kind of person God is, the winner of the battle is not determined simply on the basis of power and might" (ibid.). God accomplishes his victory through the slaughtering of the Lamb. "This Lamb is the definitive manifestation of God's character in history. Moreover, the expression *pistis Iesou* (14:12) is inextricably linked to, and defined by, the slaughtered Lamb" (ibid.).

After outlining his method and attempting to clarify the literary parameters of Revelation in Part 1, Tonstad launches into the storyline of Revelation in Part 2. Again, he does this in a unique way, starting from the end of the storyline in Rev 20, where the great deceiving dragon, that ancient serpent called the devil and Satan, is first bound for a thousand years, then released for a brief period, in which he resumes his work of deception and destruction, then is destroyed in the lake of fire. The important question is raised as to why Satan is released from his prison to deceive the nations again. Some proposed answers are surveyed, but each is rejected. The answer will be developed after

the storyline has been more fully examined. But the importance of the figure of Satan in the plot of the storyline is clearly pointed out at this juncture.

Tonstad next moves upstream to Rev 12, exploring the setting and sequence of the storyline from this central perspective. Here he points to the connections between this passage and the language in Rev 20, as well as significant OT backgrounds in Gen 3 and Isa 14, which connect the storyline in Revelation with the storyline found elsewhere in Scripture. He concludes that the plot in Revelation “*is precisely the action of the plot that is developed and illuminated by the Old Testament passages in question*” (79, emphasis original).

Still working in Rev 12, Tonstad identifies the main characters in the storyline as Jesus and Satan, and he develops the plot more thoroughly, carefully comparing details of Rev 12 with Isa 14:12-20; Ezek 28:11-19; and Gen 3:1-6. He concludes that the storyline of Revelation, in the middle as at the ending, “gives ‘the ancient serpent’ a central role in the narrative” (107). That serpent, Satan, in the plot beginning on earth in Gen 3, attempts to cast doubt on God’s motives and impugn his character in order to supplant the government of God on earth as he attempted to do first in heaven, according to the poems in Isaiah and Ezekiel. All of this OT context is brought undiminished to the narrative plot of Revelation. It pertains to “what must take place.”

Tonstad then moves to the first half of Revelation and begins to explore the storyline from that perspective, considering the allusions to the fallen “Shining One” of Isa 14 and the chaos he produces on earth in Rev 8 and 9, and comparing with the orderly throne-room setting in heaven in Rev 4–5, highlighting the function of the slaughtered Lamb as he prepares to break the seals on the all-important scroll. The worthiness of the Lamb to open the scroll is pronounced in such a way as to suggest that “*absolutely no one else would have solved the cosmic conflict this way*” (141, emphasis original). “The all-absorbing issue facing the heavenly council in Revelation should also be construed in such a way that freedom is the issue on which the decision will turn. . . . The slaughtered Lamb that is worthy to take the scroll and break its seven seals embodies God’s self-giving love made manifest in the interest of preserving the freedom of the universe” (143).

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Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2006. 582 pp. Paper, \$30.00.

Christopher Wright is the director for international ministries for Langham Partnership International, known in the U.S.A. as John Stott Ministries. Most of the material in this book appeared in basic form in previous works such as *God’s People in God’s Land: Family, Land, and Property in the Old Testament*; *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*; the trilogy *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*; *Knowing the Holy Spirit Through the Old Testament*; *Knowing God the Father*