

of human depravity would suggest that a change in social systems driven by the church will merely change the nature of the systemic sinfulness but cannot remove it. Furthermore, Heltzel offers no engagement with Jesus's prediction about the future fate of his followers. Rather than envisioning his disciples as social activists seeking justice, Jesus predicted they would be marginalized and persecuted by society (John 15:18–16:4; Matt 10:16–25). How might Heltzel reconcile such texts with his ethical model?

Does this mean Christians should not influence societal structures? Heltzel must be aware of historical movements led by individual Christians who influenced societal structures while avoiding the toxic alchemy that blends the church with politics. The nineteenth-century animal welfare movement in Europe provides such an example. Furthermore, John Wesley transformed British politics, not by organizing political action but by mass conversions to Christ, which happened to change voting patterns. These alternatives may address some of the concerns of prophetic ethics, but are not addressed by Heltzel.

This book is worthwhile reading and will stimulate thoughtful reactions across multiple theological perspectives. It challenges the reader to consider new and diverse perspectives in a respectful, congenial fashion, and makes a good addition to one's library.

Southern Adventist University
Collegedale, Tennessee

STEPHEN BAUER

Yarbro Collins, Adela, ed. *New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*. BETL 291. Leuven: Peeters, 2017. ix + 644 pp. Softcover. USD 123.00.

The essays in this volume originate from the sixty-fourth Colloquium Biblicum Lovaniense, which was held in Leuven on 23–25 July 2015. They assess the current state of research on the book of Revelation and explored some new approaches and perspectives seeking to move forward the scholarly study of the last book of the New Testament canon. In addition to the introduction, written by Adela Yarbro Collins, the work comprises twenty-six essays, of which fourteen were main papers at the colloquium. The volume is a polyglot collection with eighteen English, five German, and three French contributions organized into two parts: the main papers and seminars and the short papers. Interestingly, some of the “short” papers, such as those of Michael Labahn and Gerd J. Steyn, are significantly longer than a number of the main papers. Also, several essays in the second group deserve the epithet of “main” contribution, since by raising new questions and utilizing new approaches they address promising prospects for furthering academic discussions on Revelation.

The main papers were written mostly by renowned scholars, well established in the research of the book of Revelation. Some of them have authored commentaries or notable monographs on Revelation, such as Adela Yarbro Collins, Steven J. Friesen, Martin Karrer, Thomas Witulski, Jacques Descreux, Craig R. Koester, and Judith L. Kovacs. A number of short papers came from the younger generation of scholars, who recently carried out doctoral research on the book of Revelation or in other areas having potential for

shedding some light on interpretive problems arising in the book. The international character of the work also needs to be acknowledged as a strength. In addition to American and Western European scholars from Germany, Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland, France, and Spain, valuable insights also appear from researchers at academic institutions in Russia, South Africa, and the Philippines.

Eight of the fourteen main papers deal with hermeneutical and theological questions, while the rest focus on interpretive problems arising in specific visions. The focus given to hermeneutical and theological issues is due to the fact that misinterpretation of the book has been, and still is, the result of ignoring the character of the book of Revelation. A number of the main papers carefully and thoroughly ascertain the state of research by providing an overview of the scholarly discussion and clarifying issues that have surfaced as major foci while also advancing the investigation. For example, Adela Yarbro Collins assesses the use of Scripture in the book of Revelation, and John J. Collins addresses the question of the book's genre. Both areas of study, which are of critical hermeneutical importance for interpreting the work, have received a tremendous amount of scholarly attention in recent decades and will continue to attract interest. Significantly, Adela Yarbro Collins suggests refining terminology in the discussion by proposing the use of "Scripture" (which she defines as "authoritative sacred books") instead of "Old Testament" as a more appropriate expression for the extant biblical literature John alludes to several hundred times in the book of Revelation. She also cautions against the narrow view of limiting the interpretation of Revelation to the study of the use of Scripture, because relating the work to the culture of first-century Asia Minor is necessary for responsible interpretation. John J. Collins contributes to the discussion on genre by arguing that the predominant genre of Revelation is apocalypse (although the book is also a prophecy and a pastoral letter) and relates this insight to the "motivational structure" of the book. Namely, Revelation is a type of literature presenting an "alternative world," which functions as an apocalyptic work prompting the people of God to steadfastness and endurance in the face of crisis. In his paper on "Violence in Revelation," Jan Willem van Henten, emphasizes the importance of defining the concept of violence clearly when investigating the question that has attracted significant interest in the last three decades of Revelation studies. He suggests that focusing on physical harm is insufficient, because pestering, verbal abuse, negative stereotyping, and various kinds of discriminations also qualify as non-physical violent behavior. Van Henten sees Revelation's absolute claim to the truth as a major problem and points to the violent implications of the stereotyping of others in the book. His argument indicates the need for further research in this area, which would elucidate the relationship between Revelation's doom scenarios and its non-violent Lamb Christology.

Steven J. Friesen, in his contribution entitled "A Useful Apocalypse: Domestication and Destabilization in the Second Century," notes patterns of redirecting Revelation's political and economic "wildness" in four second-century sources (Irenaeus's *Adversus haereses*; Justin Martyr's *Dialogue with*

Trypho; two fragments from Papias, Irenaeus, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*; Clement of Alexandria's *Quis dives salvetur*). He argues that the objective of "repurposing" Revelation was to serve the early Christian authors' agenda: institutional legitimation. Friesen holds that Revelation should be freed with its wild potential from the "domestication" to which its interpreters confined it by taming the dangers this book holds. While Friesen is correct regarding the explosive potential Revelation holds for lifting up divine transcendence in the face of all human authority, he limits the book's "wildness" to the political and economic critique of the first century imperial context. It would be illuminating to go somewhat deeper by investigating further. For example, he could include hermeneutical procedures in early Christian prophetic interpretation, and exegetical evidence in the writings of interpreters for putting the coming of the Antichrist in the future without relating it to the first-century context. The contribution of Craig R. Koester in this volume is remarkable. He points out, in his discussion of the Beast from the Land (Rev 13:11–18), that the scale of crisis depicted in the book does not correspond directly to the readers' social situation. He argues that it is uncertain how clear the connections between Revelation 13:11–18 and the first-century context would have been to the original readers. He suggests correctly that the images the texts evoke should be informed by what the readers know from other contexts: not only the Greco-Roman traditions, but also other parts of Revelation and Jewish scripture and tradition. The difficulties interpreters of the second and third century faced by trying to correlate Revelation's imagery with social realities seems to provide an ample reason for rethinking the extent of the influence of the imperial concepts on the interpretation of Revelation's visions.

A number of authors focus on exploring theological aspects of particular texts or topics. Judith L. Kovacs, in her theological interpretation of the millennial kingdom, draws from Irenaeus and Augustine and identifies five different purposes of the millennium, which is a fine contribution to the discussion on the text in Rev 20:1–6, receiving an enormous amount of attention in the past. Tobias Nicklas, traces the portrayals of the human beings in Revelation and sketches their main features. He reaches the conclusion that the primary feature of the human being is mortality and demonstrates that Revelation does not have the concept of an immortal soul. He also notes the relational dimension of the human being, who is capable of making choices in relation to God, but also against him. In their papers, Konrad Huber and Michael Sommer examine Revelation from the perspective of spatial categories. This promising approach merits more attention because of the intense dynamics between heaven and earth, which both authors correctly recognize. However, in further studies on spatial categories, it would be worth giving close attention to the function of the heavenly temple as a major concept in Revelation's unfolding drama, and to examine the impact of the concept on the development of Revelation's theological themes. Enrico Norelli explores the concept of time in Revelation and concludes that the main elements for the construction of time are found in 1:1–3 and 22:6–12; therefore, he analyses the parallels between the two passages. It is well known that the prologue and the epilogue of the

book are replete with language of imminence, which surfaces also at other places throughout the book. For temporal studies of Revelation, giving close attention to the language of imminence and its theological function would be a promising enterprise.

Questions of the grammar and text of Revelation continue to be discussed. Joseph Verheyden contributes an extensive discussion on the purely grammatical approach to John's strange Greek. Martin Karrer deals with the problem of establishing the text of Revelation and provides information on issues regarding the preparation of the *editio critica maior* project, which has been undertaken in Wuppertal since 2011. This edition seeks to establish not only the earliest text of Revelation, but also contain variants which reveal aspects of the history of theology that have influenced the text.

In a number of essays published in this volume, new approaches are utilized, which offer various ways for moving forward. The studies on social ethics by Beate Kowalski and on emotion-psychological aspects of the wrath of God by Michael Labahn, demonstrate how approaches from the humanities enhance understanding of the interpretive issues. Alexander E. Stewart explores *argumentum ad baculum* ("argument to the stick") in John's argumentative strategy. He concludes that John's threats are being used in an appropriate argumentative context in which divine threat would be expected. While the essay is erudite, the impression is that it is not complete enough (the author acknowledges in the conclusion the need for further research on a number of important aspects of the topic). One particularly rewarding essay is that of Marilou S. Ibita, who utilizes the Normativity of the Future approach in reading messages to two churches in Revelation (2:8–11; 3:7–13). This approach "aims to explore the revelatory character of the biblical text and the kind of future(s) it suggests" (487). In her contribution, Lourdes García Ureña, reads Revelation as a chromatic story by giving attention to the colors as an important literary strategy in sketching the unfolding of the drama of Revelation, a book in which visions are imbued with colors. The study of John's chromatic spectrum has promising potential for exploring how John wrote theological meaning into the story-line, but the study of García Ureña focuses more on the nature of the chromatic spectrum and the dynamic of the use of colors throughout the book, rather than the theological significance of them. The conclusions of her fine research on the language of color, therefore, need to be carried forward in a new enquiry focusing on the theological meaning of colors and the significance of their interplay.

Several studies in the volume focus on particular aspects of noteworthy interpretive problems, which have a long and rich history of interpretation, such as the riders of the Apocalypse (Jacques Descreux and Thomas Witulski), the woman and the dragon (Régis Burnet), the mark of the beast (Craig R. Koester), the heavenly books (Veronika Androsova), the one hundred and forty-four thousand (Gert J. Steyn), and Babylon (Eliza Rosenberg). Contributions on issues in feminist interpretation (Olivia Stewart Lester and Eliza Rosenberg) and ecological reading (Maricel S. Ibita and Carmelo B. Sorita) are also part of the collection. Interestingly, no essays on Armageddon

and the end of the world or on the reception of Revelation in contemporary media are found in this volume. In the wake of the Apocalypse in the current generation, dealing with these topics is timely now more than ever. Also, it is somewhat surprising that there is no contribution on the structure of Revelation, which is a difficult and divisive issue because of the complex movements that take place throughout the book.

Altogether, this is an excellent collection of essays, which addresses many issues, even though it is not a comprehensive guide on the state of research in Revelation studies. It would be of particular value for all students and scholars conducting in-depth research on various aspects of Revelation. On par with major commentaries, this volume should be regularly consulted. Unfortunately, its expense makes it unaffordable for individuals, but it would be a worthy investment for university libraries and collections.

Belgrade Theological Seminary
Belgrade, Serbia

LASZLO GALLUSZ