



Scot McKnight
WITH CODY MATCHETT

Revelation

for the Rest of Us

A PROPHETIC CALL
TO FOLLOW JESUS
AS A DISSIDENT DISCIPLE



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN REFLECTIVE

Revelation for the Rest of Us

Copyright © 2023 by Scot McKnight and Cody Matchett

Requests for information should be addressed to:

Zondervan, 3900 Sparks Dr. SE, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Zondervan titles may be purchased in bulk for educational, business, fundraising, or sales promotional use. For information, please email SpecialMarkets@Zondervan.com.

ISBN 978-0-310-13578-4 (hardcover)

ISBN 978-0-310-13580-7 (audio)

ISBN 978-0-310-13579-1 (ebook)

All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.Zondervan.com. The “NIV” and “New International Version” are trademarks registered in the United States Patent and Trademark Office by Biblica, Inc.®

Scripture quotations marked as NRSVUE are from the New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Any internet addresses (websites, blogs, etc.) and telephone numbers in this book are offered as a resource. They are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement by Zondervan, nor does Zondervan vouch for the content of these sites and numbers for the life of this book.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other—except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without the prior permission of the publisher.

Cover design: Darren Welch

Cover art: © Tsuji; La_Puma / Getty Images

Interior design: Kait Lamphere

Printed in the United States of America

CHAPTER 9

The Drama of Revelation

The “Timeline” of Revelation



CHAPTER 17

Babylon in the Seven Churches

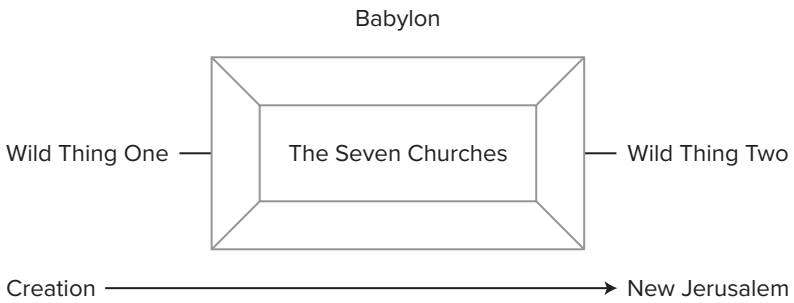
The Seven Churches



CHAPTER 18

Worshipping in Babylon

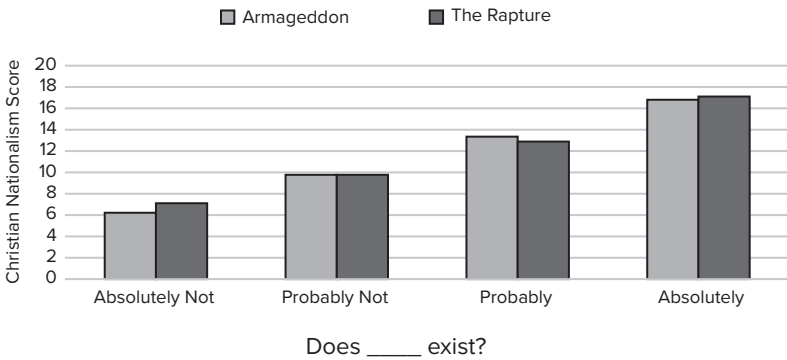
Structure of Revelation



CHAPTER 21

How Then Shall We Live in Babylon?

Figure 21.1 Predicted adherence to Christian nationalism across belief in a literal Rapture and Armageddon.



Source: 2007 Baylor Religion Survey.

Note: Ordinary least squares regression models predicting Christian nationalism scale. Controls include political party identification, political conservatism, religious tradition, religiosity, beliefs about the Bible, age, gender, educational attainment, income, and region of the country.

Dispensationalism's Seven Dispensations

Criticized and at times labeled a heresy because it was not fully formulated until the nineteenth century, dispensationalism is a method of reading the Bible (a hermeneutic) as well as a system of theology. It has often sorted the Bible into dispensations in which God administers redemption in (usually seven different) stages, or economies, that entail a stage-based response on the part of humans. A classic seven dispensations approach includes the following stages:

- innocence (pre-fall)
- conscience (to flood)
- civil government (after flood)
- patriarchs
- law
- grace
- millennium kingdom

Dispensationalism has been popularized into the following major ideas, and these have shaped the American church's perceptions of eschatology. This can be called populist dispensationalism:

creation
time of Israel, beginning with the covenant with Abraham
Moses with the law
Jesus and his life and crucifixion
church age until rapture
rapture leading to work with Israel again in tribulation
(rebuilt temple for some)
tribulation ends at battle of Armageddon
second coming with launch of millennium
release of Satan and final defeat
great judgment
eternity as new Jerusalem

Many dispensationalists do not believe all or even most of these ideas, though their disagreements with the classical viewpoint have not filtered down into a better populist presentation. The most common populist dispensational approach today is the *Left Behind* series.

Dispensationalism's Approach to Theology

There are three vital convictions in classical dispensationalism, which is a version of premillennialism (that there will be a millennium preceded by the second coming):

- (1) Israel is radically distinct from the church. Israel is about the earthly plan of God (sometimes “kingdom of heaven” in the millennium), and the church about the heavenly plan (sometimes kingdom “of God”). Hence, central to this view is a belief in a future for national/ethnic Israel, among whom God will establish an earthly kingdom to bless all the nations. It does not believe the church is the fulfillment of Israel, replaces Israel, or that Israel symbolizes the future church.

- (2) A distinct hermeneutic. Though often referred to as the literal, normal, plain meaning of language, the hermeneutic is more about how the Old relates to the New Testament, with the Old being read on its own, literal terms. The New thus fulfills what was literally stated in the Old.
- (3) A philosophy of history that anticipates completion of both God's physical as well as spiritual promises.

The first distinction (between Israel and the church) is the engine of dispensationalism, and hence the church is a parenthesis (or intercalation) in God's dealings with Israel (from Pentecost to the Tribulation). God deals with Israel, not the church (which has been raptured), during the great tribulation period (Rev 6–19). For some older approaches, the Sermon on the Mount was a message of repentance and designed for Israel in the millennium.

Revelation's various visions depict literal fulfillments of Old Testament prophecies, especially about the Davidic kingdom. From chapter 4 on, Revelation is about the future. Some root a futuristic reading of Revelation to 1:19's statements about the past, present, and what is to come. Israel and the church are consistently distinct in God's plans, and thus there is a rapture of the church prior to chapters 4–19's tribulation (sometimes mistakenly seen in 3:10–11), often called the "pre-trib rapture." Its central premillennial conviction includes that Jesus will return before the one-thousand-year reign of Christ on earth.

Dispensationalism, especially of the populist (*Left Behind*) sort, cannot be equated with premillennialism.

Major proponents: John Nelson Darby, C. I. Scofield, *The Scofield* [and *New Scofield*] *Bible*, Lewis Sperry Chafer, Dwight D. Pentecost, John Walvoord, Hal Lindsey, Salem Kirban, Charles C. Ryrie, John MacArthur, Tim LaHaye, Jerry Jenkins.

For Further Reading

- Paul Boyer. *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 1992.
- John S. Feinberg. "Systems of Discontinuity." Pages 67–85 in *Continuity and Discontinuity: Perspectives on the Relationship between the Old and the New Testaments*. Edited by J. S. Feinberg. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1988.
- Charles C. Ryrie. *Dispensationalism*. Rev. ed. Chicago: Moody, 2007.
- Matthew Avery Sutton. *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Belknap, 2014.
- Robert L. Thomas. "A Classic Dispensationalist View of Revelation." Pages 177–229 in *Four Views on the Book of Revelation*. Edited by C. Marvin Pate. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.
- Michael J. Vlach. *Dispensationalism: Essential Beliefs and Common Myths*. Rev. ed. Los Angeles: Theological Studies, 2017.

For Criticism of Dispensationalism

- Clarence Bass. *Backgrounds to Dispensationalism*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1960.
- Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock. *Progressive Dispensationalism*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993.
- Robert Jewett. *Jesus against the Rapture: Seven Unexpected Prophecies*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1979. This book is valuable because it engaged the dispensationalists in the heat of their popularity.

APPENDIX 2

What's an Apocalypse?

Too many writers reduce apocalyptic literature to simplicities or to fanaticisms. Reduction is fine as long as it is accurate, but most reductions we have seen and heard are not accurate. Instead of reduction, the best thing to do is rely on experts. In the 1970–1980s an academic group in the Society of Biblical Literature led by John J. Collins composed a complex set of characteristics of apocalyptic literature. We have reformatted and numbered those characteristics into a teaching outline:

An apocalypse is

- a [1] genre of revelatory literature
- [2] with a narrative framework
- [3] in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient,
- [4] disclosing a transcendent reality that is
- [5] both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation,
- and [6] spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.

—Collins, “Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Oxford Handbook of Eschatology*, 46; numbers added.

To this definition was later added this: apocalyptic literature

- is intended [7] for a group in crisis
- [8] with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation

[9] by means of divine authority.

—J. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5, 51; slight variations from J. J. Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 13–14; numbers added.

Read each of these characteristics again and place checkmarks next to those that fit John's Apocalypse. (We check all eight.)

John created a vision-based narrative that exposes the present in light of a heavenly, supernatural, transcendent reality and wants to reorient the life of Christians in the seven churches in light of that vision. In so doing he appeals to all the senses of the readers or listeners. He wants them to see what he saw, to feel what he felt, to hear what he heard, to touch what he touched, and because of these sensations to imagine an alternative world and *to live in that alternative world now*.

It takes an apocalyptic imagination to write and to read the book of Revelation.

Sorting out what an apocalypse is, then synthesizing apocalypse and applying the synthesis to Revelation is simplistic and unhelpful. Revelation does what it does not because that's how apocalypses work but because that's how Revelation works. In fact, Revelation is the first book in history to call itself an "apocalypse" (Rev 1:1).

For Further Reading

Greg Carey. *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*. St. Louis: Chalice, 2005. Carey composes a comprehensive approach in proposing "apocalyptic discourse" as one mode of probing ultimate things.

John J. Collins. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016.

Klaus Koch. *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*. Studies in Biblical Theology 2.22. London: SCM, 1972.

Christopher Rowland. *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.

APPENDIX 3

The Antichrist

The word “antichrist” (*antichristos* in Greek) is a compound word comprised of the words “anointed one” (*Christos*) and “instead of” (*anti*). It appears only *five times* in the New Testament (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:2–3; 2 John 7) and *once* in the Apostolic Fathers (Polycarp’s *Letter to the Philippians*). Several images, however, have been conflated with the idea of the antichrist throughout the centuries: the Gospels refer to “pseudo-Christ” who will appear and produce signs and omens to lead the people astray (Matt 24:24 and Mark 13:22). Second Thessalonians speaks of “the lawless one” who epitomizes evil and leads a deception campaign against the people of God (2:3, 8, 9). Finally, Revelation refers to the wild things that will rise from the sea and the land (13:1–18). None of these images, however, need to refer only to one future figure who will rise and draw all peoples together against God. Rather, “antichrist” refers to a class of people (comprised of individuals) who oppose the work of God in Christ.

In other words, since “antichrist” functions as a representative symbol for anyone opposed to Christ, anyone who does not follow the slaughtered but standing Lamb (Jesus) is antichrist.

Two important points remain: (1) The term “antichrist” does not appear anywhere in the book of Revelation. (2) References to the “antichrist” in the letters of John do not speak of a singular individual, but all those who oppose Christ. Thus, “Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh; any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist!” (2 John 7 NRSVUE).

We are better *not* assigning the word “antichrist” exclusively to one specific person who will rise into world leadership in the future, but rather we should see in the term, and terms connected to it like “wild things” and “Belial” and “the little horn” of Daniel 7, those who oppose God. Rather than looking for one antichrist, we should discern the presence of antichrists among us.

For Further Reading

- D. A. Hubbard. “Antichrist.” Pages 60–61 in *The Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*. Edited by D. J. Treier and W. Elwell. 3rd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Craig R. Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 38A. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Pages 530–40.
- Mitchell G. Reddish, *Revelation*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018. Page 268.
- Paul Trebilco. *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004. Page 268.

Armageddon (Har-Magedon)

H*ar-Magedon* is a Hebrew term combining the prefix *har* (“mountain”) with the name *Megiddo* (a place in northern Israel), which combined means Mount Megiddo. There is no mountain at Megiddo. But Meggido is often combined with the words of Revelation 14:20, where blood flowed “as high as the horses’ bridles for a distance of 1,600 stadia.” Hence, Armageddon often refers to the world’s final battle, the bloodiest of all. Not all is well with reading Armageddon as the geographical location of the world’s last battle.

The name is borrowed from various places in the Hebrew Bible:

- Zechariah references profound grief “as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo” that the ethnic groups will experience on account of future defeat (Zech 12:10–11 NRSVUE; cf. Rev 1:7; 19:11–21).
- The book of Judges speaks of Deborah’s victory over Israel’s enemies by the waters of Megiddo (Judg 5:19–20).
- King Ahaziah, ally of Ahab and Jezebel, is destroyed at Megiddo (2 Kgs 9:27).
- King Josiah is killed because he refuses to “listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God” (2 Chr 35:22 NRSVUE), and the reference to mountains (*har*) recalls the visions of God defeating his enemies on the mountains of Israel (Ezek 38:8–21; 39:2, 4, 17).

Combined, the name *Har-Magedon* symbolically functions as a composite image to describe (perhaps the location of) the final destruction of all that stands in opposition to God. John was not expecting a future battle to take place at a nonexistent mountain north of Palestine; rather, he was expecting the defeat of God's adversaries represented by Rome (Babylon). Thus, the name *Har-Magedon* is an image for assembling, resisting, and ultimately defeating the antichrist forces that stand in opposition to the Lamb.

Those familiar with Revelation, however, will know that the battle of *Har-Magedon* never actually takes place—all may assemble, but resistance ends at the parousia of Jesus Christ.

For Further Reading

- G. B. Caird. *The Revelation of St. John*. Black's New Testament Commentaries. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1966. Pages 206–7.
- Darrell W. Johnson. *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey through Revelation*. Vancouver: Canadian Church Leaders Network, 2004. Page 290.
- Craig R. Koester. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 38A. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Pages 667–68.

Ancient Mythologies

It may surprise some readers, but John uses images from ancient mythologies in chapter 12 too. That is, John recasts characters in the various playbills of Greco-Roman mythology. That basic mythology was this: *the birth of a divine child to a cosmic mother and the threat posed by the chaos monster*.

Greco-Roman Mythology: The great dragon, Python, learned through an oracle that he would one day be killed by one of the children of Leto. Following the impregnation of the goddess Leto by Jupiter, Python tried to hunt down the goddess to kill her before she could bear the child, but she was preserved and protected by the North Wind. She bore twins, Apollo and Artemis, upon the isle of Delos, forty miles west of Patmos. After the birth (at four days old), Apollo hunted down Python, initially wounding and finally killing the monster at Delphi with his bow (Apollo and Artemis were archers). In the Greco-Roman context, this story was used as imperial propaganda to celebrate the emperor as Apollo, the son of the gods who has defeated the chaos monster (Virgil *Ecl.* 4.10; Dio Cassius, *Hist. Rom.* 62.20.5).

The Book of Revelation: Here's how some of the hearers of this book would have understood the images. John portrays the cosmic woman about to give birth, while the chaos monster, the dragon, seeks to devour the child. The woman is preserved with the wings of the great eagle and saved by the land, while her male son was seized up to the throne of God as emperor of emperors, son of the living God who has dealt the initial death blow (in his death and resurrection), which sealed the ultimate defeat of the chaos

monster (Gen 3:15; 37:9–11; Exod 19:4–6; Ps 2:9; Isa 27:17–18; cf. Rev 1:4–5; 5:6; 12:7–12; 20:11–15).

Thus, John parodies and subverts the divine claims and arrogant presumptions of Rome by recasting the characters in their ancient mythology: the divine Son, the One who will shepherd the ethnic groups, conquers the forces of darkness and chaos, displacing Rome's powers from "the role of Apollo by the Davidic Messiah, and instead associating [Rome] with the chaos monster, the Dragon" (Paul, 214–215). In other words, John pulls back the curtain on the way of Rome: the Roman systems and rulers should not be hailed or celebrated, because they are nothing more than a tool of the dragon used to propagate destruction and chaos. The male Son (Ps 2:9; Isa 7:14; 66:7–8), however, has conquered the forces of chaos and should be hailed, celebrated, and followed (Rev 1:17–18; 4–5; 14:4–5).

For Further Reading

Adela Yarbro Collins. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001. Pages 65–71.

David A. deSilva. *Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021. Pages 126–29.

Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018. Pages 214–15.

Mitchell G. Reddish. *Revelation*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018. Pages 232–33.

The Rapture (A Very Brief History)

The idea of *the rapture* first emerged, as we know it today, in the early nineteenth century from the spiritual vision of a teenage girl at a small revival in Glasgow, Scotland. The woman claimed to have had a vision of a ‘*pre-tribulation rapture*’ at which time the church would be taken out of this world and swept up into heaven. British minister John Nelson Darby, having been present for the sharing of the vision, became convinced of its validity, and began sharing the vision as truth. Darby brought his rapture gospel to America, where he quickly encountered Dwight L. Moody, who soon became the worldwide disseminator of a ‘*pre-tribulation rapture*.’

In the early part of the twentieth century, the rapture gospel movement gained ground with the publication of the *Scofield Reference Bible*, which was not simply a study Bible with references in the margins, but one that inserted guiding headings and study notes into the biblical text (e.g., the heading for Matthew 24 is “Jesus Predicts the Rapture”). In adding these headings and study notes, readers of the *Scofield Reference Bible* became convinced that their Bible made specific references to the rapture. The rise and widespread acceptance of this lay theological movement was further solidified by the emergence of schools, publishing companies, and the (in)famous *Left Behind* series.

In other words, the rapture-gospel movement is a modern phenomenon that was nonexistent for eighteen hundred years

of church history, before becoming a cultural touchstone and a central tenet of dispensationalist theology in the last two centuries.

For Further Reading

Ben Witherington III. "Where Did Rapture Theology Come From? Ben Witherington III." Seedbed. October 8, 2014. YouTube video, 5:55. www.youtube.com/watch?v=d_cVXdr8mVs.

N.T. Wright. "Farewell to the Rapture." *N. T. Wright Page* (blog). August 2001. <https://ntwrightpage.com/2016/07/12/farewell-to-the-rapture/>.

Rapture or Resurrection?

In his book *The Indelible Image*, New Testament scholar Ben Witherington III reiterates a common piece of interpretive wisdom: “A text without a *context* is just a *pretext* for what we want it to mean.” In other words, when we isolate and divorce particular sections of any text from the surrounding *literary, historical, and theological* contexts, we cultivate the conditions for importing our own meaning. In considering key passages that surround the rapture, it seems that many have isolated and divorced passages from their contexts in attempts to create biblical support. Two key passages have been stripped of their *literary, historical, and theological* contexts.

In Matthew 24, Jesus compares the future return of the Son of Man to the days of Noah, because before the flood “people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away” (Matt 24:37–39; cf. Gen 6–9). Jesus uses the flood as an image for future judgment: *when the flood comes one will be taken and the other left behind* (v. 40). While many have removed the passage from the context to suggest that some will be left behind to endure the tribulation, in the story of Noah, only the righteous are preserved and left behind. In other words, within the imagery, the righteous are left behind, while all others are swept away in the flood of judgment.

There is but one “clear” text about the rapture in the entire

New Testament. All others are used for rapture thinking but are not clear. That text is 1 Thessalonians 4:15–17.

For this we declare to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will by no means precede those who have died. For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will be with the Lord forever. (NRSVUE)

This text is clear to many even though a rapture of humans into the sky is not found anywhere else in the New Testament. It is certainly not in Revelation, a text that one would think would have had it. Many today, therefore, see Paul using imagery from the city leaders going out to meet an emperor or some dignitary before he enters the city. The crucial term (“to meet”) is often used of a group of people exiting a city to have an official meet and greet to prepare for a proper welcome in the city itself.

In 1 Thessalonians, Paul writes to those in Thessaloniki about the final return of Jesus Christ, when the “Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God,” and the dead in Christ will rise and they will meet the Lord in the air (4:16–18). Paul uses technical language to describe *welcoming* and *celebrating* the royal king as he returns to his city (similar to the entrance liturgy of Ps 24:7–10). The language describes the royal entourage who will ascend to welcome the King of Glory in the air (air does not mean heaven), in order to usher him back to earth in royal celebration. In other words, the language signals a common image: when the watchmen of a walled city heard the trumpet sound, signaling the proximity of their royal king, they would send out an entourage and create a royal procession as the victorious king returned. Similarly, the trumpet will sound, and we will depart to

greet our royal King, not so that we might be raptured to heaven, but so that we can welcome and celebrate the return of the royal King to earth.

J. Nelson Kraybill therefore contends that the “rapture” more accurately describes not being whisked away into heaven but our going out to meet Jesus to welcome him back to earth!

When taken within their own *literary, historical, and theological* contexts, neither of these passages speak of a rapture but offer potent images of judgment and celebratory welcome. The *absence* of rapture texts anywhere else in the New Testament, especially in Revelation, tells against its clarity.

For Further Reading

R. T. France. *Matthew*. Tyndale New Testament Commentary. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985.

Nijay K. Gupta. *1–2 Thessalonians*. New Covenant Commentary Series. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016.

J. Nelson Kraybill. *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010. Pages 174–75.

Ben Witherington III. *The Indelible Image: The Theological and Ethical Thought World of the New Testament, Volume 1: The Individual Witnesses*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009. Page 41.

———. “Is the Rapture Doctrine Biblical? (Ben Witherington).” Seedbed. October 15, 2014. YouTube video, 5:14. www.youtube.com/watch?v=cg8lRGqtMHc.

Is Revelation Fantasy?

A question some scholars of Revelation ask: “Is Revelation a type of literature commonly called ‘fantasy’?” Fantasy, which departs from reality and creates a world of its own, permits the hearer to imagine a different world than one’s own and challenge the hearer to hope and action. Revelation believes God is in control, the people of the seven churches are those destined for new Jerusalem, and the powers of Rome are destined for destruction. Call it what you want, a few hundred kind folks meeting privately somehow knowing they will rule and Rome will fall partakes in imagination or fantasy. Some of my younger students think of this book as mythic or mythical, not in the sense of “that’s nothing but a myth” but in the sense of Marvel movies and Harry Potter stories.

One of the world’s leading scholars of apocalyptic literature, John J. Collins, is fond of calling this literature “fantastical” or “fantasy” and refers to some of the visions in this literature as “fantasies of violence” (311). Bauckham and Hart define fantasy as “wanton transgression of the rules which, in our familiar world, define the boundaries of the permissible and impermissible” (89), and they state that “fantasy is what could not have happened” (311), even what is “outrageous, non-sensical, impossible” (311). They, too, know that Revelation leads “us to the very brink of the unimaginable, peering into the brilliant darkness beyond” (100).

We are inclined to think that viewing Revelation as fantastical can be helpful to modern readers—not by assigning the book to the bookshelf marked “Fantasy Literature” but seeing that fantasy overlaps with the imaginative, fictive literature we call “apocalyptic.”

As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza says, Revelation is not “predictive-descriptive language but . . . mythological-imaginative language.” That is, it “is mythological-fantastic language—stars fall from heaven . . . animals speak, dragons spit fire, a lion is a lamb, and angels or demons engage in warfare” (*Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 25).

But notice this: apocalyptic, fantasy, and imaginative literature like this is profoundly *cathartic* and *therapeutic* for the oppressed people of western Asia Minor and for all readers since. Adela Yarbro Collins describes the process of release and catharsis that happens for the hearer of this text being read when fear and resentment-shaped feelings are projected onto the screen with images of defeat and triumph. John J. Collins puts it like this: “By enabling people to let off steam by fantasizing divine vengeance, it relieves the pressure toward action in the present and enables people to accommodate themselves to the status quo for the present” (321). Pippin, who also believes the Apocalypse takes part in the fantastic, adds to this sense of catharsis as healing the conclusion that catharsis also involves the community’s scapegoating of Babylon.

To hear in whatever form, especially in the evocative set of images we find in Revelation 12–13 or 18–19, that injustice and evil will be defeated by the good victories of God offers a hope-filled life and a healing orientation toward life’s rugged realities.

For Further Reading

Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart. *Hope against Hope: Christian Eschatology at the Turn of the Millennium*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999. Pages 72–108.

Adela Yarbro Collins. *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse*. Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984. Pages 152–60.

John J. Collins. *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015. Pages 308–25, 326–42.

Tina Pippin. *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021. Pages 17–21.

The Millennium

The idea of the millennium (*mille* [one thousand] and *annus* [years]) comes from the thousand-year reign of Christ and his allegiant martyr witnesses in Revelation 20:1–6. Despite the varying theological systems that have been constructed to try to explain the thousand-year reign (*premillennial*, *postmillennial*, *amillennial*), which deserve respect even when we completely disagree, the millennium, like all other numbers in the book of Revelation, functions not as statistic but as potent symbol. For some the millennium is the current reign of believers in heaven with Christ (see Hill).

John has taken the Jewish apocalyptic symbol of a temporary messianic reign on earth before the final judgment and new creation (2 Baruch 40:3; 4 Ezra 7:28–9; b.Sanh. 99a), and has used it as a symbol of *assurance* and *encouragement* for the martyr witnesses. John offers assurance that those who have been judged and condemned to death by the dragon and the wild things will be vindicated and rewarded with the kingdom (13.1–10; 20.4–6). In the end, when the heavenly perspective is finally revealed and the truth becomes evident, not only will all enemies be defeated and judged, but the martyr witnesses will conquer and be granted *life* and *rule*. The millennium symbolically demonstrates the triumph of the allegiant witnesses: those who have suffered on account of the Jesus Christ witness will in the end rule universally and receive the special rewards promised to those who have paid the highest price (first resurrection, reign, escape from second death). John

uses the symbol of the millennium to depict “the meaning, rather than predicting the manner of their vindication.”

Judith Kovacs, after sketching some major theologians’ discussion of the millennium, maps various proposed purposes of the millennium: (1) it prepares the righteous for immortality and participation in the divine nature; (2) with the martyrs vindicated, John encourages radical faithfulness; (3) it affirms the goodness of creation and God as creator; (4) it exemplifies the importance of human history in God’s salvific plan; (5) it motivates and directs human action in the present.

For Further Reading

Richard J. Bauckham. *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pages 106–8.

Charles E. Hill. *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001. Hill contends convincingly that there was more “amillennialism” in the early church than has been argued by most.

Craig R. Koester. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB 38A. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Pages 741–52.

Judith Kovacs. “The Purpose of the Millennium.” Pages 353–75 in *New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*. Edited by Adela Yarbro Collins. BETL. Leuven: Peeters, 2017.

Mitchell G. Reddish. *Revelation*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018. Pages 391, 394–95.

Utopia, Eutopia, Eudchronia, and Progressivism

Much later than John's new Jerusalem vision of an ideal society, and worthy of nothing other than a mention here, is the idea of "utopia," which turns our eyes toward Thomas More's book *Utopia* or even Jonathan Swift's satirical exposé of such thinking in *Gulliver's Travels*. John's new Jerusalem forms into various visions of a utopia—and it's true, new Jerusalem is idealistic, utopian, and unachievable by humans. More himself was playing with terms: "u" comes from "not" (in Greek *ou/ouk*) and "topia" from "place" (Greek *topos*). So, his *utopia* was not a place on earth, yet his famous book finishes with a poem that tells us his *utopia* is not a part of the known world, it greatly surpasses even Plato's ideal city, and its city and laws are so wonderful the place should be called *Eutopia*, which means "the good place."

Eudchronia is a time of near perfection on earth, the good place of the future. Propelled, even compelled, by optimism in reason's and science's capacities to make the world better and better, eudchronia succeeds the utopian visions. Social evolution then aims at eudchronia. Instead of being a "no place" on some remote island one could visit by a journey, which is what a utopia is, the eudchronia led humans to think they could achieve such a society and world, sometimes called the "Golden Era." In general, then, one finds here Thomas Paine and Jean Jacques Rousseau, the Pilgrims if not also the Puritans of colonial America, as well as the more radical socialist-communist utopians like Friedrich

Engels and Karl Marx, and one must not ignore their totalitarian manifestations. In euechronia humans believed they could bring about an ideal society.

Much of contemporary *progressivism* conceives of humans as capable, through the enactment of better laws and promotion of better people, step by step, of achieving a better city, country, and world, and is thus a kind of euechronia. In the history of Christian eschatology, progressivism is often associated with postmillennialism, not always fairly.

New Jerusalem, even though it is beyond life and death into the next life, is the climactic fulfillment of God's design for humans in God's world. John's new Jerusalem is not in another world but is this world housing the kingdom of God. Some then use "utopia" or "eutopia" or "euechronia" for the new Jerusalem; for the Romans the book of Revelation becomes dystopian. These various utopias and euechronias and progressivist idealism have been challenged by dystopian novels like George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *1984* or Ralph Ellison's *The Invisible Man*.

For Further Reading

Fátima Vieira. "The Concept of Utopia." Pages 3–27 in *The Cambridge Companion to Utopian Literature*. Edited by Gregory Claeys. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pages 4–5.

The Songs of Revelation

4:8–11: Antiphonal

Rev 4:8 Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under its wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

“‘Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,’
who was, and is, and is to come.”

Rev 4:9–11 Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they were created
and have their being.”

5:8–14: Antiphonal

Rev 5:8–10 And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before

the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of God's people. And they sang a new song, saying:

“You are worthy to take the scroll
and to open its seals,
because you were slain,
and with your blood you purchased for God
persons from every tribe and language and
people and nation.
You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to
serve our God,
and they will reign on the earth.”

Rev 5:11–12 Then I looked and heard the voice of many angels, numbering thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand. They encircled the throne and the living creatures and the elders. In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and strength
and honor and glory and praise!”

Rev 5:13 Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!”

Rev 5:14 The four living creatures said, “Amen,” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

7:9–12: Antiphonal

Rev 7:9–10 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb.”

Rev 7:11–12 All the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They fell down on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying:

“Amen!
Praise and glory
and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength
be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!”

11:15–18: Antiphonal

Rev 11:15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

“The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah,
and he will reign for ever and ever.”

Rev 11:16–18 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying:

“We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.
The nations were angry,
and your wrath has come.
The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your people who revere your name,
both great and small—
and for destroying those who destroy the earth.”

12:10–12

Rev 12:10–12 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:

“Now have come the salvation and the power
and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Messiah.
For the accuser of our brothers and sisters,
who accuses them before our God day and night,
has been hurled down.
They triumphed over him
by the blood of the Lamb
and by the word of their testimony;
they did not love their lives so much
as to shrink from death.
Therefore rejoice, you heavens
and you who dwell in them!
But woe to the earth and the sea,
because the devil has gone down to you!

He is filled with fury,
because he knows that his time is short.”

15:2–4

Rev 15:2–4 Those who had been victorious . . . sang the song of God’s servant Moses and of the Lamb:

“Great and marvelous are your deeds,
Lord God Almighty.
Just and true are your ways,
King of the nations.
Who will not fear you, Lord,
and bring glory to your name?
For you alone are holy.
All nations will come
and worship before you,
for your righteous acts have been revealed.”

16:5–7: Antiphonal

Rev 16:5–6 Then I heard the angel in charge of the waters say:

“You are just in these judgments, O Holy One,
you who are and who were;
for they have shed the blood of your holy people
and your prophets,
and you have given them blood to drink as they
deserve.”

Rev 16:7 And I heard the altar respond:

“Yes, Lord God Almighty,
true and just are your judgments.”

19:1–4: Antiphonal

Rev 19:1–2 After this I heard what sounded like the roar of a great multitude in heaven shouting:

“Hallelujah!

Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,
for true and just are his judgments.

He has condemned the great prostitute
who corrupted the earth by her adulteries.

He has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”

Rev 19:3 And again they shouted:

“Hallelujah!

The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever.”

Rev 19:4 The twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God, who was seated on the throne. And they cried:

“Amen, Hallelujah!”

19:5–8: Antiphonal

Rev 19:5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying:

“Praise our God,
all you his servants,
you who fear him,
both great and small!”

Rev 19:6–8 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting:

“Hallelujah!

For our Lord God Almighty reigns.

Let us rejoice and be glad

and give him glory!

For the wedding of the Lamb has come,

and his bride has made herself ready.

Fine linen, bright and clean,

was given her to wear.”

(Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God’s holy people.)

The Progress of Progressivism

Right-wing Christians have politicized the gospel into Christian nationalism in the Republican party, while progressive evangelicals lean Democrat or social Democrat, and at times themselves wander into thinking political power is itself redemption. Some evangelicals have shifted from traditional church-based Christianity into full-on Progressivism, that is, social justice activism that has walked away from their former faith. Yet one can't punch progressives for abandoning faith because, as Jack Jenkins more than establishes in his romp through the religious Left's impact on the last few elections in *American Prophets*, many are progressives *because of their faith*. Early in his book Jenkins makes what many would perceive to be an arresting claim since many have argued there is no coherent religion in the Left and, even more, that the Left is little more than secularization on display. But Jenkins notes with justification that "the Religious Left is the beating heart of modern progressivism." He's right.

But imbalancing faith and politics bedragons Christian progressives too. Since Revelation is for dissident disciples who are called to discern the presence of Babylon, any study of the book must deal with politics, which means both Christian nationalism and progressivism. Both have the capacity to capture and occupy, both are on display in the USA today, and both need to be understood to comprehend the potency for Revelation today. But what is progressivism? There are four major dimensions of

progressivism, one leading in some ways to the others: historical, economic, social reform, and prophetic.

The standard study of the history of progress, though now more than four decades old, remains Robert Nisbet's *History of the Idea of Progress*, and here's his definition: "Simply stated, *the idea of progress holds that mankind has advanced in the past—from some aboriginal condition of primitiveness, barbarism, or even nullity—is now advancing, and will continue to advance through the foreseeable future.*" Progress is the "dogma" that assumes "the slow, gradual, inexorable progress of mankind to higher status in knowledge, culture, and moral estate." Progress as a theory for history is at work in modern progressivism. Historical progressivism, when tied to capitalism and economic growth, became a kind of ever-expanding production and consumption of goods. We can call this economic progressivism, something resisted by one major thinker, Christopher Lasch, in his book *The True and Only Heaven*, and by all progressivists today. Instead of locking progress into economic growth, which leads to greater and greater inequities, many want to connect a theory of progress to social reform through voting and governmental regulations. About 20% of American evangelicals today are what came to be known at the turn of the twentieth century as "classic progressivists"; a good exposition of this system can be found in Walter Nugent's *Progressivism*.

Progressivists cannot be equated with either the social gospels of that era or even with liberation theology. Rather, they are Christians committed to a kind of civic republicanism that focuses on urging the government to enact laws and realities that approximate justice. Today's progressivists then have taken progressivism's central impulses into new places, but they still churn their energies from the same four chambers of the heart: social justice ideals, federal government's power to get things done, centralization of power, and the agitation of the electorate. With a big chunk of verses taken from the prophets and Jesus.

Progress's essence is about the arc of history, with many more optimistic sorts thinking it's all moving toward justice. One must, however, ask *for whom* that arc bends. The answer is

utterly undeniable: *for those in power and those favored by those in power*. Prophetic progressivism, building as it does on social reform progressivism, wants progress *for all*, so the focus becomes justice and equity. While the speculators and pessimists spend their time trying to convince others that the world is falling apart, anyone willing to look at the evidence knows that in many dimensions of life the world is progressing and getting better. There is no reason to deny this will not continue. Progress can be seen in our knowledge of and the quality of food, in global sanitation, in life expectancy, in global decreases in poverty, in the reduction of violence (though many of us know increases in some areas of crime), in our knowledge of and commitment to our environment, in the expansion of literacy, and yet also in both greater expressions of freedom and equality. No one says we have arrived, but knowledge of the last century's changes establishes a belief that we are making the world a better place.

Progressivism is on the left side of the political spectrum. As something political, as is the case with right-wing Christian nationalism, it too comes under the scope of Revelation's vision for dissident disciples discerning the progress of Babylon's powers. A standard story is that 'right-wingers are religious' and 'left-wingers are secularists,' but this has been dealt a fatal blow.

As the editors of the volume *Religion and Progressive Activism* summarize the movement, "Progressive religious groups have long promoted a morally grounded view of progressive politics, used faith-infused languages and symbolism to express their political commitments, and lent moral authority to progressive movements' claims." By progress they are speaking of social reform: "advancing a more just, more loving, and more God-like society." I will call this prophetic progressivism because they themselves use this term for themselves. What the editors of *Religion and Progressive Activism* discover is four nodes of religious progressivism: progressive actions focusing on equality, progressive values that are shaped by social justice, progressive identities in that they identify with other progressives outside their own religion, and progressive theology that seeks to reform current Christian theology toward

justice for all. As such, these are not secular progressives, and the jibe by conservatives that it is secularism seeking to sheer religion from society does not describe their movement. A major spokesperson for progressives is Philip Gorski, who argues for the revival of the American civil religious tradition. He calls his version of political engagement “prophetic republicanism.” It emphasizes a virtuous citizenry and the social responsibility and obligation of citizens but views history less in linear and more in circular terms, which means it must routinely return to its foundations. But his themes remain progressive when it comes to equality, progress, and education. He criticizes religious nationalism as “national self-worship disguised as American patriotism” while doing the same for radical secularism as “cultural condescension disguised as radical egalitarianism.” Finally, though Gorski cannot represent all prophetic progressivism, his contention is that this form of progressivism has greater capacity to check radical liberalism as well as having the capacity to open spaces for greater justice and community.

Prophetic progressivism presses hard against free market capitalism while it anchors its views in the prophetic writings of Scripture. As a theory of history, it suggests often enough an eschatology shaped by human activism more than divine intervention, and its sense of redemption at times borders more on systemic sins than personal sins. For those conversant with the study of eschatology, progressivism at times echoes postmillennialism without a millennium! In the history of Christian eschatology, many have opted for the view that the mission of the church was to evangelize the world, eventually the world would welcome the gospel, and thus the millennium would be ushered in—following which (the “post”) Christ would come after the millennium (“millennialism”).

Having said that, I do want to register a final observation: both Christian nationalism and progressivism are species, some more secular than others, of Christian eschatology, and both tend to lack the discerning dissidence of the book of Revelation.

For Further Reading

- Ruth Braunstein and Todd Nicholas Fuist, eds. *Religion and Progressive Activism: New Stories about Faith and Politics*. Religion and Social Transformation 6. New York: New York University Press, 2017. See pp. 6, 7.
- Joshua Foa Dienstag. *Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Philip Gorski. "Reviving the Civil Religious Tradition." Pages 271–88 in *Religious and Progressive Activism: New Stories about Faith and Politics*. Edited by Ruth Braunstein and Todd Nicholas Fuist. Religion and Social Transformation 6. New York: New York University Press, 2017. Pages 279, 281.
- Jack Jenkins. *American Prophets: The Religious Roots of Progressive Politics and the Ongoing Fight for the Soul of the Country*. New York: HarperOne, 2020. See page 3.
- Christopher Lasch. *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1991.
- Robert Nisbet. *History of the Idea of Progress*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 1994. See pages 4–5 (his italics), 9.
- Walter Nugent. *Progressivism: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford, 2010.

Recommended Commentaries

Revelation for the Rest of Us is not a commentary, but we have made use of commentaries throughout. The best commentaries, which often include histories of interpretation and a sketch of interpretive options for significant issues, are by David Aune, Brian Blount, and Craig Koester. They can be read with great profit.

Aune, David E. *Revelation*. Word Biblical Commentary. 3 vols. Dallas: Word, 1997; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998.

Beale, Gregory K. *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999.

Beasley-Murray, G. R. *The Book of Revelation*. New Century Bible. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974.

Blount, Brian K. *Revelation*. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2013.

Boring, M. Eugene. *Revelation: Interpretation; A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2011.

Caird, G. B. *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

Fanning, Buist M. *Revelation*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020.

Fee, Gordon D. *Revelation: A New Covenant Commentary*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011.

Keener, Craig S. *Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 1999.

Koester, Craig R. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Anchor Bible 38A. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014.

Kovacs, Judith, and Christopher Rowland. *Revelation*. Blackwell Bible Commentaries. Oxford: Blackwell, 2004.

- Mounce, Robert H. *The Book of Revelation*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Revelation*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.
- Paul, Ian. *Revelation*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries 20. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2018.
- Reddish, Mitchell G. *Revelation*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary Series. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2018.
- Tonstad, Sigve K. *Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019.
- Weima, Jeffrey A. D. *Sermons to the Seven Churches of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021.
- Witherington, Ben, III. *Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Recommended Studies

Studies on the book of Revelation are, like most books of the New Testament, a bit of a cottage industry with lots of insider talk. This book is designed for church folks and pastors and not specialists, so we have shuttled all technical notes to the back of the book and avoided getting into the weeds of academic discussion. We have benefited the most from the following studies, but five deserve top mentions: Richard Bauckham, Michael Gorman, J. Nelson Kraybill, Brian Blount, and David deSilva.

- Barr, David L., ed. *Reading the Book of Revelation: A Resource for Students*. Atlanta: SBL Press, 2003.
- Bauckham, Richard. *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993.
- . *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993.
- Blackwell, Ben C., John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston, eds. *Reading Revelation in Context: John's Apocalypse and Second Temple Judaism*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2019.
- Blount, Brian K. *Can I Get a Witness?* Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005.
- Collins, Adela Yarbro. *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001.
- Collins, John J. *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*. New York: Crossroad, 1982.
- Culy, Martin M. *The Book of Revelation: The Rest of the Story*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017.
- Daniels, C. Wess, Wes Howard-Brook, and Darryl Aaron. *Resisting Empire: The Book of Revelation as Resistance*. Newberg, OR: Barclay, 2019.
- deSilva, David A. *Discovering Revelation: Content, Interpretation, Reception*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021.

- . *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Goldingay, John E. *Daniel*. Word Biblical Commentary 30. Dallas: Word, 1989.
- Gorman, Michael. *Reading Revelation Responsibly: Uncivil Worship and Witness; Following the Lamb into the New Creation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011.
- Hays, Richard B., and Stefan Alkier, eds. *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation*. Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2015.
- Johnson, Darrell W. *Discipleship on the Edge: An Expository Journey through the Book of Revelation*. Vancouver: Canadian Church Leaders Network, 2004.
- Koester, Craig. *Revelation and the End of All Things*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018.
- Kraybill, J. Nelson. *Apocalypse and Allegiance*. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2010.
- Mathewson, David L. *A Companion to the Book of Revelation*. Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020.
- Moloney, Francis J. *The Apocalypse of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020.
- Pagels, Elaine. *Revelations: Visions, Prophecy, and Politics in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Viking, 2012.
- Peterson, Eugene H. *Reversed Thunder: The Revelation of John and the Praying Imagination*. San Francisco: HarperOne, 1991.
- Pippin, Tina. *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021.
- Schüssler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992.
- Stevenson, Gregory. *A Slaughtered Lamb: Revelation and the Apocalyptic Response to Evil and Suffering*. Abilene, TX: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013.

Notes

Introduction

- Matthew Avery Sutton, *American Apocalypse: A History of Modern Evangelicalism* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap, 2014), ix–x.

Chapter 1: Revelation for Too Many

- Christopher Rowland, *Revelation* (London: Epworth, 1993), 543.
- For a splendid new study on the churches of Revelation, see Weima, *Sermons to the Seven Churches of Revelation*. A distinctive emphasis for Weima is that these are not technically “letters” but more like sermons, and the reason for this conclusion is that these messages lack key elements of a letter. So also Aune, *Revelation*, 1:125; Beale, *Revelation*, 224. The “these are the words,” say of 2:1, sound like prophetic oracles, which Weima translates into modern discourse into “sermon.” See Weima, 3–5.
- Caird, *Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 2.
- Sutton, *American Apocalypse*, 326, 329.
- Amy Johnson Frykholm, *The Rapture Culture: Left Behind in Evangelical America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 105–29, quoting from p. 106.
- Timothy Beal, *The Book of Revelation: A Biography*. Lives of Great Religious Books 49 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2018), 202.
- Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 142.
- Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 70–73.
- Philip Gorski, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present* (Cambridge, MA: Princeton University Press, 2017), 22.
- Gorski, *American Covenant*, 22.
- Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 72.
- Rowland, *Revelation*, 544.
- Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 24.

- Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 21.
- For a complementary sketch of populist eschatology in the UK, see Stephen Holmes and Russell Rook, eds., *What Are We Waiting For? Christian Hope and Contemporary Culture* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008), 1–10.
- On the history of evangelicals and eschatology, showing a connection between social conditions and one's preferences in eschatology, see D. Bebbington, "Eschatology in Evangelical History," in Holmes and Rook, *What Are We Waiting For?*, 75–86.
- Thomas B. Slater, *Revelation as Civil Disobedience: Witnesses Not Warriors in John's Apocalypse* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2019), 98.
- Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, x.
- Greg Carey, *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2014), 228.
- Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, 15.
- On the expression "uncivil worship," Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 176–180.
- Beale, *Revelation*, 171.
- Wes Howard-Brook and Anthony Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, The Bible & Liberation (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books), 2; see also Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).
- On this chapter's general themes, see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, which is a model of reading Revelation well. See also Kraybill, *Apocalypse and Allegiance*, as well as Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*. A theopolitical reading is ignored by many, including Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone*, New Studies in Biblical Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019). In preparing for this book, I read several major studies by proponents of classical dispensationalism, and there is virtually nothing in their studies about discipleship, about dissidence, or about the divine politics revealed in this book. All that matters is what is to come.

Chapter 2: For Whom Was the Book of Revelation Written?

- On the genre of Revelation, see Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 1–23; Beale, *Revelation*, 37–43; Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 10–27; Aune, *Revelation*, 1:1xx.
- Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem: The Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 3.

- Any discussion of “empire” evokes both the Roman empire, which is the culmination of a history of violent empires in the ancient world, as well as modern theories of empire. This study concentrates on the specific manifestations of Babylon, or Roman empire, and not so much on theories of empire. By focusing on the characteristics of Babylon, we move away from potential partisan politics and closer to systemic injustices and idolatries. For one sketch, with a view toward dissidence, see Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 87–119, 223–35. They sketch economics, culture and cult, and the imperial myth (or story), as well as how Christians countered the myths of Rome.
- Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, xv.
- For a proposal for Christian dissidence, we recommend Lee C. Camp, *Scandalous Witness: A Little Political Manifesto for Christians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020).
- For the best study of Jewish attitudes to Hellenistic rulers, see Tessa Rajak et al., eds., *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).
- Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 11–20.
- On the history of interpreting details about Patmos, much of which was speculation to fill in the absence of information in Revelation itself, see Ian Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse*, Oxford Theology and Religion Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). That history reveals that some considered Patmos a symbol for the solitary location where revelation occurs—that is, a thin place. Patmos was not perceived as a prison location.
- Malcom Guite, “A Villanelle for National Poetry Day,” *Malcom Guite* (blog), October 6, 2011, <https://malcolmguite.wordpress.com/2011/10/06/a-villanelle-for-national-poetry-day/>. Thanks to my colleague, Lynn Cohick, for pointing me to this poem.

Chapter 3: Revelation and Imagination

- On the meaning of “saw” and “heard,” see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 39–40; Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*, 27–32; Paul and Perrin, *Revelation*, 22–25; G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2010). On Daniel’s approach to

- writing, see John Goldingay, *Daniel*, Word Biblical Commentary 30 (Dallas: Word, 1989), 154.
- John's so-called use of the Old Testament has been subjected to intense scrutiny, with many concluding that John, in typical Jewish fashion, reused or "re-actualized" or "re-appropriated" or created a "pastiche" of the prophets Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, or Daniel. An innovative synthetic expression for understanding how John put this text together is the word "pastiche," explored by Michelle Fletcher, *Reading Revelation as Pastiche: Imitating the Past*, Library of New Testament Studies 571 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017). For a technical discussion, see Garrick V. Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), who concludes that John must be read in the context of various versions of Old Testament texts.
 - Bruce Metzger, *Breaking the Code: Understanding the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2019), 11.
 - Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 8.
 - Richard Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005).
 - Rowland, *Revelation*, 506.
 - Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 141.
 - Richard Bauckham, "Eschatology in the Book of Revelation," in Holmes-Rook, *What Are We Waiting For?*, 48–59, here pp. 48–49.
 - Trevor Hart, "Eschatology and Imagination," in Holmes and Rook, *What Are We Waiting For?*, 127–37, quoting p. 129.
 - On various approaches to imagination, see Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*; Clyde S. Kilby, William A. Dyrness, and Keith Call, *The Arts and the Christian Imagination: Essays on Art, Literature, and Aesthetics* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2016); Richard Bauckham and Trevor Hart, *Hope against Hope: Christian Eschatology in Contemporary Context* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1999); Ruth M. J. Byrne, *The Rational Imagination: How People Create Alternatives to Reality* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005); Carey, *Ultimate Things*.
 - For Revelation's connection to modern fiction, see Frykholm, *Rapture Culture*, 131–51.

- Gregory Stevenson, *A Slaughtered Lamb: Revelation and the Apocalyptic Response to Evil and Suffering* (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2014), 96, 101.
- Adela Yarbro Collins, “‘What the Spirit Says to the Churches’: Preaching the Apocalypse,” *Quarterly Review* 4/3 (Fall 1984): 79.
- On oral performance of Revelation, see Harry O. Maier, *Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation after Christendom* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 91–122; and especially Lourdes García Ureña, *Narrative and Drama in the Book of Revelation*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 175 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).
- On the rhetorical aspects of Revelation, no one has done more than David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), and he makes summary comments throughout *Discovering Revelation*. The potent predictions of Babylon's fall and its destruction is “a device intended to heighten indignation against Rome” (*Discovering Revelation*, 162). For a brief discussion, see Koester, *Revelation*, 132–144; On interpretation of symbolism, see Beale, *Revelation*, 50–69; Aune, *Revelation*, 1:xc.
- J. R. R. Tolkien, *Leaf by Niggle* (London: HarperCollins: 2016).

Chapter 4: Babylon's Identity

- On the cast of characters in Revelation, see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 116–36.
- Paul Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Washington: Corpus Books, 1968), 228.
- David Mathewson, *A Companion to the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020), 58.
- On the importance of the throne-room scene, see Reddish, *Revelation*, 92; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Invitation to the Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Apocalypse with Complete Text from the Jerusalem Bible* (Garden City, NY: Image Books, 1981), 27.
- On women in Revelation, see Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*; Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021); deSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 146–66; Lynn R. Huber, *Thinking and Seeing with Women in Revelation*, Library of New Testament

Studies 475 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013). For a fresh undertaking, see Eliza Rosenberg, “‘As She Herself Has Rendered’: Resituating Gender Perspectives on Revelation’s ‘Babylon,’” in *New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium 291 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 545–60, who concludes that John connects Jezebel and Babylon with evil, exploitative, and enslaving women of the Old Testament.

- On Babylon and how Jews and Christians wrote about foreign domination, see Tessa Rajak, “The Angry Tyrant,” in *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers*, ed. Tessa Rajak et al., Hellenistic Culture and Society 50 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 110–27.
- On Babylon in the history of the church’s interpretation, see Koester, *Revelation*, 637–41.
- On Babylon being identified with the city of Jerusalem, see Moloney, *Apocalypse of John*, 260; deSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 146–66.
- William Stringfellow, *An Ethic for Christians and Other Aliens in a Strange Land* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2004) 51, emphasis added.
- Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 157–158, all italics in original.
- Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 43.
- On Hitler learning racial profiling from the USA, see Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Lies that Divide Us* (London: Allen Lane, 2020), 78–88.
- For “Gorman, deepening his accusations . . .,” see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 45–56.

Chapter 5: Babylon’s Characteristics

- Bauckham, *Theology of Revelation*, 43.
- For a good sketch of civil religion, see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 40–45. For another list, see Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 179–83: murder, whoring, illusion, sorcery, and worship of idols. See also Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 121–24: idolatries, violence, self-glorification, wealth. An alternative version of the seven marks of Babylon: leaving out the living

God, sensuality, injustice, worship of products, violence, deception and counterfeit, idolatry. See for this last list Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*, 302–3.

- On idolatries, see Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).
- On opulence and exploitation, see Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 38, 87–88.
- Adrian Goldsworthy, *Pax Romana: War, Peace and Conquest in the Roman World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 11; see also Mary Beard, *S.P.Q.R.: A History of Ancient Rome* (New York: Liveright, 2016).
- For the mosaics in Pompei, see Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), #170; also Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 88–97.
- On economic exploitation, gentile kings were at times comprehended in Jewish literature as “bandits”; see Richard Fowler, “Kingship and Banditry: The Parthian Empire and Its Western Subjects,” in Rajak, *Jewish Perspectives on Hellenistic Rulers*, 147–62.
- Shelton, *As the Romans Did*, #172.

Chapter 6: The Dragon and Its Wild Things

- On the central importance of Genesis 3 for Revelation, see Tonstad, *Revelation*, 176–79.
- On comparing the “beast” language of chapter 13 with Daniel, see Keener, *Revelation*, 336–37.
- On 666, see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 126–28. For an adventurous sketch of the history of interpretation, see Koester, *Revelation*, 538–40. For two longer sketches, see Rowland, *Revelation*, 528–57; Russell Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014); Michael C. Thompson, “The Book of Revelation,” in *The State of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research*, ed. S. McKnight and N. K. Gupta (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 459–75.
- On Nero and the beast, see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 384–452.
- On the rejection of identifying 666 with only one historical figure, see Beale, *Revelation*, 1130–31.

- On the web of cult and commerce in the Roman world, see J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996).
- deSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 135.

Chapter 7: The Lamb

- Slater, *Revelation as Civil Disobedience*, xi.
- For reading “testimony about Jesus” as the message of the book of Revelation, see Sarah S. U. Dixon, *The Testimony of the Exalted Jesus in the Book of Revelation*, Library of New Testament Studies 570 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017).
- Paul, *Revelation*, 71.
- Caird, *Revelation*, 73 (italics added).
- On Christology in Revelation, see Slater, *Revelation as Civil Disobedience*, 37–66. The most thorough study on the lamb in the background and world of Revelation is Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: An Investigation into Its Origins and Rhetorical Force*, WUNT 2.167 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). A conviction of John's is that, in tension with the world around Revelation, the Lamb is a victorious lamb who conquers, paradoxically, by suffering. The image, then, is not one of force or violence but one of a vulnerable victor. See the discussion by Jan Willem van Henten, “Violence in Revelation,” in *New Perspectives on Revelation*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, BETL (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 49–77, who is unconvinced Revelation can be read nonviolently.
- Metzger, *Breaking the Code*, 77.
- On the “biggest copycat” see Eugene Boring, *Revelation: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Nashville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 157.
- On the lion, the lamb, and the dragon, see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 174–98; idem, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 54–65.

Chapter 8: The Faithful Witnesses

- Richard Lischer, *Just Tell the Truth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2021), 39.
- I will avoid naming the many Protestant authors who never even entertain the possibility that this woman may be Mary. One who does see some imagery for Mary is Johnson, *Discipleship on the Edge*, 219–220.

- On the woman of chapter twelve, see Koester, *Revelation*, 542–43; Tonstad, *Revelation*, 177; Beale, *Revelation*, 625–29; Osborne, *Revelation*, 457–58; Boring, *Revelation*, 152.
- On the possibility of the woman Babylon being the same as the woman from chapter twelve, see Tonstad, *Revelation*, 240–45.
- For a brief sketch of the history of how the seven churches have been interpreted, see Koester, *Revelation*, 231–34. For a brief refutation of the chronological, predictive reading, see Weima, *Sermons to the Seven Churches*, 19–21. For a similar approach that sees the churches as segments of Israel’s history, see Moloney, *Apocalypse of John*.
- For an exceptional study of the early history of the church at Ephesus, see Paul Trebilco, *The Early Christians in Ephesus from Paul to Ignatius* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).
- Many make much of precise details in each city of the seven churches, and such details supposedly correlate with what John writes, sometimes with illumination and other times without credibility. Caution must be used (Weima, *Sermons to the Seven Churches*, 22–25). For details on each city, besides the commentaries (Aune, Koester, Blount), see especially Colin J. Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Livonia, MI: Dove Booksellers, 2001; repr., Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1986).

Chapter 9: The Drama of Revelation

- On the structure and plan of John’s Apocalypse, see Beale, *Revelation*, 108–51; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 1–37. A brief bibliography of rhetorical studies can be found in Ben Witherington III, *Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 53–54.
- On chronological readings in the dispensational and progressive dispensational approaches, the “major proponent” is Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 2016), 180.
- C. Kavin Rowe, *Christianity’s Surprise: A Sure and Certain Hope* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2020), 11.
- Keener, *Revelation*, 21.
- On the backstory of Revelation, see esp. N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and The People of God: Christian Origins and the Question*

- of God (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007).
- On the story so far, see G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 61–103.
 - Gorski, *American Covenant*, esp. 13–36.

Chapter 10: An Interlude about the Interludes

- Blount, *Revelation*, 145.
- Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 233.

Chapter 11: Three Times Seven = Completion

- On the themes, see deSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 106–24; Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 138–59; Koester, *Revelation*, 356–57. See also Peterson, *Reversed Thunder*, 87–101.
- On “They are imminent” and the general theme of next event as last event, see G. B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1980), 243–271; Edward Adams, *The Stars Will Fall from Heaven: Cosmic Catastrophe in the New Testament and its World*, LNTS 347 (London: T&T Clark, 2007).
- For a more “hopeful” approach about the foreign nations in Revelation, Allan J. McNicol, drawing on the prophetic expectation of the pilgrimage and streaming of the nations to Mount Zion, contends that at the return of Christ the nations will all convert. See *The Conversion of the Nations in Revelation*, Library of New Testament Studies 438 (London: T&T Clark, 2011). Also see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 238–337.
- For an excellent manifestation of how John re-actualizes the language of Israel’s prophets, see David Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1–22.5* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2003); deSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 57–59.
- For a succinct and challenging account of seeing the violence of Rome flipped onto John’s own violent language, see Greg Carey, “The Book of Revelation as Counter-Imperial Script,” in *In the Shadow of the Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 157–76. Carey connects this all, as well, to how John creates a voice of authority and leads modern readers of various sorts to the claims

of authority. See *Elusive Apocalypse: Reading Authority in the Revelation to John*, Studies in American Biblical Hermeneutics 15 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1999). Carey, matching John's own irony, thinks John reinscribes the violence he opposes.

- Slater, *Revelation as Civil Disobedience*, 99, italics his.

Chapter 12: A Prophet Spinning Plates

- On the theme of this chapter, see Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 60–128; Koester, *Revelation*, 123–25; deSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 106–8.
- David Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 234–35.

Chapter 13: Divine Judgments or Disciplines?

- This chapter is indebted to the work of Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 98–104.
- See also Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, and the discussion of mission in the early centuries. Also, see the still valuable Ramsay Macmullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, AD 100–400* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) as well as Carter, *Roman Empire*, 124–28; Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 150–55.
- For “sLambled,” used many times by Blount in *Can I Get a Witness?* and *Revelation*.
- Bauckham, *Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 101 (italics added).

Chapter 14: Visions of Final Justice

- On reading Revelation 19–21 as nonsequential, see Paul, *Revelation*, 313–71.
- Some have compared Revelation to the War Scroll of Qumran; see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 210–37.
- Bauckham, *Theology*, 107, 108 (italics ours).

Chapter 15: A New Jerusalem Imagination

- For major themes in this chapter, see Alan Ryan, *On Politics* (New York: Liveright, 2020), 1.71–148; for a full study of the vision here in comparison with utopianism in the ancient world, see Eric J. Gilchrest, *Revelation 21–22 in Light of Jewish and Greco-Roman Utopianism*, Biblical Interpretation Series 118 (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
- Jacques Ellul, *Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation*, trans. George W. Schreiner (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019 [1977]), 208–209; see

- also Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*; William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2001).
- On George Ladd's "present without consummation," see his *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).
 - See N. T. Wright's many writings, including his recent *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2 vols. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013); see also G. K. Beale, "The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology," in *Eschatology in the Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium*, ed. Kent Brower and Mark Elliott (Downers Gove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 11–52.
 - On new Jerusalem in the church's interpretation, see Koester, *Revelation*, 741–50; on new Jerusalem as fulfilling scriptural themes, see Mathias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19.11–22.15*, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 2.23 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1972).
 - On theocracy, see Eugene Peterson, *This Hallelujah Banquet* (New York: Crown, 2021); Justin Thacker, "Heaven," in Holmes and Rook, *What Are We Waiting For?*, 112–23: feasting, fellowship, facing God—and it begins now; Drew Strait, *Hidden Criticism of the Angry Tyrant in Early Judaism and the Acts of the Apostles*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books; Minneapolis: Fortress Academic, 2019); on the ideal temple, see Andrea L. Robinson, *Temple of Presence: The Christological Fulfillment of Ezekiel 40–48 in Revelation 21:1–22:5* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2019); G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic; Nottingham: Apollos, 2004).
 - On a rebuilt temple in the millennium and beyond, see Fanning, *Revelation*, 544.
 - Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, 129.
 - R. B. Wright, "Psalms of Solomon," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 2 vols., *Anchor Bible Reference Library* (New York: Doubleday, 1985), 2:662.

Chapter 16: New Jerusalem as Promise for Victors

- Osborne, *Revelation*, 562–63.
- Blount, *Revelation*, 52.
- Slater, *Revelation as Civil Disobedience*, 67–80.

- C. S. Lewis, *The Last Battle* (London: HarperCollins, 2014), 210–11.

Chapter 17: Babylon in the Seven Churches

- Rowland, *Revelation*, 523.
- *Sermons to the Seven Churches*, 10–11.
- For “what Christ thinks of the church,” see John R. W. Stott, *What Christ Thinks of the Church: An Exposition of Revelation 1–3* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).
- On the problems in the seven churches, see Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 60–74, who frames three problems: assimilation, complacency, persecution. DeSilva, *Discovering Revelation*, 78–87, finds three as well: tensions with synagogue, hostility from Greco-Roman neighbors, and accommodation.
- Howard-Brook and Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire*, xxii.
- Weima, *Sermons to the Seven Churches*, 41, italics in original.
- Martin M. Culy, *The Book of Revelation: The Rest of the Story* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2017), 30.
- On disordered love, see Scot McKnight, *The Jesus Creed: Loving God, Loving Others* (Brewster, MA: Paraclete, 2014); Patrick Mitchel, *The Message of Love: The Only Thing That Counts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2019).
- David Brooks, *The Second Mountain: The Quest for a Moral Life* (New York: Random House, 2019), 22.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 4 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 44.
- On “Constantinianism,” I am grateful to George Kalantzis for suggestions that found their way into this discussion. See Macmullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100–400*; Timothy D. Barnes, *Constantine and Eusebius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981); Elizabeth DePalma Digeser, *The Making of a Christian Empire: Lactantius and Rome* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2000); Mark Hebblewhite, *Theodosius and the Limits of Empire* (London: Routledge, 2020). For a view opposite Eusebius hagiography, see Paul Stephenson, *Constantine: Roman Emperor, Christian Victor* (New York: Overlook, 2009).
- Macmullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire, A.D. 100–400*, 50.

Chapter 18: Worshiping in Babylon

- On the themes of this chapter, see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 176–87, who sees seven themes of discipleship: (1) worship; (2) discernment, vision, and imagination; (3) faithfulness and prophetic resistance; (4) self-criticism; (5) cruciform, courageous, nonviolent warfare; (6) embodied communal witness and mission, including evangelization; and (7) hope.
- James K. A. Smith, *Imagining the Kingdom: How Worship Works*, Cultural Liturgies 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 14–15.
- On worship, see David Peterson, *Engaging with God: A Biblical Theology of Worship* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002).
- Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives* (New York: HarperOne, 1999).
- Lauren Winner, *The Dangers of Christian Practice: On Wayward Gifts, Characteristic Damage, and Sin* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).
- Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 4, *her italics*.
- For a good discussion of the impact of John's songs, see Gorman, *Reading Revelation Responsibly*, 4–8.
- On reading the songs as spirituals, see Brian Blount, "The Negro Spiritual," in *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 55–69; Howard Thurman, *Deep River* and *The Negro Spiritual Speaks of Life and Death* (Richmond, IN: Friends United, 1975); Daniel Seeger, "Revelation and Revolution," *Friends Journal*, June 1, 2015, www.friendsjournal.org/revelation-and-revolution-the-apocalypse-of-john-in-the-quaker-and-african-american-spiritual-traditions/.
- Thurman, *Deep River* and *The Negro Spiritual*, 36.
- For "endurance, hope, and resistance," Blount, *Can I Get a Witness?*, 95.
- For the following from Blount, see his "The Negro Spiritual," in *Cultural Interpretation: Reorienting New Testament Criticism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 55–70. For "do not receive . . .," see Blount, "Negro Spiritual," 56.
- For "I look'd over Jordan" and "the black slaves" and "this language," see Blount, "Negro Spiritual," 68.
- For "one of the angels," see Blount, "Negro Spiritual," 68.
- "The black slaves" see Blount, "Negro Spiritual," 68.
- "This language," see Blount, "Negro Spiritual," 68.

- For “listeners the spiritual energy,” see Blount, “Negro Spiritual,” 69.
- C. Kavin Rowe, *One True Life: The Stoics and Christians as Rival Traditions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).
- Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Boston: Belknap, 2007).
- On “foot-dragging” and resistance, see Drew Strait, *Hidden Criticism of the Angry Tyrant in Early Judaism and the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2019), 121–162.

Chapter 19: Worship as Witness

- On the term “witness,” I am especially fond of the work of Blount, *Can I Get a Witness?* and his articulation throughout his wonderful commentary, *Revelation*.
- Blount, *Can I Get a Witness?*, ix–x.
- King Jr., *Strength to Love*, 19.
- Peterson, *Hallelujah Banquet*, 54–55.
- Eberhard Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Biography* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000), 654–655.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Theological Education Underground: 1937–1940*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works 15 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 210.
- Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 886.
- Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 655.
- Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, 655.
- On worship as allegiance, see Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990); Sigve K. Tonstad, *Saving God's Reputation: The Theological Function of Pistis Iesou in the Cosmic Narratives of Revelation* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013).

Chapter 20: Four Marks of Babylon Today

- Ross Douthat, *The Deep Places: A Memoir of Illness and Discovery* (New York: Convergent, 2021), 5.
- Eli Watkins and Abby Phillip, “Trump Decries Immigrants from ‘Shithole Countries’ Coming to US,” CNN, January 12, 2018, www.cnn.com/2018/01/11/politics/immigrants-shithole-countries-trump/index.html. See also Laignee Barron, “‘A New Low.’ The World Is Furious at Trump for His Remark about ‘Shithole Countries,’” *TIME*, January 12, 2018, <https://time.com/5100328/shithole-countries-trump-reactions/>.

- On economic exploitation and meritocracy, see Michael Sandel, *The Tyranny of Merit: What's Become of the Common Good?* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2020).
- Benjamin M. Friedman, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2021); see too the changed perception of raw capitalism's ads in the life of Jean Wade Rindlaub, along with the routine accommodation of the gospel to the market in Ellen Wayland-Smith, *The Angel in the Marketplace: Adwoman Jean Wade Rindlaub and the Selling of America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).
- Wayland-Smith, *Angel in the Marketplace*, 6.
- On militarism, see “Military Budget of the United States,” *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_budget_of_the_United_States. And see M. Szmigiera, “Countries with the Highest Military Spending 2021,” Statista, April 29, 2022, www.statista.com/statistics/262742/countries-with-the-highest-military-spending/#:~:text=The%20United%20States%20lead%20the,year%2C%201.92%20trillion%20US%20dollars. Also, see Jacques Ellul, *The Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2020); Scot McKnight, *The Audacity of Peace*, My Theology Book 9 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2022).
- For “sLambled,” Blount, *Can I Get a Witness?*, throughout.
- On oppression and intolerance and freedom, see Robert Louis Wilken, *Liberty in the Things of God: The Christian Origins of Religious Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).
- For “American blindspot,” see Gerardo Marti, *American Blindspot: Race, Class, Religion, and the Trump Presidency* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2020).
- For America’s “original sin,” see Jim Wallis, *America’s Original Sin: Racism, White Privilege, and the Bridge to a New America* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2016).
- For “Here are three of her statements . . . ,” see Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste*, 17–19.
- For “What is the difference . . . ,” *Caste*, 70.

Chapter 21: How Then Shall We Live in Babylon?

- For the statistics in the opening paragraph: “Fractured Nation: Widening Partisan Polarization and Key Issues in 2020 Presidential Elections,” PRRI, October 20 2019, <https://www.prri.org/research>

/fractured-nation-widening-partisan-polarization-and-key-issues-in-2020-presidential-elections/.

- Andrew C. McCarthy, "The Impeachment Trump Deserved," *National Review*, January 21, 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/magazine/2021/02/08/the-impeachment-trump-deserved/>.
- Ryan Burge, "Is American Evangelicalism on the Decline?," *The National Interest*, January 28, 2021, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/reboot/american-evangelicalism-decline-177138>. Emphasis added.
- Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright, 2020), 3. Emphasis added.
- Philip S. Gorski and Samuel L. Perry, *The Flag and the Cross: White Christian Nationalism and the Threat to American Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 70.
- Andrew Whitehead and Samuel L. Perry, *Taking America Back for God: Christian Nationalism in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), quotations in order of appearance from pp. 222n19, 15, 145.
- Randall Balmer, "Randall Balmer: Something's Wrong When Devout Christians Praise Proud Boys as 'God's warriors,'" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 25, 2021, https://www.stltoday.com/opinion/columnists/randall-balmer-somethings-wrong-when-devout-christians-praise-proud-boys-as-gods-warriors/article_d85282c8-ef0a-5cba-9f51-d9cc3278e7d5.html.
- Sean Michael Lucas, "Jesus Plus Masculinity for America's Sake: Replying to *Jesus and John Wayne*," *Mere Orthodoxy*, January 25, 2021, <https://mereorthodoxy.com/jesus-masculinity-america/>. Emphasis added.
- On progress in the world today, see Johan Norberg, *Progress: Ten Reasons to Look Forward to the Future* (London: OneWorld, 2017); Hans Rosling, *Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong about the World—And Why Things Are Better Than You Think* (New York: Flatiron, 2018).
- Nathan Hatch, "The Political Captivity of the Faithful," *Comment*, February 13, 2020, <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/the-political-captivity-of-the-faithful/>.
- On the civil religious tradition and prophetic progressivism, see Philip Gorski, "Reviving the Civil Religious Tradition," in

Braunstein et al., *Religion and Progressive Activism*, 271–88; idem, *American Covenant: A History of Civil Religion from the Puritans to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019); idem, *American Babylon: Christianity and Democracy before and after Trump*, Routledge Focus on Religion (London: Routledge, 2020); Bruce Ellis Benson, Malinda Elizabeth Berry, and Peter Goodwin Heltzel, *Prophetic Evangelicals: Envisioning a Just and Peaceable Kingdom*, Prophetic Christianity (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012).

- Brian Daly, *The Hope of the Early Church: A Handbook of Patristic Eschatology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2003), 217.
- On hope, see J. Christiaan Beker, *Suffering and Hope: The Biblical Vision and the Human Predicament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

Chapter 22: A Manifesto for Dissident Disciples

- Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation*, 139 (*italics added*).
- The Barmen Declaration: https://www.pcusa.org/site_media/media/uploads/oga/pdf/boc2016.pdf.
- Eberhard Busch, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (London: SCM, 1976), 223.
- For what is found in the Barmen paragraph, see Matthew Hokenos, *Then They Came for Me: Niemöller, the Pastor Who Defied the Nazis* (New York: Basic Books, 2018), 110.
- For “Christocracy of siblings,” see Busch, *The Barmen Theses Then and Now*, The 2004 Warfield Lectures (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 65.
- Walter Brueggemann, *Israel’s Praise: Doxology against Idolatry and Ideology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 157–160.