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## Review: The Theology of the Book of Revelation and The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John

A. Boyd Luter  
*Liberty University*, [abluter@liberty.edu](mailto:abluter@liberty.edu)

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text to analogous circumstances in our world. Some are presented abstractly and others in a variety of applications that are surprisingly specific to the 1990s, revealing the breadth of her own ministerial experience.

Since the volume is designed for teaching and preaching, she also counts the readings from these letters in the *Revised Common Lectionary*—so few that “it explains the church’s unfamiliarity with these letters.” This concern for use in worship is carried over into the essays on lectionary passages by highlighting the theological motif for the day. The reading of 1 Pet 3:18–22 at the beginning of Lent, for example, “echoes the highlights in the story of salvation” and “God’s grace that was given to [Christians] in baptism.” Occasional asides are presented in a way that is appropriate to the context and yet exposes the reader to contemporary scholarship. In 2 Pet 3:14–18 she compares canon criticism to a child’s toy box, emphasizing that the whole Bible provides the larger horizon within which the individual pieces make sense.

This commentary is useful for persons who are informed theologically and exegetically. We would disagree with her on several critical issues and some interpretations of the text, yet it is an excellent example of good writing and the clear presentation of the determined meaning of the letters. In evangelical situations it would be useful for analytical comparison, as an example of critical positions put to positive Christian exhortation, and as a model of scholarship for pastors and teachers.

In a decade when evangelical worship is suffering metamorphosis, it is good to be reminded again of the Christian calendar and the importance of theological formulations built upon the public reading of Scripture.

Norman R. Ericson  
Wheaton College, Wheaton, IL

*The Theology of the Book of Revelation.* By Richard Bauckham. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1993, xv + 169 pp., \$14.95 paper. *The Apocalypse: A Reading of the Revelation of John.* By Charles H. Talbert. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994, ix + 123 pp., \$12.99 paper.

Both volumes go a long way toward filling gaps that still exist in spite of the recent avalanche of literature on the Apocalypse. Amazingly, comprehensive theologies of Revelation (like Bauckham’s) and compact, but fresh, commentaries on Revelation (as Talbert’s certainly is) have suffered through a virtual drought period, at the same time in which a bumper crop of varied highly specialized studies on the Apocalypse have emerged.

Of the two, Bauckham’s contribution is the more prominent but, in one ironic sense, the less original. If nothing else, inclusion in the significant New Testament Theology series, edited by J. D. G. Dunn, marks Bauckham’s work as noteworthy. Dunn and Cambridge University Press are to be commended both for planning such a volume devoted solely to the Apocalypse and for assigning it to Bauckham, whose massive scholarly output related to Revelation since the later 1970s is broad and deep.

On the other hand, it should be realized that the content of *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* is essentially a “Cliffs Notes” condensed version of Bauckham’s recent anthology of mostly previously published articles, *The Climax of Prophecy* (T. & T. Clark, 1993). That volume, with extensive notes and full bibliography, has the luxury of developing Bauckham’s (often) creative views in depth.

In a review of this length, it is only possible to discuss what is surely Bauckham’s most substantial, and most controversial, contribution in both *Climax* and *Theology*. For example, a recent survey of the status and immediate future of NT studies by

C. Blomberg expressed reservations about Bauckham's understanding of "the conversion of the nations" in Revelation (and he is not alone in that assessment).

In the studied opinion of this reviewer, however, Bauckham is on the right track. Certain passages in the Apocalypse (notably 7:9–17; 14:6 ff.; 15:2 ff.) do not reflect the conversion of many worldwide at the end of the age, prior to Christ's second advent, as the reference to "the end of the age" in the Matthean great commission (Matt 28:20) implies. Interestingly, however, Bauckham derives his evidence from less obvious (sometimes bordering on obscure) sources in the OT and intertestamental literature, overlooking a considerable amount of relevant NT data (e.g. Matt 13:24–30, 36–43; 24:14).

Much like Bauckham's *Theology*, Talbert's *The Apocalypse* handles a great deal of important material in a readable manner and in short compass and does so with very few notes. (Unlike *Theology*, though, it utilizes endnotes to keep the documentation from cluttering the movement of the commentary.) Thus *The Apocalypse* also seeks to appeal to a wider audience than just scholars and professors.

There is only space here to underscore two consistent notes that Talbert continues to sound throughout *The Apocalypse*. First, painting on even a broader canvas than Bauckham does, Talbert has skillfully mined the apocryphal and pseudepigraphal works for thought patterns found in Revelation. Most of the connections drawn are plausible and, at the least, thought-provoking. For example, premillennialists will be interested in the discussion on the background of the "Great Tribulation."

Second (and unexpected in a commentary of this brevity), Talbert offers numerous useful observations on literary structural aspects of the book of Revelation. Noting clear instances of parallelism and chiasmus is consistent with Talbert's longtime literary interests reflected in his impressive body of scholarship. However, since his recent commentary segment on Philippians in the *Mercer One-Volume Commentary on the Bible* (1994) shows that Talbert is well aware of sophisticated macrostructure in the NT (in Philippians, a grand chiasm), it could have been hoped that he would provide such sorely needed insights to the "big picture" structure of Revelation. Alas, so much to do and so little space!

In spite of the fact that neither author is as conservative as the membership of the ETS, both offer timely insights from which evangelicals can profit. Thus, given the limitations expressed above, both volumes can be recommended as worthwhile complementary investments for evangelical scholars, pastors and even serious lay students in their deepening, increasingly sophisticated study of the Apocalypse.

A. Boyd Luter

Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary, Brea, CA

*Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* By David E. Holwerda. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995, xi + 193 pp., \$12.99.

Answering the question posed in the subtitle, Holwerda defends the "one covenant" view—namely, that the new covenant Church (and it alone) stands in essential continuity with old covenant Israel. Developing his case exegetically, primarily from material in the gospels, he demonstrates that holy people, temple and land/city are through Christ (and through him exclusively) brought to their true and full manifestation. His conclusion: "Any so-called literalistic or particularistic fulfillment occurring outside or apart from this authentic resolution of the basic problem cannot be the genuine fulfillment that the Old Testament promises" (p. 182).