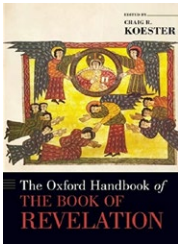
Craig R. Koester (ed.). *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*. Oxford University Press (NY): Oxford University Press, 2020, 552 pp.



The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation has five sections which are the major approaches to John's Apocalypses. These sections are "Literary features", "Social setting", "Theology and ethics", "History of reception and influence", and "Currents in interpretation". Thirty well-known scholars in the book of Revelation contribute to this project. These scholars are led by Craig R. Koester, who participates as the editor.

Koester opens the book by discussing the social setting, the theological perspective, and the literary design of Revelation. This chapter begins by identifying Revelation's author and its social setting, describing the internal and external disputes in the seven churches. Regarding the theological perspectives in Revelation, Koester contrasts the imagery of God, the Lamb, the witnesses, and new Jerusalem with Satan, the beast, the false prophet, and Babylon. Finally, Koester analyses the literary structure and movement of Revelation.

Mitchell G. Reddish opens the section about the literary features of Revelation. Reddish examines the genre of Revelation by exploring three possible candidates: an apocalypse, a letter, and prophecy. Reddish concludes that Revelation is an apocalypse written by a Christian prophet who sent the letter to the churches of Asia Minor. James L. Resseguie analyzes the narrative features of Revelation, specifically the master plot, the architectural and topographical settings, and the numerical symbolism. Resseguie sees the book not only as past events but also as a narrative. The narrative of Revelation describes the universal story involving struggles, freedom, and the journey to the new land.

Konrad Huber discusses the imagery of the Book of Revelation that includes metaphor, symbol, and narrative image. Huber argues for the importance of the

imagery and its background, particularly in the Old Testament and Second Temple Period, in uncovering the deep meaning of Revelation.

David A. de Silva studies the rhetorical features of Revelation, describing that from the beginning the book tries to persuade its audience. John explains that his authority comes from God appealing to the fear and confidence of church members. Therefore, de Silva emphasizes that Revelation's primary concern is not about the future. In his opinion, John is trying to influence the current thinking of his audience.

Steve Moyise explores the use of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. After discussing the language used by John in Revelation, Moyise examines the way John employs Ezequiel, Daniel, and Isaiah in his narrative alongside some specific passages (Rev 1:12–16; 5:5–6; 12:7–12; 15:3–5). Finally, Moyise studies the worship of God, the new exodus, and God's abiding presence, which are three common themes in John's Revelation.

David L. Mathewson examines the use of the Greek language in Revelation by reviewing the different scholarly ideas. In Mathewson's opinion, "Revelation falls within the range of registers of first-century Greek" (p. 113). Therefore, for him, John is using the Hellenistic Greek of his days.

Justin P. Jeffcoat Schedtler analyses the hymns in Revelation, exploring the form and performance of those hymns within early Judaism and Christianity. The hymns provide structural landmarks in the text, important theological ideas, and Christological and soteriological notions. Moreover, the hymns in Revelation depict the contrast between God and Rome by exalting God's sovereignty and delegitimize Roman imperial worship.

Warren Carter begins the discussion about the social setting in Revelation by considers the interactions between Revelation and Roman rule in first-century Asia Minor. In Carter's opinion, the claim that Revelation's author talks about Christian persecution is historically unfounded. Therefore, the author of Revelation opposes the Roman Empire, not because of the alleged persecution of Christians, but because he condemns cultural, ecological, and economic aspects in the imperialist structure.

Mikael Tellbe studies the relationships among Christ-believers and Jewish communities in first-century Asia Minor. Tellbe argues that the typical theological, sociopolitical, and financial conflicts between Jewish and Christians are evident in Revelation. Those conflicts are mostly preponderant in the churches of Smyrna and Philadelphia, places where some Jews oppose Gentiles and Jewish believers in Jesus Christ. The focus of Tellbe's study is to relate the tension between both groups to define God's people in Revelation.

Richard S. Ascough explores the religious context of the book of Revelation by considering the main deities that appear in the message of the seven churches. Ascough's main idea is that the author of Revelation uses the metaphors of feasting and fornication to invite Christians to keep themselves pure to enter the utopian city.

Paul Trebilco analyzes the relationship between Revelation, Johannine, and Pauline traditions. In his comparison, Trebilco employs the concepts of acculturation, assimilation, accommodation, issues concerning food sacrificed to idols, attitude towards the imperial ruler, possessions, and leadership. Perhaps John in Revelation was not directly influenced by Paul and Johannine traditions, but it seems he was familiar with some ideas.

Martin Karrer opens the section that explores the theology and ethics in Revelation by considering the statements about God. Revelation's author contrasts God with Zeus, Apollo, Hades, and Thanatos, which build a bridge between biblical and Greek traditions. The God of Israel is unique and sovereign and is above the foreign Gods.

Loren L. Johns discusses the variety of descriptions about Jesus in Revelation. Johns believes that several ambiguities and inconsistencies in Revelation are partially resolved when one studies Christology in this book. According to Johns, Jesus as lamb should be the prism through which the reader reads the rest of the book's narrative.

John Christopher Thomas studies the role of the Spirit in Revelation. Thomas's article focuses on four phrases: "the seven Spirits"; "I was in Spirit"; "in the Spirit"; and "the Spirit of Prophecy". The last section of the article addresses the connections between Jesus and the Spirit in Revelation. Although Jesus and the Spirit are intimately connected, the two are different entities.

Mark B. Stephens examines the topics of creation and new creation in Revelation, which challenge the sovereignty of Rome. The corrupter present world (Rome) will come to an end. Babylon, the sea, and death will no longer exist in the new cosmos.

Gregory Stevenson argues that evil appears in Revelation as a power that opposes God's Kingdom. Therefore, evil is related to the social situation where the church suffers from external and internal pressures. Revelation's author uses the warfare metaphor to encourage Christians and to criticize all those who are unfaithful.

David L. Barr studies the concept of violence in Revelation by exploring the symbols of Holy War and the Exodus Plagues. The violence in Revelation is not easy to understand. Scholars try to explain such violence either by understanding it as symbolic or by considering violence as justice. The truth is that Revelation is a violent story, difficult to rationalize.

Lynn R. Huber talks about the city-women Babylon and the new Jerusalem in Revelation. In doing so, Huber reviews the symbols of Babylon and the new Jerusalem from a feminist and queer theory perspective. The Babylonian symbol functions as a critique of Rome, whereas the new Jerusalem personified God's people.

Peter S. Perry Analyses the way John describes God's people in the Book of Revelation. God's people are described as an audience, an assembly, God's slave, the saints, witnesses, and as a group who dress in white. John's audience sees Babylon not as a benevolent patron but as a seductive and fraudulent power. The churches are invited to take God's side, rejecting the Roman economy and society.

Juan Hernández Jr begins the discussion about the history of reception and influence in Revelation by investigating the reconstruction of the Greek text of Revelation. He explores the methodological, theoretical, and major trends that enabled the reconstruction of the Greek text in Revelation. Hernández Jr concludes that the quest for the original Greek text of Revelation is an illusion because that possible candidate leaves the reader with no certainty of a single original text.

Tobias Nicklas investigates the relationship between the book of Revelation and the New Testament canon. Nicklas considers the historical development in which Revelations was considered part of the canon. He explores the theological value of Revelation in the New Testament and the Bible by emphasizing the importance of studying Revelation within the canon to avoid pitfalls. Ian Boxall analyzes the book of Revelation employing the reception history method. This method is interdisciplinary, which is useful for studying a book like Revelation. Furthermore, reception history addresses real-life issues connecting biblical scholarship with ordinary people.

Charles E. Hill analyzes the interpretation of Revelation in early Christianity, specifically up to the end of the fourth century. Despite the differences among Christian interpreters, "[they] recognized in the symbols of Revelation a divine mingling of things both present and future, both earthly and heavenly" (p. 441).

Julia Eva Wannenmacher surveys the interpretation of Revelation in the Medieval Period. Wannenmacher divided her article into four sections: (1) the older Latin commentaries of Victorinus and Tyconius; (2) the patristic perspective and its interaction with early medieval commentators; (3) the discussion about the interpretations of Rupert of Deutz, Anselm of Havelberg, and Joachim of Fiore; and (4) the presentation of several scholars in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.

Paul Westermeyer studies the hymns and church's liturgy in Revelation. In Westermeyer's opinion, whereas the music in worship is anthropocentric, the music in Revelation has a theocentric view.

Joshua T. Searle and Kenneth G. C. Newport examine the futuristic interpretations of Revelation and the impact they have had on the world. Moreover, Searle and Newport discuss the origins of premillennial dispensationalism and its influence on the American policy towards the middle east. In their conclusion, futurism will continue to be part of the post-modern world, as long as there are people who are influenced by the richness of the symbols of Revelation.

Susan E. Hylen opens the last section of the book, which deals with the currents in the interpretation of the book of Revelation. Hylen's article approach to Revelation from a feminist perspective emphasizing the scholarly work in recent decades. In her conclusion, the feminist interpretation of Revelation still has a lot of work to do. Therefore, employing the feminist perspective using historical studies—paying attention to the diversity of interpretations that these studies offer—allows us to see new possibilities that the feminist approach alone cannot offer.

Thomas B. Slater examines the African American scholarship on Revelation, paying attention to the ways Revelation has functioned in African American congregations. Slater surveys the political perspective of African American scholars on Revelation by concluding that despite the differences between scholars' views, they agree that Revelation describes a social tension between local authorities and Christians.

Finally, Harry O. Maier studies Revelation by using a post-colonial interpretation. He identifies the images on Revelation as signs that demonstrate a conscious use by John on Roman imperial similes.

The book is easy to read, which allows scholars, students, as well as lay people to benefit from its content. Each article includes an abstract, which summarizes the authors' work. At the end of each article, the authors provide a series of bibliographical references useful for further studies. Finally, the organization of the book is useful because it allows the readers to look specifically those most interesting sections for them.

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