FRANCIS J. MOLONEY, *The Apocalypse of John: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020). Pp. xxiv + 404. Hardcover. US$54.99.

Frank Moloney needs no introduction for readers of ABR or members of FBS. Long respected as a Markan and Johannine scholar, he has also been wrestling with the Book of Revelation at least since his translation of Eugenio Corsini's *The Apocalypse* in 1983. So, the appearance of his own commentary on Revelation is most welcome; one might even say overdue.

Moloney follows his own path in this commentary, not the usual scholarly or popular roads for interpreting Revelation, though he respects historical criticism, for example with respect to the origins of the Apocalypse and its authorship (3–6). The commentary begins with an explanatory preface where he identifies his approach as "*my rethinking and rewriting of the interpretation of Eugenio Corsini*" (xvi, emphasis in the original), but clarifies that, "I differ from Corsini's reading of the Apocalypse in my adoption of a narrative approach to the reading/listening experience" (xvii). Then, in the Introduction, he presents the thesis that "the Apocalypse does not close with a consoling message of God's definitive eschatological triumph over the wicked, but confidently proclaims the perennial saving effects of Jesus' death and resurrection" (1). This is the key idea that Moloney has derived from Corsini and it underlies everything in the ensuing commentary. For example, Moloney finds fault with the common labelling of Revelation as a Christian version of the Jewish apocalypse because it "does not do justice to the fact that the victory of the Lamb is portrayed from the beginning of the document, and steadily, almost rhythmically, across the narrative, as *already* won" (8, emphasis in the original). He asserts that John the Seer, like the author of the Fourth Gospel, holds to a "realized eschatology" (12).

Broadly, then, this approach rejects the idea that Revelation is primarily either predicting future events, encouraging a church facing systematic persecution, or commenting on the political context in the Roman Empire. Instead, Moloney argues that the focus of Revelation is more on the past; that is, on Israel's experience of persecution under Antiochus IV (34–35, 155–159), the development of God's program through Israel's history culminating with the death and resurrection of Jesus, now available to all "in the new Jerusalem, the Christian church" (11; see also 53). However, Moloney differs from Corsini by retaining the second coming as part of John's message (351, n.19).

Certain key statements in Revelation support this thesis, such as the claims about what Jesus' blood has done in ransoming "saints from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9 NRSV), the shout from the temple-throne at the seventh bowl disaster that "It is done!" (Rev 16:17 NRSV), using very similar language to John 19:30 (see 10, 11, 249) and by the alternative translation of Rev 13:8 of "the Lamb who was slain since the foundation of the world" (11, 198–204). Moloney follows Corsini's intriguing idea that the rivers of blood in Rev 14:20 may be a reference to "the death of Jesus outside the city

of Jerusalem" (225–27); this makes a lot of sense of the hyperbolic language and is consistent with what John says elsewhere about Jesus's blood (Rev 1:5; 5:9; 7:14; 19:13). I agree with Moloney that the new Jerusalem is, at least in part, referring to the church now, not just in the future. His is also a different and stimulating way of explaining the suffusion of Revelation with allusions to almost every part of the Hebrew Scriptures, the role of a variety of angels in the text (see 60) and its frequent references to Jesus' blood.

Some of Moloney's claims I find unconvincing, such as that the battle of Harmagedon in Rev 16:16, the other battle scenes and the great tribulation of Rev 7:14 are all references to the crucifixion of Jesus (26, 121, 247–48, 295–304, 313), that Revelation 9 is about humanity's primeval fall (140–48) or that the woman of Rev 12:1 is the same person as the harlot of Rev 17 before changing again to the bride of Rev 21 (26, 176–80, 257–59, 319, 326–29), an idea not unique to Moloney. The view that the harlot of Rev 17–18 refers to Jerusalem, and to the events of 70 CE (see 264–71), has also been proposed before and is plausible, but not ultimately convincing. Other suggestions, such as that in his allusions to the story of Israel in Revelation 2–3, John is indeed "retelling" that story (27) as leading up to Jesus, as opposed to using it as a lesson in the prophetic message of those chapters (similar to Paul in 1 Cor 10:1–11), may be pushing the evidence too far, though the distinction is perhaps very slight. But Moloney's arguments are always intriguing and engaging, and this commentary makes a distinctive and valuable contribution *and corrective* to our understanding of John's Apocalypse.

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