

I have two more negative observations. The proofreading of the manuscript has not been very thorough, judging from frequent typos. More importantly, there seems to be a significant lacuna in the main argument. As I understand it, Griffiths mainly wants to stress the way the gift of the Spirit influences interpersonal relationships as “the binding force between believers” or “the basis for the sociability between believers” (215). This is clearly achieved through the analysis of Acts, especially the relationship between the “summary statements” and the adjacent statements about the Spirit. But the connection with Greco-Roman literature fails to support the thesis, in my opinion. The sociability implied in the literature using δωρεά or *beneficiis* seems mainly to affect the relationship between the giver and receiver of gifts, not that among different recipients, in Griffiths’ analysis. Applying this to Acts would mainly lead to a focus on the relationship between believers and God, which is valid but not Griffiths’ purpose.

However, in spite of this weakness, this monograph throws up so many great insights and provides such intelligent discussion of Acts and literature on gift-giving that it will command the attention of readers for some time to come.

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JON K. NEWTON, *A Pentecostal Commentary on Revelation* (Pentecostal Old Testament & New Testament Commentaries; Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2021). Pp. xvi + 409. Paperback. \$AU67.00.

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The challenge of interpreting the Book of Revelation has stimulated a series of outstanding commentaries in recent years. One of the many strengths of Jon K. Newton’s contribution is his continual dialogue with the very best of them (especially David Aune [1997–98], G. K. Beale [1999], Craig R. Koester [2014] and Peter J. Leithart [2018]), aided by the commentary from his fellow-Pentecostalist, John C. Thomas (2012). He has not neglected the voluminous secondary literature (largely limited to English language works). He traces allusions to the Hebrew Scriptures at every turn, even though the author of Revelation (“John”) never cites them. While not neglecting the Greco-Roman world, Newton shows that John’s literary background is Jewish.

As well as his commitment to the relevance of Revelation for Pentecostal tradition Newton summarises (31–42) and refers regularly to major interpretative traditions: futurist, historicist, preterist, idealist, and variations within these approaches. This is a large-scale agenda, but succinctly interwoven throughout the commentary. Aware of contemporary doubts about large-scale persecution of Christians late in the first century, Newton nevertheless accepts that

Revelation is a Christian apocalypse, written to challenge, exhort and encourage persecuted Christian communities in Asia Minor.

While appreciating various attempts to trace a literary structure of Revelation (especially that of Koester), Newton prefers to read the book as a narrative that opens with an introduction and prologue (1:1–3:22) and closes with an epilogue (22:6–21). The plot proper begins with a struggle to release the sealed document (4:1–5:14). Conflict intensifies, building to a climax in the victory of the rider on a white horse (19:11–16), winding down from there to the satisfactory conclusion of 22:5, closing the description of the heavenly Jerusalem. Newton offers his own excellent translation of the Greek text.

The structure of the commentary is divided according to the traditional chapters of Revelation. Newton guides the reader through the narrative by means of excellent short introductions at the beginning of each chapter, summarising the action to that point in the story as it intensifies and climaxes. However, the structural importance of the “sevens” (letters, seals, trumpets and bowls) is lost in this presentation. For example, the opening of the seventh seal and the subsequent silence (8:1) is separated from the other seals. It opens the discussion of Rev 8, even though it clearly belongs to the 4 + 3 presentation of the opening of the seals across 6:1–8:1. Rev 15:1–8 is rightly read as “preparing the stage for the last seven plagues” (270–76). But the significant inclusion between indications of final completion in 15:1 (*etelesthē*) and 8 (*telesthōsin*) is missed. That inclusion fittingly introduces the presentation of the saving effects of the death and resurrection of Jesus “achieved” (*gegonen*) in the pouring out of the seventh bowl (16:17–21; see v. 17).

Important as these details might be to an interpreter, John the Seer’s work is so multidimensional that it is a mistake to try to fit it into a single interpretative tradition. Newton’s careful weighing up of the evidence of the text itself, including his insightful translation, the intertextuality of Israel’s Sacred Scriptures, and openness to various interpretative traditions, including a Pentecostal reading, make this book a significant contemporary commentary.

A caveat remains. Since the work of Leonard L. Thompson (*The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1990]), Steven J. Friesen (*Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John. Reading Revelation in the Ruins* [New York: Oxford University Press, 2001]) and the edited collection of Jeffrey Brodd and Jonathan Reed (*Rome and Religion. A Cross-Disciplinary Dialogue on the Imperial Cult* [Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement Series 5; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011]) it has become increasingly clear that there was no systematic persecution of Christians late in the first century. Asian Christians were not being forced into Emperor worship, despite the growing presence of the cult. Patmos was never a prison. The link between the earlier burning of Rome and the Neronian persecution of Roman Christians, as described by Tacitus, is seriously questioned (see Brent D. Shaw, “The Myth of the Neronian Persecution,” *JRS* 105 [2015] 1–

28). “Had the church been wiped off the face of the earth at the end of the first century, its disappearance would have caused no dislocation in the empire, just as its presence was hardly noticed at the time ... Simply, it did not count” (Ramsay MacMullen, *Christianizing the Roman Empire (AD 100–400)* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984] viii). Major contemporary studies of the Book of Revelation (including this one) give a nod to these issues (see 14–16) but continue to allude to persecution and forced participation in the Imperial Cult as fundamental to the interpretation of the book.

Newton’s regular association of the text of Revelation with Pentecostal Christianity is encouraging. Direct links between John’s narrative and the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles are not always convincing, but applications of the imagery and the radical message of the Book of Revelation to contemporary Pentecostalism will challenge all readers. Commenting on the river of life that flows from the New Jerusalem (22:1), Newton writes: “The river flows out of the Spirit-filled church, beginning at Pentecost when it was ‘poured out’ (Acts 2:33); it renews the whole world, sweeping away all the tawdry obstacles in its path as a mighty flood, and brings healing wherever it flows through willing missionaries” (380). Amen to that, and to Newton’s important reflections on “what the Spirit is saying and doing through the other churches” (395, see 393–95). Despite my caveat, I strongly recommend this fine commentary.

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

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Frank Moloney needs no introduction for readers of *ABR* or members of the Fellowship for Biblical Studies. 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