

daß der Verf. durch seine Vorarbeiten und den vorliegenden Kommentar einen reichhaltigen Beitrag zur Erschließung dieser allzu lange wenig beachteten neutestamentlichen Schriften geleistet hat. Vielmehr wollen sie anerkennend bezeugen, wie sehr er anregt, ihnen die gebührende Aufmerksamkeit zuzuwenden.

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GIBLIN, CHARLES, H., *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Good New Studies 34). Collegeville/MI: Liturgical Press 1991. 231 S.

For those to whom the *Apocalypse* seemed a maze of a colorful, but incomprehensible mystery, G.'s commentary is better than Ariadne's thread. In clear, concise fashion G. lays out persuasively the underlying structure of the book, showing many concentric formal developments and the striking correspondences among various parts of the work. As such it would serve as a fine textbook, but it is, I suspect, far more than that. For once the structure of a such an imaginatively creative book has been uncovered – and ancient writers generally employed a very clear structural development of their theses – the most important step to interpreting its meaning has been accomplished. However much John may borrow from the Old Testament and make references to pagan worship and imperial policies, his vision is his own, not bound strictly to a reporting of historical facts. So experts too are bound to learn much from G.'s analysis.

Having considered the prologue and the seven letters to the seven Churches, G. tackles the central portion of John's heavenly vision (4:1 – 22:11). After an introduction of the main characters before the heavenly throne and the definition of the Lamb's central role in opening the sealed scroll, three series of climactical crescendos move from the seven unsealings to the seven trumpet blasts to the seven libation-bowls of divine wrath as the Lamb's triumph and the Day of the Lord realize themselves. In the first two series the sixth element is enlarged to introduce fittingly the seventh element that leads immediately to the next series of seven. The seventh trumpet blast portrays the real victory of the Lamb, who stands with his followers at the exact center (14:1–5) of the concentric revelation of the final battle and its assured outcome. That outcome is assured through the outpouring of the seven libation-bowls; the sixth of this series is only slightly expanded, but just enough to emphasize the final, greatest cataclysm destroying God's enemies. The fall of Babylon marks the simultaneous arrival of the heavenly Jerusalem, even if the latter has to be described after the former. For in God's plan all is assured. The Lamb's word alone, the sword from His mouth, wins the victory, and there is no need for graphic descriptions of battle scenes. Babylon's fall involves the destruction of the Lamb's main adversaries: beast and false prophet, Satan and his hordes, Death and the Grave. They are destroyed in the reverse order of their introduction. Simultaneous with Babylon's fall the heavenly Jerusalem descends from heaven to her marriage with the Lamb. A final analysis reveals how fittingly the conclusion and epilogue round off the final victory in Jerusalem's descent and touch again themes of the prologue. Throughout his analysis G. stressed the dominant theme of the Holy War, God's conquest of pride, without, however, neglecting the strong liturgical emphases that mark the *Apocalypse's* structure.

A novice in apocalyptic speculation like myself will find it hard to fault the main line of G.'s persuasive analysis. A great advantage of his interpretation consists in its exclusion of temporal fabrications of the future. For the *Apocalypse* does not give a temporally sequential description of coming attractions (or horrors) but rather portrays various elements of the Lamb's victory that is already assured from heaven and is breaking into the present world of sin, oppression, and corruption. Not phantasmagorical speculation but the central Christological meaning of history with its call for concrete conversion is intended by John's vision that extends far beyond history from its source and to its conclusion in eternity before God's throne. Indeed the typical New Testament balance between the divine „already,“ accomplished by God in Christ's life, death, and resurrection, „the Lamb sacrificed from the universe's creation,“ (13:8) and the „not yet,“ conditioned by freedom in the remaining time before the end, is well maintained in this mysterious book closing the New Testament. Similarly in an age that is growing weary of inner-world Utopias and longs for salvation from beyond this

world, the *Apocalypse* maintains the just balance between bearing faithful witness in this world, thereby preparing for its recreation, and the utter transcendence of God's creative sovereignty. Not fanaticism but fidelity and charity are demanded of the Christians living in the end time before the end.

Despite the excellence of G.'s interpretation, a few minor points remain where the argument was not entirely convincing. G.'s identification of the 144 000 Israelites (7:4) with the innumerable multitude from every nation (7:9) on the basis of the correlation of visual and auditory revelations may not be quite exact since the 144 000 are later identified as the „first fruits“ of the redeemed (14:4); perhaps they are representative of without being identical with the vast multitude of the saved. Furthermore, does not the 1000 year realm (20:4) teach us to be a little careful about the simultaneity „in a metahistorical dimension“ (202) of Babylon's destruction and the New Jerusalem's arrival? Irenaeus, who came from Asia Minor and knew Polycarp, John's disciple, maintained a strong millennial interpretation of the end times. Finally, even while writing „John does not develop the Eucharistic celebration in terms of the liturgy of the sacrament,“ (226) G. enumerated references to the Eucharistic celebration and thanksgiving. But he may have overlooked the notions of sacrifice and adoration that the Eucharist also entails, elements that have remained central to the Eastern tradition. The Lamb sacrificed stands with the one seated on the throne at the center of universal worship.

Our final point of disagreement concern G.'s interpretation of the woman clothed with the sun (12:1ff.). G. limited her to „a heavenly type, not a given individual person, much less a given historical institution.“ (126) She is supposed to represent „the Israel of old“ and „the mother of Christians.“ A Marian interpretation allegedly does not falsify the text's meaning but is only its „poetic or homiletic application.“ Nonetheless, if the woman and the Lamb are the only heavenly characters who play a personal role in the earthly drama, why should an historical identification be allowed for the Lamb but denied to the woman? She is the mother first of Christ and then of Christians (12:5.17), and this connection had already been made in the Johannine tradition (Jn. 19:26f.). Furthermore, despite G.'s reference (85f.) to Feuillet's article (*NRTb* 99 [1977], 191–196), it is not clear that the martyrs sacrificed (6:9) are those of the Old Testament. The Israel of 144 000 follows the Lamb (14:4), and the *Apocalypse* prescind from any considerations of the relation of Old to New Testaments, seeing in the later but the true Israel of God, which by fidelity in time has transcended time. Feuillet's argument employs texts from other New Testament works (Mt 23:31–35; I Jn. 3:12), but not from the *Apocalypse*. The lack of explicit reference to Jesus in 6:9 (as opposed to similar phrases with the reference in 1:2.9; 12:17; 19:4; 20:4) does not constitute a sure argument but rather leads to the need of completing the phrase with reference to Jesus. Most probably the „souls“ of 6:9 reappear in 20:4. There the judgment they earlier requested is given to them as those who did not worship the beast or his idol are added to them in accordance with the promise of 6:11.

A few typographical errors should be noted in this excellent study: p. 70, v. 8 should read „six wings“ instead of „seven wings“; p. 126, l. 24 should read „concentric“ instead of „chiastic“; p. 134, l. 15 should read „C“ instead of „B.“ This is a book highly recommended.

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## 2. Historische Theologie

POUCHET, ROBERT, *Basile le grand et son univers d'amis d'après sa correspondance*. Une stratégie de communion (Studia Ephemeridis ‚Augustinianum‘ 36). Rom: 1992. 802 S.

Unter den verschiedenen Kirchenväterbriefsammlungen der zweiten Hälfte des 4. Jahrhunderts kommt dem 325 sicher echte Briefe umfassenden Briefcorpus Basilius' des Gr. aus verschiedenen Gründen eine ganz besondere Bedeutung zu. Die Briefe gelten als Muster des Genres, sie enthalten eine Fülle von Informationen über wichtige