

Notwithstanding some important criticisms, Longman's work remains on the one hand a helpful resource for understanding the Old Testament background for Revelation and on the other hand an extremely valuable tool for connecting Revelation canonically with the rest of Scripture. The dispensationalist pastor would do well to be aware of Longman's Reformed theological perspectives, but he will probably still gain much value from the book.

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The Apocalypse of John Among Its Critics: Questions & Controversies, edited by Alexander E. Stewart and Alan S. Bandy. Studies in Scripture and Biblical Theology. Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2023. 287 pp. \$34.99.

Ever since the apostle John put pen to parchment, debate has surrounded the Apocalypse (i.e., the book of Revelation). While the book of Revelation has puzzled its readers for centuries, in most recent decades it has even offended its readers. With the rise of Postmodernism, Critical Theory, "third wave" feminism, as well as other ideological and methodological approaches, Revelation has been the object of reproach, accusation, and attack. It has even been accused of being a tool of oppression on multiple fronts. Critiqued for violence, fear mongering, misogyny, chauvinism, antisemitism, and even political insurrection, Revelation has been viciously scrutinized and disparaged.

These criticisms, however, have not gone unchallenged by those who believe in the veracity of Scripture and value of Revelation. Many scholars today still possess a backbone of steel and refuse to yield sacred ground to the critical theorists and their disregard for history and the authority of Scripture. In particular, Christ has even preserved a remnant of Revelation scholars who have accepted the challenge to defend it against its detractors. Leading the charge are Drs. Alexander E. Stewart (Professor of New Testament at Gateway Seminary) and Alan S. Bandy (Professor of New Testament at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) in their 2023 release *The Apocalypse of John Among its Critics*. In this work they bring together many of the best Christian scholars working on Revelation today "to wrestle with the difficulties raised by both ancient and modern critics of Revelation" (3). In their introduction they note that *The Apocalypse* "attempts to address issues and topics that have been either the focus of critical theorists or perennial questions related to unique challenges prompted by study of Revelation" (3–4). Although the team of scholars gathered by Stewart and Bandy have, at times, different methodological approaches, all possess a deep conviction about the value of Revelation and all pursue deep engagement with the charges leveled against the book of Revelation.

Not afraid to tackle the most vicious accusations against John's

Apocalypse, each chapter seeks to answer one hot-button question leveled against the book of Revelation. After a poignant introduction by Stewart and Bandy setting the vision and trajectory for the book, Chapters 2 and 3 address canonical and genre issues respectively. Chapter 2 (by Alan S. Bandy) poses the question “Why should this strange and controversial book be included in the canon?” Chapter 3 (by Ian Paul) then asks, “What kind of book is it?” Chapter 4 (by Alexander E. Stewart) examines the threats and fear appeals in Revelation, and asks the question, “Was John a bully?” Chapter 5 (by Dana M. Harris) addresses the violent language and imagery in Revelation to answer the question, “Did John delight in violence?” Chapter 6 (by Külli Toniste) asks, “Was John a Male Chauvinist?” Chapter 7 (by Michael Naylor) tackles the issue of John’s alleged intolerance and hatred of dissenting views. Chapter 8 (by Rob Dalrymple) investigates whether the apostle John was anti-semitic. Chapter 9 (by Dave Mathewson) addresses the accusation about John’s language of imminence and whether it qualifies as a false prediction (i.e., “Did John Make Things Up about the Future?”). Chapter 10 explores whether John advocated for political subversion. Finally, the last chapter (by G. K. Beale) is a “tour de force assessment of scholarship on the use of Scripture in Revelation” (8).

While the format and structure of each chapter differs somewhat between the various authors, each one approaches their respective topic in the same general way. First, the authors lay out the main charges and accusations against the book of Revelation (ancient and/or modern). Second, there is a presentation of the material *within* Revelation that critics use (i.e., *misuse*) to question its value and credibility. Finally, each author uses Revelation in its full context to refute the accusations as baseless and unsubstantiated. As a whole, this format gives the book a definite clarity, continuity, focus, direction, and purpose. While the strength of each chapter must be weighed individually (some were clearer or made more persuasive arguments than others), the reader is sure to always to end the chapter more convinced than ever that the integrity of Revelation, as holy Scripture, remains profoundly unshaken.

With regard to the topics chosen for each chapter, some of these will resonate with certain readers more than others. Those readers already persuaded that Revelation is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God and not guilty of the crimes of which it is accused, will engage the material in a different way than those take more seriously the claims of critics. Thus, while reading certain chapters, I found the accusations made against Revelation so unjustified and groundless, that I wondered why they even deserved a response at all. But this is precisely why the book is useful. *Someone* has to give a credible scholarly answer to the slander against the book of Revelation, and these scholars each deliver their best defense. Despite the often-anachronistic nature of the charges addressed in each chapter, this book is nevertheless a needed academic witness to refute the bogus charges made against the Apocalypse of John.

While each chapter deserves its own praise for its particular contribution, there are a few chapters that will be especially beneficial to

a wider audience. First of all, the introduction by Stewart and Bandy frames the theological perspective for the entire book in a bold and compelling way by resisting the irrational claims of critical theory and all of its postmodern children. In a day when so many professing believers (and scholars!) bow the knee to woke agendas and Critical Theory, it is refreshing to see calm, but resolute resistance. As Stewart and Bandy boldly declare, “Christian readers do not need to be ashamed of Revelation; it is not an ethical embarrassment” (3).

Canonical issues are always helpful to revisit, which makes chapter 2 (“Should John’s Apocalypse Be in the Canon?”) such a helpful contribution. The history of Revelation’s reception and interpretation through the early centuries of the church is alone enough to make the book worth having.

Chapter 6 (“Was John a Male Chauvinist?”) by Külli Toniste was among the best examples in the book of exposing the noxious postmodern assumptions lurking behind the charges of Revelation as being sexist or chauvinistic.

Finally, G. K. Beale’s nearly 60-page survey in the afterword on how scholars understand John’s use of the Old Testament was particularly helpful, informative, and even gripping. Every page of Beale’s treatment of the subject will not only deepen your understanding, but even sharpen your own convictions on a complicated interpretive issue (whether or not you fully agree with all of Beale’s views). In the end, Beale proves yet again that the scholarly world has been better with him in it.

In the end, although *The Apocalypse of John Among its Critics*, will find few in the pew who will ever read it, I do recommend it as a tool for pastors to give to their parishioners who may struggle with the book of Revelation. At the same time, some pastors will also find parts of the book helpful as they work through the challenges of interpreting and preaching through Revelation. The greatest benefit of this book, however, will be to scholars whose role in the Great Commission is crucial as they train leaders and preachers for local churches. As a whole, this book injected my heart with both hope and courage as I read it—hope, because many great scholars in the world (like the ones who contributed to this book) still hold fast the Word of God, unwilling to compromise; and courage—courage to preach and teach the book of Revelation without shame or fear, knowing that the crown of life awaits those who overcome (cf. Rev 2:10).

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Canon Formation: Tracing the Role of Sub-Collections in the Biblical Canon, edited by W. Edward Glenny and Darian R. Lockett. London: T&T Clark, 2024. xix + 348 pp. \$108.00.

Christians have always recognized the various groupings of books in