

## ***The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters: Short Studies and an Annotated Bibliography***

**Boxall, Ian and Richard Tresley, Eds. *The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters: Short Studies and an Annotated Bibliography*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016. 282 pp. \$88.00. Hardcover. ISBN: 9780810861534.**

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The goal of this volume, as stated in the introductory material, is to fill a gap in scholarship on Revelation with a compendium of bibliographies and short studies on the history of interpretation. The audience, as stated in the preface, is scholars of Revelation. As a compendium of information directed toward specialist scholars, this volume will be well received.

Christopher Rowland's brief overview of the reception history of Revelation is a concise, well-informed introduction to the importance of the book in the apocalyptic history and imagination of Christianity. Rowland sets the tone for the reader, beginning with his opening statement: "It is no exaggeration that the Book of Revelation both explains the nature of Christianity and epitomizes its problems" (1). Rowland covers the historical and literary contexts of the book: traces its interpretation from early Christianity through the Middle Ages, Reformation, and the English Civil War; discusses its representation in art; and outlines the patterns of interpretation one sees over the centuries. As a standalone essay, this overview would serve as a marvelous introduction for anyone beginning a study of Revelation. As the introduction to this volume, it serves to stir the interest, excitement, and motivation of scholars.

In addition to the introduction, the volume includes four chapters on the interpretation of Revelation prior to the eighteenth century. Ian Boxall's overview of the figure of John of Patmos and Natasha O'Hear's presentation of visualizations of Revelation prior to 1700, while for experienced researchers, would likewise be accessible to students and scholars not already immersed in the scholarship of Revelation.

The remaining two chapters are far more narrow in scope and far-reaching in depth. Sean Michael Ryan's essay on Tyconius's exegesis of chapters 4 and 5 of Revelation and Francis X. Gumerlock's presentation of the homily of Chromatius of Aquileia on the legend that the apostle John did not die (John 21:22 and Rev 10:11) are excellent studies of two interpreters and their interpretations of certain aspects of Revelation. They do not, however, follow the same path as the other chapters, which approach their topics with more of a summary technique. Scholars interested in the interpretations of Tyconius and Chromatius of Aquileia will be pleased; scholars interested in having the stage set for an informative comprehensive bibliography may want to give these chapters a cursory reading, then file them for future reference. These in-depth studies may be especially useful as examples of the type of incredible work one may produce by reading interpretations of Revelation closely, and that in itself proves their worthy inclusion in this volume. Additionally, the bibliographies of all the short studies in this volume, including the introduction, provide a wealth of information for those working on Revelation research.

Studies on the interpretation of Revelation comprise only the first part of this volume, the second being the annotated bibliography. The bibliography begins with a brief introduction and guide to the components of each entry and comments on the variations in accuracy, completeness, and attribution found in these works spanning thirteen centuries. This is followed by a key to the sigla (the signs which appear to comprise in large part the annotation component of the bibliographies that follow). After the key to the sigla, there is a list of select histories of interpretation and a final note distinguishing the present bibliography of interpreters of Revelation apart from those that have come before. The bibliography itself appears in two parts: the first is a presentation of commentaries; the second, visual representations of Revelation.

The two bibliographies are comprehensive and contain a wealth of information for students and scholars of Revelation. The information contained in the bibliographic entries is concentrated, consisting of abbreviations, cross-references, and brief notes. For nearly every entry, the reader must refer back to the key to the sigla, and unpack the information

to understand what is being presented. Some entries are in fact limited to sigla, occasional references to other entries, and occasional brief notes about editions, textual histories, authorship, content, and other notes. Some entries are more comprehensive than others, owing to the differing amount of information known about each item. This bibliography is an extremely technical tool, best wielded by the hand of an experienced researcher. Religion and theology librarians will find this tool an excellent resource to aid scholars in their research. Scholars and librarians may want to distill the information contained in these bibliographies for students who have not had as much experience unpacking such detailed work.

*The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters* is an exciting addition to the world of resources available to scholars of this powerful and influential biblical book. Upon close inspection, the volume is far more complex than the simple collection of short studies and bibliography the subtitle promises; it is a valuable tool for expert hands. The structure of the volume, apparently borne out of a lengthy compilation and publication process, is striking, and may be inconvenient to some scholars.

Very advanced undergraduates and graduate students will find interesting examples of in-depth study in the chapters on Tyconius and Chromatius of Aquileia. Researchers seeking brief essays on the interpretation of Revelation will be pleased with what they find in the first part of this volume, but may be left wanting more. Researchers seeking a bibliographic tool to further their own work will be pleased with the intensity of the second part of this volume, but may find the first 124 pages a physical burden, especially in a bibliography that demands near constant reference back to a key and occasionally to other entries.

*The Book of Revelation and Its Interpreters* is presented for an audience of scholars, and indeed, librarians and researchers with experience with the text of Revelation and with using such technical bibliographies will find this resource most useful. It may find a place in the personal collections of many scholars of Revelation, and is highly recommended for purchase by academic and theological libraries who serve advanced researchers in the subject area.

Martha Adkins  
Assistant Professor and Reference Librarian  
Copley Library, University of San Diego  
San Diego, California