

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE GENERAL EPISTLES AND REVELATION TO A BIBLICAL THEOLOGY OF RELIGIONS

Andreas J. Köstenberger

It should be acknowledged at the outset that the writings grouped together rather amorphously under the heading “general epistles,” as well as the book of Revelation, do not self-consciously address the issue of religious pluralism, at least not in terms akin to the modern use, where “pluralism” has come to denote a construct of often rather abstract philosophical or religious sets of beliefs. Even where the issues entailed by a plurality of conflicting world views are in view, such as in the book of Revelation, the discourse is conducted largely on a practical rather than doctrinal level, and the prevailing concern is for the spiritual purity of believers rather than for the formulation of apologetic rationales for the purpose of religious dialogue.

The present study should therefore be launched on the basis of the observation that, in the writings under consideration, the presence of other worldviews and religious beliefs is presupposed rather than addressed directly. To what extent can one therefore speak of a contribution made by these books to a biblical theology of religions? Foremost of all, one should avoid overstating one’s case by claiming that they reflect a consciously worked out Christian theology and response to religious pluralism in their day—in the opinion of this writer, they do not. Conflicting truth claims are rather brought to the fore by religious persecution and the challenge of formulating a believing approach to it. The New Testament data should not be intellectualized, and one should not claim a greater degree of deliberateness or sophistication than the evidence bears out. Moreover, owing to the occasional nature of these writings, much of the relevant material is incidental rather than systematic, so that many insights can be gained on the level of inference or implication rather than by explicit reference or direct injunction.

In the light of these caveats, do the general epistles and Revelation provide any information regarding a proper Christian response to other religious faiths? What can we learn from these writings about dealing with other religions? First, we can observe how the biblical authors themselves dealt with other religions. Second, we may ask how these writings provide any other helpful material for interacting with other faiths, such as teaching on the unique person and work of Christ, on Christians’ identity in the world, and on the church’s relationship to the world, particularly with reference to mission.

In the following discussion, emphasis will be given to Hebrews and the Petrine and Johannine material, since James yields little helpful information, and much of Jude is reapplied to a similar context in 2 Peter and can be subsumed under the discussion there. The writings considered here share in common the general backdrop of the dominant political power of the day, i.e. the Roman Empire, and the impending or real suffering of persecution by believers, especially in Rome and Asia Minor. The relationship between Judaism and Christianity is still a vital issue (Hebrews, Revelation), and proto-gnosticism rears its head as an early Christian heresy (1–3 John). The world’s hostility toward the Messiah sent by God, i.e. Jesus, had resulted in Jesus’ crucifixion and continued to find expression in the persecution of his followers, just as Jesus himself had predicted (John 15:20; 16:33).

Hebrews

This “word of exhortation” (13:22; the only other instance of this phrase in Ac 13:15 refers to a homily) deals with one aspect of religious pluralism, i.e. the relationship between Judaism and Christianity, perhaps shortly before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E. (note the reference to Timothy in 13:23 and the conspicuous absence of any reference to the destruction of the temple, a fact that, if it had already occurred at the time of writing, would have been highly significant for the writer’s argument). The letter is probably addressed to a Jewish-Christian congregation in Rome (13:14) where the threat of religious persecution tempted segments of the church to defect from Christianity back to the safe confines of Judaism (cf. e.g. 12:4–13) while perhaps revealing that others may never have fully embraced the Christian faith in the first place (cf. the “warning passages” in 2:1–3; 3:6b–4:13; 5:11–6:8; 10:19–39; 13:14–29).

In this time of transition where the lines between Christianity and Judaism were not always neatly drawn (Blomberg 1994:76), the unknown author, probably a second-generation believer (cf. 2:3; perhaps Apollos), keenly accentuates the differences between the old and the new covenant system. He points to a typological correspondence between events in the history of the Old Testament people of God such as Israel’s unbelief during her wilderness wanderings subsequent to the exodus (3:7–4:10) and the situation of some in his audience, seeking to show that faith in God also entails faith in Jesus, the person through whom God revealed himself “in these last days” (1:1–4). Faith in Jesus, according to the author, is therefore not an optional appendage to Judaism, but essential, since Judaism, as a religious system, has been eclipsed by Christianity. Inherent in the claim to Jesus’ superiority over previous mediator figures, such as angels, Moses, Joshua, or the Old Testament priesthood, is the assertion of the exclusivity of salvation in Jesus, the antitype of these various preceding persons and institutions.

The Supremacy of Jesus

What are the claims made regarding Jesus in the Book of Hebrews? The book opens with several striking assertions of the supremacy of the revelation brought by Jesus, and of the superior nature and work of Jesus (1:1–3). God’s revelation in Jesus is superior, since God in ancient days spoke through prophets, while, in the last days, he spoke to us in “son”-revelation (1:1–2), a divine self-disclosure that exceeds that of the giving of the Law which had been mediated by angels (2:2; cf. Ac 7:38, 53; Dt 33:2). Jesus’ work is superior, since, through Jesus, God made the ages. Jesus also made purification from sin, and sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high (1:2–3). Jesus’ nature, too, is superior, since Jesus is the effulgence of God’s glory and the exact representation of his nature (1:3). Apparently, no tension is felt between these assertions and monotheism (cf. already the increasing emphasis on mediator figures in the intertestamental literature and the role of wisdom in creation according to Pr 8:22–31; see also Rev below). Finally, Jesus is superior to other spirit beings (i.e. angels, including Satan; see 2:14), in nature, calling, and authority (1:4–2:18). In an age where there is a sharp rise in the interest in angels, Hebrews’ emphasis on the supremacy of Jesus is timely indeed.

Jesus is also presented as the great high priest (1:3; 2:9–18; 4:14–10:39; cf. 2:17) who was given an eternal priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek (5:1–7:28) and who instituted a new, superior covenant (8:1–10:39). The writer of Hebrews draws the implication that when

Jesus' "sat down" (1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2), this indicated that there remained no further need for sacrifice. Complete atonement had been rendered (9:23–28). The question of how to deal effectively with sin is crucial for all world religions. Hebrews provides a powerful answer: Jesus has dealt once and for all decisively with sin. He has overcome the power of Satan. Regarding Judaism, the extensive quotes of Jer 31:31–34 and 31:33 with reference to Jesus (cf. 8:8–12; 10:16–17) imply that, now that a "new" covenant has been made, the "old" covenant is obsolete and no longer effective, so that Jews should find the fulfillment of God's promise of an eschatological covenant in Jesus.

The Identity of Believers

Believers' dealings with other faiths need to be undergirded by an accurate understanding of their own identity, both individually and as a community. According to the author of Hebrews, Christians are pilgrims, exiles in search of a homeland and of a better country, i.e. of "a city prepared by God" (11:13–16; cf. 12:22; Johnsson 1978; Käsemann 1984; Grässer 1986). The pilgrimage to an earthly sanctuary is replaced by the pilgrimage to a lasting heavenly home (6:19–20); Israel's disbelief during the exodus is to serve as a warning against the Hebrews' lack of faith during their new exodus (3:7–4:11; cf. 1Co 10:6, 11). Abraham is presented as a model pilgrim: he set out now knowing where he was going, acting upon nothing but God's word of promise, living in tents like a foreigner, looking ahead to a permanent home, not in Palestine, but in heaven (11:8–10). Moses, likewise, scorned the fleeting pleasures of this world (11:24–29). According to the pattern set by Abraham and Moses, the readers of Hebrews were to be sojourners embarking on a new exodus, with their way led, not by Joshua (Greek: *Iesous*) but by Jesus (cf. 2:10; 12:2). As the author of Hebrews argues, the Old Testament already contains the acknowledgment that, even after Israel had entered the Promised Land, there remains a "rest" for God's people, i.e. heaven (3:7–4:11; cf. Ps 95:7–11; cf. also 11:13–16; Attridge 1980).

The climactic exhortation of the entire book, transcending even 12:1–3, is found in 13:13. After affirming that Jesus suffered outside the gate, the author exhorts his audience, "Therefore let us go out to him, outside the camp, and bear the abuse he endured" (cf. 10:25–26). Remarkably, conceptualities involving the "temple" have been eclipsed in Hebrews by "tent" and "camp" terminologies. Christians are to count it a privilege to follow the one "who for the joy set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (12:2). Their mission is to have its root in this radical discipleship which reveals itself in believers' close association with Christ, not just in his glory, but also in his sufferings (cf. also 1Pe 1:11–12; 5:1).

Believers' Relationship to the World

In Hebrews, "witness" terminology is never applied to believers in the active sense of the term, i.e. as a call for them to bear witness. Rather, it is God who bears witness to the faith of previous believers (11:2, 4, 5, 39; 12:1). The many verbal and allusive parallels to the intertestamental book of 2 Maccabees in 12:1–3 indicate, together with the exhortation of 12:4, that the author conceives of the Christian "witness" as one who is prepared to "resist to the point of shedding blood." This certainly was true for many of the believers mentioned in 11:32–38 as well as for the martyrs in the Maccabean period. When facing the prospects of persecution, the

Hebrew believers should therefore be inspired by the “great cloud of witnesses” who had gone and suffered before them (12:1), with Jesus, “the pioneer and perfecter of our faith . . . who endured such hostility from sinners against himself,” as the supreme forerunner (12:1–3; cf. also 2:10; and 6:20).

The epistle’s equivalent to the “witness” terminology found in other writings may be the references to believers’ “confession” (*homologia*: 3:1; 4:14; 10:23). The Jewish Christians to whom the epistle is addressed, are to hold fast to their confession, not throwing away their “assurance” (*hypostasis*: 3:14; 11:1), “confidence” (*parresia*: 3:6; 4:16; 10:19,35), or “faith” (*pistis*: 4:2; 6:1,12; 10:22, 38, 39; 11:1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 [bis], 8, 9, 11, 13, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 39; 12:2; 13:7). Moreover, by using the metaphor of a “race,” even that of a marathon, the author urges his audience to view suffering as a form of divine discipline designed to perfect them as sons (12:5–11; quoting Pr 3:11–12), just as Jesus himself learned obedience through suffering (cf. 2:10, 17–18; 5:7–9). This mindset would help believers persevere in their struggle as they “ran the race” by fixing their eyes on Jesus, just as he had fixed his eyes on God. Christians’ primary focus should therefore not be on the world, but, in Jesus, on God.

Implications

The book of Hebrews contributes to a biblical theology of religions its unequivocal assertion of the supremacy of Christ and the finality of God’s revelation in him, the “Son.” This speaks decisively against all claims by later so-called “prophets,” be it Mohammad, Joseph Smith, or others, to have received further direct revelation from God that in effect sets aside or contradicts God’s revelation in Jesus Christ. How can anyone, in the light of the assertions made in Hebrews 1:1–2, claim to provide divine revelation beyond Christ without being subject to the charge of blasphemy? This, of course, is also expressed in the warning of Revelation 22:18–19.

The writer’s exhortation to believers to go to Jesus “outside the camp” and to bear suffering with him accentuates the call to Christians to be “outsiders,” choosing, not the easy road of material prosperity, but the path of the cross, of self-denying, death-defying discipleship and, if called for, even social ostracism. This letter’s message will be especially meaningful for the church in a time and place where it is called to suffer for Christ’s sake, and where it is tempted to religious compromise in order to escape severe persecution. Of course, the message of Hebrews should not be taken to imply that it is always inappropriate for Christians to exercise influence on society’s government and structures. Where this is possible, there appears no reason to preclude such efforts. This involvement, however, should not be coupled with religious compromise or merely be used as an excuse for self-aggrandizement.

1 Peter

Peter’s first epistle appears to have been written to believers “dispersed” in Asia Minor at the onset of a major persecution in the early 60s C.E. Peter probably wrote from Rome (5:13), where such a persecution may already have started, in order to prepare his readers for imminent suffering (4:12: “do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you . . . as though some strange thing were happening to you”). By referring to the location where he lives at the time of writing as “Babylon” (5:13), Peter symbolically relates Rome to the nation that was responsible for Israel’s exile, a

metaphor developed even more fully in Revelation (O'Connor 1991:17–26; contra Prete 1984:335–52). Peter, who identifies himself as a “fellow-witness of Christ’s sufferings” (5:1), would soon be martyred himself, providing, like Jesus, an example in his sufferings that others could follow (cf. also Jn 21:15–23). In the light of the explicit claims of 1:1 and 5:1, not to mention numerous other factors, Petrine authorship appears secured (see Guthrie 1990:762–81; Carson, Moo, and Morris 1992:421–24; contra Senior and Stuhlmüller 1983:298, 302).

Despite 1 Peter 3:15 (and 2:9), there are no elaborate strategies for verbal gospel proclamation in the Petrine literature. The first epistle calls believers to a godly response to imminent suffering, while the second letter reapplies parts of Jude’s epistle to Peter’s concerns in the context of a “reminder” of the first letter (2Pe 1:12; 3:1). While the author of Hebrews accentuates the new covenant brought by Jesus, thus highlighting elements of discontinuity between Old Testament and New Testament, Peter focuses more on the continuity between Old Testament Israel and the New Testament people of God. In both cases, the salvation-historical embeddedness of Christianity, as the culmination of God’s revelatory and redemptive patterns begun in Old Testament times, roots believers’ faith deeply in one particular trajectory reaching from Old Testament Israel over Jesus to the church comprised of both Jews and Gentiles. The question whether other religious faiths have any revelatory or redemptive value is not directly addressed and may not have been asked in such terms by the authors of the books under consideration. Peter views his faith in deeply personal terms, i.e. both as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (1Pe 1:10–12; 2Pe 1:19–21) and as the result of his personal acquaintance with Jesus (2Pe 1:16–18) rather than merely as the adherence to an abstract system of truth claims.

Peter describes people’s lives before their Christian conversion in the following ways: those believers had been pursuing “the passions of former ignorance” (1Pe 1:14; see also 2:11; 4:2), living according to “the futile ways inherited from the forefathers” (1Pe 1:18), and walking in “darkness” (1Pe 2:9; 2Pe 1:14). The people of God have “escaped from the corruption of the world and its passions” (2Pe 1:4) and “defilements” (2Pe 2:20). The response to which Christians are called is described primarily in behavioral and attitudinal terms: they are to “maintain good conduct among the Gentiles” (1Pe 2:12), to “live lives of holiness and godliness” (2Pe 3:11), and to keep themselves “without spot or blemish” (2Pe 3:14). Nevertheless, references to verbal witness are not entirely absent: believers, in analogy to Old Testament Israel, are to proclaim the excellencies of God (1Pe 2:9 alluding to Isa 43:21), and they are to be prepared to give a defense (*apologia*) of their hope (1Pe 3:15). Even the latter reference, however, should not be understood in terms of elaborate inter-religious dialogue or the detailed engagement of other world views, but as satisfying the curiosity aroused by Christians’ godly response to unjust suffering. To reassure believers, God is presented both as a Father and as a righteous Judge. The final judgment is a recurring theme in Peter’s letters (see 1Pe 1:17; 2:12, 23; 4:7, 17; 5:4; 2Pe 2:1–3:13).

Jesus the Example in Suffering

Who is Jesus, and is he the only Savior? By applying to Jesus numerous Old Testament passages in Messianic fashion, Peter clearly affirms Jesus’ uniqueness and exclusive saving role (cf. e.g. 1Pe 2:6–8, 21–25). These teachings, however, are not ends in themselves but rather serve the purpose of instructing believers on how to respond to persecution. Like the author of

Hebrews, Peter holds up Jesus as believers' example in suffering (1Pe 2:21–25 echoing Isa 53; cf. Heb 12:1–3). Patient suffering on the part of Christians may even lead some to God. This is the implication of Peter's explanatory statement, "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, *in order that he might bring us to God*" (1Pe 3:18), in connection with the exhortation to suffer for doing what is right (1Pe 3:17). While Peter's focus is on Christians' appropriate attitude toward, and response to, suffering, he does not therefore neglect to point to their need of being prepared to give an answer to those who ask them (1Pe 3:15).

While this approach may be considered to be more defensive than, for example, the "Great Commission" in the Gospel of Matthew, it is an appropriate, as well as realistic, perspective on possible missionizing in the context of persecution. As in 1 Peter 2:9–12, verbal proclamation is linked with the necessity of a holy life: believers are to "set apart the Lord Christ in their hearts" (1Pe 3:16). Like Noah, Christians are to bear bold witness in the midst of hostile unbelievers (1Pe 3:19–20). Moreover, even in a context of persecution, believers are to practice love and hospitality (1Pe 4:8–9; cf. Heb 13:1–2), and to exercise their spiritual gifts, be it those of speaking or serving, to the glory of God in Christ (1Pe 4:10–11). Simply put, believers are to "do good" (1Pe 2:12, 15, 20; 3:6, 11, 17; 4:19).

The Identity of Believers

According to Peter, believers are sojourners, "resident aliens" (1:1: *parepidemois*; 1:17: *paroikias*; 2:11: *paroikous kai parepidemos*; cf. also Heb 11:13: *xenoi kai parepidemoi*; Heb 11:9: *parōkesen*; and Phil 3:20: *politeuma en ouranois*; cf. Elliott, 1966; id., 1982; Wolff 1975, 333–42). A strong eschatological component flavors the entire epistle, especially in the light of the church's suffering and persecution (cf. also 1:7, 9, 13; 2:12; 4:7, 11, 13, 17; 5:1,10). Peter reminds Christians in the diaspora of their imperishable inheritance kept in heaven (1:4), assuring them that they are, by the power of God, guarded through faith for a salvation to be revealed on the last day (1:5). Thus believers are to rejoice in their hope, even though they have to endure various trials in this world, "for a little while, if necessary" (1:6). Christians are, however, not alone in their sufferings; there is a solidarity of brotherhood in all the world (5:9; cf. also 5:1; and 2:21–25).

Peter's message to his readers is that their "home," i.e. their identity, is found in the "household of God" (*oikos tou theou*, 4:17), i.e. the fellowship of God's people, a "spiritual house" (*oikos pneumatikos*, 2:5; cf. O'Connor 1991, 20). Paradoxically, these "resident aliens" are also God's "chosen race" (2:9). Peter's characterization of his recipients' identity in those terms represents an effort to equip the church in his sphere of influence for the fulfillment of its mission. Rather than being discouraged by their powerlessness, uprootedness, and abuse from the world, Christians are given hope and are strengthened in their faith and vision (O'Connor 1991, 20). Thus empowered, believers are readied to minister to an often abusive world rather than adopting a defensive "siege mentality" (Senior and Stuhlmüller 1983:299). God's people rather are to be "involved strangers," showing "critical solidarity" with the world (Botha 1988:27–37), loving their enemies (cf. Mt 5:44; see Piper 1980:212–31).

God's promises to his Old Testament covenant people of a physical land, inheritance, and descendants are transformed in 1 Peter into expectations of eternal realities, thus putting experiences in this life into an eschatological perspective. Likewise, categories reserved in the Old

Testament for Israel are now freely transferred to the church (2:9–10; cf. Steuernagel 1986:8–18). It appears that Peter’s entire vision of the church’s mission takes its cue from the Old Testament concept where Israel was to be a mediatorial body, a light to the nations, thus revealing God’s glory (cf. Exod 19:6 and Isa 43:20 quoted in 1 Pet 2:9; cf. also Isa 49:6). The implication of Peter’s incorporation of the Old Testament concept of mission into the new covenant community points to the essential continuity between these missions, contrary to some who exclusively stress the discontinuity between the dynamics involved in the Old Testament and New Testament.

In analogy to Israel’s intended function, Peter perceives the church’s presence in the world from the vantage point of mission, stressing its identity as a witnessing community (Robinson 1989:176–87). The transferal of covenant categories from God’s old to his new covenant community in 2:9–10 is linked with the climactic purpose statement in 2:9, “that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light,” quoting Isa 43:21. Immediately following this, the epistle’s recipients are exhorted to keep their behavior excellent among the nations “so that in the things they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation” (2:12). The proclamation of God’s excellencies thus must be undergirded by “excellent behavior,” now not by Old Testament Israel among the Gentiles, but by the new covenant community in the unbelieving world surrounding it.

Believers’ Relationship to the World

As one writer contends, “[N]o part of the New Testament speaks out more eloquently . . . on [the] theme of holiness of life as a way of Christian witness [as does 1 Peter]” (O’Connor 1991:17). The entire section of 1:13–2:10 is devoted to Peter’s exhortation to his readers to live a holy, spiritually set-apart life. This injunction is grounded in God’s command to the people he called out from slavery in Egypt to be holy and set apart for him (1:15–16 quoting Lev 11:44, 45; 19:2; and 20:7). While the external expressions of such distinctness, i.e. dietary, ritual, and ceremonial laws, have since largely been rendered obsolete, there remains a need for God’s people to live a distinct Christian life-style and to abstain from both physical and spiritual adultery (1:14, 18; 2:1, 11–12; 4:3–4, 15; cf. Matt 5–7). By living holy lives, Christians reveal to their surrounding world God’s very own nature, just as Israel was called to do. A failure to do so, today as then, amounts to a failure of the mission of the church of Christ, regardless of its verbal gospel proclamation. Notably, the power for living a holy life is not drawn from one’s own moral capacity, but derives from Christ’s redemption (1:18–23).

Not only this, even believers’ submission to earthly authorities, be it civil, economic, familial, or ecclesial (cf. 2:13,18; 3:1; 5:1,5), is necessary ultimately for its witness to the world, a frequently overlooked fact. The obligation to be God’s representatives does not only provide a powerful rationale for the necessity of submission to governing authorities (2:13) or economic superiors (2:18), but also for wives to husbands (3:1) and for younger men in the church to elders (5:5). In each case, the same word, *hypotassō*, is used (this is given inadequate consideration by Senior and StuhlmueLLer 1983:300–301,310–11 and Richardson 1987:70–80). Christian wives may hope to win over any unbelieving husbands by their submissive behavior “without a word” (3:1). In a society where women were usually expected to adopt their husband’s religion, Christian wives in mixed marriages were in a very vulnerable position indeed (Balch 1981).

Husbands, in turn, are to treat their wives with understanding, as fellow-heirs of grace (3:7), while the entire congregation is to humble itself under God (5:6). Indeed, Christ, the powerful one who became weak (cf. 1Co 1:25–29; 2Co 8:9; Php 2:6–8), is more than able to strengthen those in minority positions, be it Christian citizens in an ungodly society, Christian slaves suffering from the abuse of people in authority over them, or Christian wives who have to live with their unbelieving husbands. According to Peter, the church is the place where exemplary relationships in proper submission are to be lived out before a watching world.

Implications

Peter’s teaching on believers’ relationship to the world does not focus on the verbal proclamation or defense of the gospel but rather on Christians’ distinctive living out of their roles in their families, workplace, society, and Christian communities. Lofty Christian concepts and virtues are brought down to earth and applied to everyday relationships. No sphere of life is to be exempt from obedience to Christ. This vision was revived during the Protestant Reformation. If there is no difference between Christians and non-Christians in the way they live (as is all too often the case in contemporary North American society), their witness will remain ineffectual. There will be no reason for questions concerning the hope of Christians (3:15). Peter believes that the Christian lifestyle has certain unique qualities which will render the gospel proclamation attractive, but only if a holy lifestyle is maintained and not compromised.

John

The first epistle of John can only be adequately understood against the backdrop of a proto-heretic heresy which had entered the church through some who had since left it (1Jn 2:19). The letter was apparently written in an effort to undo the harm done by those false teachers and to reassure the members of the congregation that were left behind bewildered and confused (Carson 1992). Thus the epistle provides, not an example of inter-religious dialogue, but a pattern of dealing with Christian heresies or cults.

The letter’s argument may best be traced by the claims it seeks to refute: (1) the claim that those teachers “walked in the light” while living immoral lives (1:6); (2) their claim to have no sin (1:8, 10); (3) their claim to know Jesus while disobeying his commandments (2:4, 6); (4) their claim to love God while hating their brother (4:20; see also 2:9, 11; 3:10, 12, 15); and (5) their claim to special divine revelation (2:20, 27). These tenets appear to reflect some form of early gnosticism, a Greek philosophy that was rooted in neoplatonic dualism, fostering a dichotomy between matter and spirit, considering the former evil and the latter good. Significantly, the appropriate Christian response to such an infiltration of concepts incompatible with true Christianity is spelled out not so much on the level of verbal argumentation (except for leaders such as the author of the epistle) as in terms of proper living: believers are not to “love the world” (2:15–17) and they should love their fellow-believers (3:16–18). Then they can be fully assured that they have the Spirit (2:20, 27), that they are born of God and know God (3:1–2, 9–10; 4:4–5; 5:18–19), and that they have eternal life (5:11–12).

Christians, according to John, are not to “engage” the world, but rather to “overcome” both the evil one (2:13–14) and the world (4:4–5), a victory that is assured by believers’ spiritual birth

and by their faith in Jesus who had come to destroy the works of the devil (3:8). In fact, John asserts that the whole world is under the power of the evil one (5:19) so that God's people should keep themselves from idols (5:21). When John affirms that believers in Jesus know the truth, he does so, similarly to Peter, in deeply personal terms: they "know him who is true" and "are in him who is true" (5:20). The world is merely temporary and will pass away (2:17). It is already "the last hour" (2:18), and the spirit of the antichrist is at work in the false teachers (2:18; 4:1–6; see also 2Jn 7) whose judgment is sure (2:28).

The Uniqueness of Jesus

John's major Christological and soteriological emphases are, in interaction with proto-gnostic challenges, twofold: first, Jesus came in the flesh (1:7; 4:2; 2Jn 7), rather than having merely had a phantom spiritual existence as the Docetists would hold; and second, Jesus made atonement for the sins of the entire world (2:2; cf. 4:10), contrary to those who conceived of religious experience merely in terms of esoteric divine revelation. Whether it was docetism, Cerinthianism, or some other form of early gnosticism that provided the major target for John in his epistles (for an overview, see Carson, Moo, Morris 1993:452–55; Schnackenburg 1992:17–24; Marshall 1978:14–22; Stott 1988:44–55), these assertions of Christ's full humanity and the universality of his atonement effectively countered the notion that Christianity could merely mediate a higher knowledge of the divine, or a more profound spiritual union with God, without first dealing with sin and providing salvation and forgiveness (cf. Jn 20:23; 1Jn 1:9; 2:1). A full-fledged, entirely orthodox Christology and soteriology are thus crucial and indispensable in dealing with other religions which may be open to *aspects* of Christian teaching, such as in the ethical realm, or which may be willing to acknowledge that Jesus was a prophet from God, while refusing to embrace biblical Christological and soteriological teaching in its entirety.

The Identity of Believers

John's message to believers is deeply reassuring. He focuses primarily on the ontological realities that are beyond question for all true believers, such as their regeneration ("children of God": 3:1–2, 10; "born of God," "of God": 3:9; 4:4, 6; 5:18–19; cf. also Jn 3:3, 5) and possession of the Holy Spirit (2:20, 27), the availability of forgiveness in the case of sin (1:9; 2:1), or their eternal security (5:11–12). In dealing with adherents of other religions, therefore, Christians need not be in the least intimidated by other forms of spirituality that claim intimate knowledge and communion with God (Carson 1994). Christianity is a religion for everyone, not merely for a spiritual elite initiated into certain religious rites or blessed with esoteric knowledge of divine secrets, as was the case in the mystery religions that flourished in that day (Köstenberger 1991:80–83).

Various tenets of mystery religions and different strands of Greek religion and thought have been incorporated into modern movements such as the New Age movement or other forms of an emerging Western neo-paganism. Thus it is highly relevant to learn how biblical writers such as John deal with challenges proceeding from such faiths.

Believers' Relationship to the World

We find in John's letters no strategy or call to a direct verbal engagement or dialogue with the world. This may be owing to John's realization that the world is caught up in its sinful blindness and hardened in its opposition to Christ, to believers, and to the gospel, so that John appears less optimistic regarding the possibility of successfully engaging other belief systems by way of religious dialogue (cf. 2:15–17). Indeed, to challenge or to change a commitment to other religions entails not merely more education, information, or arguments, but repentance, i.e. a changing of one's mind, especially regarding the person and work of Jesus Christ. John's message to his readers is, not an exhortation to enhanced apologetic efforts, but a call to perseverance, holiness, full assurance, and brotherly love. Prophetically, John insists that a person's true beliefs will be apparent in that person's actions, be it good or evil. Truthful lives thus make a telling statement to the surrounding world, while people living a lie invalidate their words by their deeds. This approach brings the issue of the credibility of the church's and of individual believers' witness into proper focus.

Implications

John's concern for the purity of the church which is shared by other New Testament writers such as Paul accentuates the need for distinguishing Christian teaching clearly from syncretistic elements. In North America, there is generally far too little concern for the purity of the local church, and, paradoxically, missionary efforts are often far too removed from local churches. In an age of pragmatism and pluralism, John calls the church to a return to the simplicity and clarity of biblical teaching on the Christian faith. Believers should not merely engage in interaction with other world religions, but also be concerned with preserving the internal purity of the Christian faith and make every effort to purge it from syncretistic elements and mere nominalism. This necessitates more emphasis on being than doing, and a renewed concern for believers' true identity in Christ in contrast to the surrounding world. John is not hostile to the world, but he reminds us that the world is ultimately hostile to us as Christians. This should warn us both against a complacent accommodation to the world and against undue optimism in engaging the world.

Revelation

The churches in Asia at the end of the first century were apparently plagued by opposition both from within and from without. Believers were called to resist both pressures. On the one hand, the Roman Empire is cast as the very personification of evil in its perpetration of religious persecution (cf. e.g. 17–18). On the other hand, numerous false teachers are named, some apparently Jewish: the Nicolaitans (2:6, 15); the so-called "synagogue of Satan" (2:9; 3:9; cf. also 2:24); some perpetrating the "teaching of Balaam" (2:14; cf. 2 Pet 2:15–16; Jude 11); and the "woman Jezebel" (2:20).

Of these forces, i.e. the Domitian persecution (81–96 C.E.) and Jewish opposition, the Romans are the ultimate threat. The Jews are merely opportunistically collaborating with the Romans to secure a relatively autonomous fragile coexistence with the powers that be. This spirit

of accommodation and compromise, already evident in the political maneuvering of the Pharisees and Sadducees in Jesus' and Paul's day, is strongly condemned in Revelation and clearly presented as unacceptable for Christians. Such accommodation is not a solution for Christians. The role of the Vatican and the state churches of Germany and Austria during the rise and rule of Hitler in Nazi Germany, for example, illustrates both the danger and the reality of the temptation faced by the institutional church in times of persecution. Genuine believers only have the choice of separating themselves in such times from apostate bodies and banding together in underground resistance movements, though whether this should entail the use of force is disputable.

John's vision presents the Messianic community as a woman who, after having given birth to a son (i.e. Christ), flees into the wilderness to escape persecution, but there is nurtured by God (12:1–17). Satan is cast as a dragon (cf. Satan as a roaring lion in 1Pe 5:8; deSilva 1991:185–208). "Babylon," i.e. Rome, is powerfully portrayed as "the great harlot" with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, "the scarlet woman . . . drunk with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the witnesses of Jesus" (17:1–6). Witness in such a context must not lead to defilement (cf. 14:4). While Peter's first epistle still emphasizes discriminate participation in society, the seer here focuses on non-participation in activities associated with the pervasive emperor cult. Revelation may thus be likened to a subversive underground tract, seeking to strengthen believers against the controlling power by holding before them a vision of the end, where, in a complete reversal of contemporary circumstances, Rome will get her due while Christians will be completely vindicated. Only faith could sustain a vision so entirely contrary to people's current experience. As in Hebrews and 1 Peter, only infinitely more gloriously, Jesus is presented as believers' supreme example in suffering.

John's Prophetic-Apocalyptic Political and Social Analysis

Rome's depiction in Revelation as a dragon (12:3–18), a beast (13:1–18), and as a whore (17:3–18), seeks to underscore its usurpation of Christ's power and its promotion of false, counterfeit worship that detracts from the worship of the one true God. Political power and the materialistic amassing of earthly wealth are seen to be at the heart of the self-serving spirit driving the ambitions of the citizens of this worldly empire. John thus attempts a social critique of the society of his day. He provides this analysis, however, not in an effort to evangelize or to dialogue, but merely in order to open the eyes of believers who are tempted to compromise. After all, this compromise may perhaps be due merely to the failure to see clearly the demonic underpinnings of the world system, with the result that those believers think they can combine the securing of their own well-being with their religious commitment. John excludes this possibility. His predominant concern is for the purity of the communities of believers and of individual believers in partially apostate bodies rather than for the development of an elaborate apologetic for the Christian faith as such.

There is evidence that the Roman emperor insisted on being addressed as *dominus et deus*, i.e. as "Lord and God" (Suet. *Dom.* 13; Mart. *Epig.* 9.56.3). Revelation itself may provide evidence for the escalation of a "polemical parallelism" (Deissmann's term) between the titles and institutions in Rome and the church. Jewish synagogues introduced the curse of the Minim into the "Eighteen Benedictions" in about 90 C.E. (Hemer 1986:216) as a means of detecting Christians in the synagogues. The lack of explicit evidence for outright persecution of Christians

under Domitian points to the possibility that persecution took on the form of a systematic and deliberate exploitation of pressures inherent in people's existential circumstances, be it social, economic, political, or religious (Hemer 1986:11), a powerful lesson for Christians even today. Owing to heavy taxation of Jews, many appear to have left the synagogues in order to avoid paying tribute to the Romans, a practice met by the Jews' occasional disclosure of their bona fide members to the Roman authorities.

Christians thus were caught between two alternatives if they wanted to avoid persecution for their faith: to associate with paganism by participating in the emperor cult ("Nicolaitanism"; see below), or to find shelter in the confines of the local synagogue, which implied, besides heavy taxation by the Romans, also at least implicit denial of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially after 90 C.E. Believers' commitment was thus severely tested, and the temptations to compromise were many. The flawed rationale for any of these false alternatives, however, needed to be fully exposed in order to open up for believers the glorious vistas of eternal heavenly worship of the glorious Christ. His sole worthiness of worship, and the absolute necessity of holiness and spiritual purity, needed to be held squarely before struggling believers in order to confirm their resolve to face even death rather than the loss of eternal blessedness with Christ. The latter, in the ultimate analysis, was by far the worst option.

These alternatives, then as today, are not always as clearly in view as might be desirable. Then as today, it is the prophetic responsibility of those so called within the Christian church, to expose potential areas of moral and practical compromise for believers and to clarify the choices that are required, if severe eternal consequences should be avoided. The book of Hebrews provides an early example of this issue. The question of whether or not people who had fallen away from the faith during persecution should afterwards be reinstated in the church in later years shows that this continued to be a vital difficulty in the church.

The Christian Community's Enemies

It is now necessary to return in more detail to the specific enemies of the faith named in the seven letters. It appears that these opponents of believers should be divided into two distinctive threats: on the one hand, Jewish antagonists, i.e. the "synagogue of Satan"; on the other hand, antinomian tendencies, i.e. the Nicolaitans perpetrating "the teaching of Balaam," and the "woman Jezebel." We may begin with the latter phenomena.

Who were the Nicolaitans (Hemer 1986:87-94)? It appears that this movement, possibly founded by a certain Nicolaus, was based on a misrepresentation of Pauline teaching on Christian liberty (cf. 1Co 8:1-13; 10:20-30; see also 2Pe 3:15-17?). Thus believers were tempted to violate the spirit of the apostolic decree cited in Acts 15:20, 29 which explicitly forbade Gentiles in mixed communities to commit fornication and to eat meat offered to idols. Such partaking may also have been viewed as participation in the emperor cult, thus raising acutely the choice faced by many between Christ and Caesar. Balaam, the Jewish prophet, whose counsel was traditionally seen as contriving the Israelites' sin with the daughters of Moab, may here be viewed typologically as a tempter of God's people to both literal and figurative, i.e. spiritual, immorality (cf. Nu 25:1-2; cf. also Jude 11 and 2Pe 2:15).

The exalted Jesus, according to John, demanded that the churches of Asia Minor be purged from such influences, since these would make individual believers and entire communities more

susceptible to spiritual compromise, watering down the churches' distinctness, and forging unholy links between believers and the emperor worship. Significantly, the distortions of Christian teaching associated with Nicolaitanism are primarily practical, not doctrinal, in nature. They involve no extensive apologetic dimension but rather have serious behavioral implications. There is no hint regarding the need to engage the world view of Nicolaitanism by individual believers or even entire communities beyond the prophetic denunciation of the teaching by Jesus himself as reported by John.

Similar to Balaam, Jezebel was considered to have induced Israel into idolatry (1Ki 16:31–33; 21:25–26). Hemer considers the teaching of Jezebel in Thyatira to have been a reapplication of Nicolaitanism to a different context. While elsewhere the lives of Christians were at stake, here it was their livelihood. The “woman Jezebel,” it may be conjectured, argued that it was possible for believers to join a guild and to participate in its feasts in order to secure their business interests without compromising their faith (Hemer 1981:123). By claiming to know “the deep things of God” (cf. 1Co 2:10?), this teaching may have sought support from Paul’s dealing with a similar situation in Corinth, while conveniently setting aside the apostolic degree of Acts 15. This kind of rationalization and ethical accomodation to lower pagan standards would certainly have been tempting where people’s livelihood was at stake and where compromise may at the outset have appeared harmless and inconsequential. Jesus’ prophetic counsel, however, drew a sharp line between the worship of God and participation in practices perpetrated in a society pervaded by Satan. A clear choice was required; such “lukewarmness” would not be tolerated by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the light of these pressures, John emphasizes the following truths (Osborne 1993): (1) Jesus’ supreme worthiness of allegiance; (2) the confidence that people adhering to conflicting truth claims will be judged by God at the final revelation of Jesus Christ and that believers will ultimately be vindicated by a sovereign, just God; (3) that believers are to entrust themselves to God in their suffering; (4) the conviction that the world’s opposition to Christ and his people is ultimately Satanically inspired. Once again, truth is personalized in Jesus. A person’s relationship to Jesus is the crucial issue, not merely beliefs about him.

The book’s categories are black and white, and the need for an uncompromising attitude is stressed (cf. e.g. 18:4). Angel worship is discouraged (19:10). The world is characterized as given to spiritual fornication and blasphemy (17:2–3), as drunk with the blood of martyrs (18:6), as the dwelling place of demons (18:2), the source of material enrichment for some who absorb its values (18:3). Just as Satan is a liar, the world he controls is a counterfeit system. Jesus, on the other hand, is faithful and true (19:11), the Word of God (19:13), and the King of kings and the Lord of lords (19:16).

Overall, it appears that the greatest problem faced by believers at the time when Revelation was written was not the question of how to dialogue with adherents to other faiths, but rather the issue of how they could keep their Christian practice clean from associations with their pagan environment. The solution was spiritual separation rather than compromise and accomodation. Prophetically, Jesus calls for a clear choice between Christ and Caesar, excluding the possibility of a middle ground.

The Portrayal of Christ

The Christophany of chapter 1 presents Jesus as the faithful witness, the proto-martyr (see below), as the first-born from the dead who is preeminent in his church, and as the ruler of the kings of the earth, thus fulfilling Jewish Messianic expectations (cf. 1:5). Jesus is the lion (5:5; cf. Ge 49:9) turned lamb (*to arnion*; 5–7; 12:11; 13:8; 14:1,4,10; 15:3; 17:14; 19:7,9; 21:9,14,22,23,27; 22:1,3), an image that combines paschal imagery with the notion of the warrior-lamb prominent in apocalyptic literature. By relating Isaiah 11:1 to Isaiah 53:2, 7 (with possible overtones of Zec 3:8–10), and by adding to those passages the notion that Jesus was the warrior-Messiah who would execute God’s judgment, John portrays Christ’s death as the decisive victory over Satan and death without stopping there. Jesus is also the fulfillment of Jewish hopes of a powerful, reigning king: “John, rather than reinterpreting the Messianic hopes of Judaism solely along the lines of a cosmic victory accomplished at the cross, fully expected the hopes to be fulfilled and that victory to be prosecuted on earth at the return of Christ” (Hultberg 1994:16; cf. Ac 1:6).

Besides the Christophany of chapter 1 and the image of the lion turned lamb, perhaps the most powerful depiction of Christ in Revelation is that of the rider on the white horse, as the one who is called “faithful” and “true” (ch 19). One further notes that John deliberately blurs the images of God and Christ (cf. Rev 1:14 which portrays Jesus in terms of the “Ancient of Days,” i.e. God, in Da 7:9; cf. also the development of Da 7:13 in Rev). Christ is clearly portrayed as divine (cf. e.g. the use of the term “the first and the last” for Christ: 1:8, 17; 21:6–7; 22:13), and the book vividly depicts the dual worship of God and Christ (cf. e.g. 5:8–14).

The Christian Community’s Witness

Are the believers to whom the book of Revelation is addressed thus to be merely indifferent toward the destiny of people in the surrounding world? This appears to be precluded by the presence of the “witness” motif (Poucousta 1988:397–405), a term that undergoes a permutation from “testimony” to a person’s dying for the faith, i.e. as a “martyr” (cf. Heb 12:1, 4; see Holtz 1962:55; Filippini 1990:401–49; Vassiliadis 1985:129–34; von Campenhausen 1936).

As a matter of fact, Bauckham has recently argued persuasively that the question of the conversion of the nations is at the center of the prophetic message of Revelation (Bauckham 1993). This becomes apparent especially by a close study of the book’s Old Testament allusions. This author draws attention particularly to the following passages which he considers crucial: (1) 14:6–7 where the usual terminology, “the inhabitants of the earth,” is changed to “those who sit on the earth,” thus indicating that the latter group, unlike the former, is still a potential prospect for conversion; the passage also contains an allusion to Psalm 96:2b, with Psalm 96 being the first of a string of psalms celebrating Yahweh’s universal lordship; (2) the account of the two witnesses (cf. esp. 11:5–6) where Moses and Elijah, both of whom confronted pagan rulers and religions, serve as the Old Testament models, but where the two witnesses transcend both, since they die a martyr’s death while neither Moses nor Elijah did, with Elijah (and Moses according to tradition) not having died at all; (3) the vision of the grain harvest (14:14–16), an image, not of judgment, but of the gathering of converted nations into the kingdom of God; and (4) the Song of Moses (15:2–4), a piece of careful exegesis of Exodus 15:1–18 with reference to Psalms 86:8–10;

98:1–2; 105:1; Jeremiah 10:6–7; and Isaiah 12:1–6. As Bauckham contends, in this final period, God does not deliver his faithful people by the slaughter of their enemies, as he did in order to bring the nations to repentance and faith. In this way, those ransomed by the sacrifice of the Lamb now themselves are called to sacrifice in order to participate also in his victory, giving it universal effect.

Thus believers' witness is the quintessential prerequisite for the conversion of the nations. At this "climax of prophecy," suffering and martyrdom are placed in an eternal perspective. Jesus is the prime witness, the proto-martyr (1:5; 3:14; cf. also 11:3; 14:6; 17:6; 19:11; 22:16, 20). Reference is also made to Antipas, "the faithful witness" (2:13), and to the "two witnesses" who testify before the inhabitants of the earth for 1260 days and then are killed on account of their testimony (11:3, 7). John the seer, too, is said to testify (1:2; 20:18).

John, similar to Peter, introduces himself as a "fellow-sharer in the tribulation and kingdom and endurance in Jesus" (1:9; cf. 1Pe 5:1–2). "The testimony of Jesus" (1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10 [bis]; 20:4), i.e. believers' testimony *to* Jesus (objective genitive: Filippini 1990:401–49; contra Ford 1990:141–46), with a possible martyrological nuance, i.e. "unto death" (Vassiliadis 1985:129–34), is presented as a prophetic act that discloses God's truth in a world adamant in its opposition to God. In the final days, it is not active outreach, but "holding to the testimony of Jesus" that is needed, for "the one who overcomes" and "endures" is the one who will be rewarded eternally ("overcomes" *nikaō*, cf. 2:7,11,17,26; 3:5,12,21 [bis]; 21:7; "endurance": *hypomonē*, 1:9; 2:2, 3, 19; 3:10; 13:10; 14:12; cf. Heb 10:32, 36; 12:1, 2, 3, 7; 1Pe 2:20 [bis]).

Nevertheless, "witness" terminology clearly involves, not mere indifference to the world's fate, but the proclamation of a divine message (cf. 14:6 where an angel proclaims an eternal gospel to all nations). Also, exhortations for five of the seven churches, or individuals in them, to repent, clearly indicate that the seer still allows room for conversions (2:5, 16, 21–22; 3:3, 19). The unrepentant attitude of those confronted with the gospel in Revelation also functions as the foil for John's "justification of God," i.e. theodicy (cf. Osborne 1993:63–77; Yarbrow Collins 1989:729–50). Finally, the church is, as in 1 Peter, presented as a kingdom of priests (1:6; 5:10; 20:6; cf. Ex 19:6; Isa 61:6; cf. also 1Pe 2:5, 9), indicating its mediatorial function for the world (Bandstra 1992:10–25).

Implications

The book of Revelation is supremely concerned with the difference between true and false worship (Peterson 1992). When dealing with other religions, this book will be supremely relevant regarding the nature and proper object of worship as well as regarding the meaning of martyrdom and believers' future hope.

According to the author of Revelation, it is ultimately Satan himself who stands behind the forces conspiring against Christians. Nevertheless, the church is called to witness until the end, even in the midst of fierce and deadly persecution. It should discern, and expose, the unholy allegiances and ungodly compromises that tempt believers to drift away from their complete allegiance to Christ in this world. A person's Christian commitment is not merely a system of beliefs to be upheld, but an allegiance to be maintained in the face of constant opportunities for compromise. In the post-Christian West at the dawn of the third millennium after Christ, where, according to Francis Schaeffer's prophetic words, personal peace and affluence reign, even in segments of the evangelical subculture, this is a timely message indeed.

Conclusion

The general epistles and the book of Revelation deal with a variety of pastoral concerns and issues of vital interest to the recipients of those writings. Many of these entail the unique and supreme role of Jesus in the Christian faith and life, the identity of believers, and their relationship to the surrounding world, especially in regard to persecution. Conflicting world and religious views are touched upon primarily from the vantage point of their potential of distorting the purity of the Christian faith. The author of Hebrews asserts that the entire old covenant system was merely a model of the life of the new covenant inaugurated by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus. Judaism is thus shown to cling to the mere preparatory edifice of which Jesus has become the fulfillment. The Petrine epistles challenge believers to maintain a godly life witness, involving proper submission to authority, in order to render the gospel message attractive. The Johannine correspondence seeks to safeguard its readers from competing views such as proto-gnosticism, in an effort to protect believers from doctrinal and moral compromise. The book of Revelation, finally, presents a vision of believers' future that dramatically reverses their present experience: suffering will turn to glory, and the now powerless will rule with Christ.

The writings considered here do not self-consciously map out a strategy of engaging other religions. Their thrust is primarily defensive, seeking to preserve the purity of individual believers and of entire congregations, while calling believers to hold fast to their confession (Hebrews), witnessing by their entire lives and words (1 Peter), and persevering until the end (Revelation). The book of Revelation, with its contrasting scenes of true and false worship, evokes powerful images etching into our minds the difference between the nature and proper object of worship.

Reference List

Attridge, Harold W.

1980 " 'Let us strive to enter that rest': The Logic of Hebrews 4:1–11." *Harvard Theological Review* 73:279–88.

Balch, David L.

1981 *Let Wives Be Submissive: The Domestic Code in 1 Peter*. SBLMS 26. Chico, CA: Scholars Press.

Bandstra, A. J.

1992 " 'A Kingship and Priests': Inaugurated Eschatology in the Apocalypse." *Calvin Theological Journal* 27:10–25.

Bauckham, Richard

1993 "The Conversion of the Nations." In *The Climax of Prophecy. Studies in the Book of Revelation*. Pp. 238–337. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Blomberg, Craig

- 1994 "Critical Issues in New Testament Studies for Evangelicals Today." In *A Pathway into the Holy Scripture*. Philip E. Satterthwaite and David F. Wright, eds. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Botha, J.

- 1988 "Christian and Society in 1 Peter: Critical Solidarity." *Scriptura* 24:27–37.

Carson, D. A.

- 1992 "Reflections on Christian Assurance." *Westminster Theological Journal* 54:1–29.
 1994 "When is Spirituality Spiritual? Reflections on Some Problems of Definition." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37:381–94.

Carson, D. A., Douglas J. Moo, and Leon Morris

- 1992 *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Chin, M.

- 1991 "A Heavenly Home for the Homeless. Aliens and Strangers in 1 Peter." *Tyndale Bulletin* 42:96–112.

deSilva, David A.

- 1991 "The 'Image of the Beast' and the Christians in Asia Minor: Escalation of Sectarian Tension in Revelation 13." *Trinity Journal* 12 NS:185–208.

Elliott, John H.

- 1966 *The Elect and the Holy*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966.
 1982 *A Home for the Homeless. A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. London: SCM.

Feldmeier, Reinhard

- 1992 *Die Christen als Fremde: Die Metapher der Fremde in der antiken Welt, im Urchristentum und im 1. Petrusbrief*. WUNT 64. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).

Filippini, R.

- 1990 "La forza della verità. Sul concetto di testimonianza nell'Apocalisse." *Rivista Biblica* 38:401–49.

Ford, J. M.

- 1990 "Persecution and Martyrdom in the Book of Revelation." *Bible Today* 28:141–46.

Grässer, Erich

- 1986 "Das wandernde Gottesvolk. Zum Basismotiv des Hebräerbriefes." *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77:160–79.

Guthrie, Donald

1990 *New Testament Introduction*. 4th edition. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity.

Hemer, Colin J.

1981 *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in their Local Setting*. JSNTSS 11. Sheffield: JSOT.

Holtz, Traugott

1962 *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes*. Berlin: Akademie.

Hultberg, Alan D.

1994 *The Christology of the Revelation to John*. Seminar paper presented at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1994. Deerfield, IL.

Johnsson, William G.

1978 "The Pilgrimage Motif in the Book of Hebrews." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 97:239–51.

Käsemann, Ernst

1984 *The Wandering People of God*. Roy A. Harrisville and Irving L. Sandberg, trans. Minneapolis: Augsburg.

Köstenberger, Andreas J.

1991 "The Mystery of Christ and the Church: Head and Body, 'One Flesh.'" *Trinity Journal* 12 NS:79–94.

Marshall, I. Howard

1978 *The Epistles of John*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

O'Connor, Dan

1991 "Holiness of Life as a Way of Christian Witness." *International Review of Mission* 80:17–26.

Osborne, Grant R.

1993 "Theodicy in the Apocalypse." *Trinity Journal* 14 NS:63–77.

Peterson, David L.

1992 *Engaging with God. A Biblical Theology of Worship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Piper, John

1980 "Hope as the Motivation of Love: 1 Peter 3:9–12." *New Testament Studies* 26:212–31.

Poucota, P.

1988 "Mission-témoignage dans l'Apocalypse." *Spiritus* 29:397–405.

- Prete, B.
1984 "L'espressione *he en Babyloni syneklete* di 1 Pt. 5,13." *Vetus Christus* 21:335–52.
- Richardson, R. L.
1987 "From 'Subjection to Authority' to 'Mutual Submission': The Ethic of Subordination in 1 Peter." *Faith and Mission* 4:70–80.
- Robinson, P. J.
1989 "Some Missiological Perspectives from I Peter 2:4–10." *Missionalia* 17:176–87.
- Schnackenburg, Rudolf
1992 *The Johannine Epistles*. Reginald and Ilse Fuller, trans. New York: Crossroad.
- Senior, Donald and Carroll Stuhlmueller
1983 *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Steuernagel, V. R.
1986 "An Exiled Community as a Missionary Community. A Study based on 1 Peter 2:9, 10." *Evangelical Review of Theology* 10:8–18.
- Stott, John R. W.
1988 *The Letters of John*. TNTC. Revised edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Vassiliadis, P.
1985 "The Translation of MARTYRIA IESOU in Revelation." *Bible Translator* 36:129–34.
- von Campenhausen, Hans
1936 *Die Idee des Martyriums in der alten Kirche*. Göttingen.
- Wolff, C.
1975 "Christ und Welt im 1. Petrusbrief." *Theologische Literaturzeitschrift* 100:333–42.
- Yarbro Collins, Adela
1989 "Persecution and Vengeance in the Book of Revelation." In *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East*. 2d edition. David Hellholm, ed. Pp. 729–50. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck).