

BOHDAN KURYLIAK

Temporal Dimensions of the Apocalypse

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*
671

Mohr Siebeck

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Ancient Christian Reception and
Contemporary Hermeneutical Reflections

Mohr Siebeck

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*This monograph is dedicated to my parents,
Ivan and Hanna Kuryliak,
whose enduring faith, love, and devotion to God
laid the foundation for my academic and spiritual journey*

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List of Abbreviations

<i>AcT</i>	<i>Acta Theologica</i>
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AUSS	<i>Andrews University Seminary Studies</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BGBE	Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BP	Biblioteca Patristica
<i>BR</i>	<i>Biblical Research</i>
BRI	Biblical Research Institute
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum Series Latina
<i>CH</i>	<i>Church History</i>
ConcC	Concordia Commentary
ECF	Early Church Fathers
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
<i>EvQ</i>	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
ExpTim	Expository Times
FC	Fathers of the Church
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
GNS	<i>Good News Studies</i>
<i>HBT</i>	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries
<i>HvTSt</i>	<i>Hervormde theologiese studies</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KEK	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (Meyer-Kommentar)
LD	Lectio Divina
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
<i>MSJ</i>	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>

NAC	New American Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NTD	Das Neue Testament Deutsch
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
OSHT	Oxford Studies in Historical Theology
<i>PRSt</i>	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RBén</i>	<i>Revue benedictine</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
<i>RHPR</i>	<i>Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
SC	Sources Chrésiennes
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SP	Sacra Pagina
SUNT	Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments
SVTQ	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TEG	Traditio Exegetica Graeca
TGST	Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Teologia
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
ThH	Théologie historique
ThKNT	Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>TJ</i>	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TS</i>	<i>Theological Studies</i>
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur
<i>TZ</i>	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WUNT II	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
ZAC	<i>Zeitschrift für Antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
ZRGG	<i>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</i>
ZTK	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The book of Revelation has a special place in the New Testament. It has become the last book that finally completes the Christian Bible, and it is written in a particular genre that has been named in modern scholarship – according to the opening of this book – “apocalyptic.”¹ A characteristic feature of this genre is the symbolism in the transmission of information, as well as the emphasis on eschatological events. Heavenly scenes of the worship and glorification of God, descriptions of a new heaven and a new earth, the second coming of Jesus Christ, judgments of evil, hybrid monsters, beasts, a dragon, descriptions of cataclysms, and many other images stimulated the imagination of commentators and artists alike. Jörg Frey writes that “No other biblical book has therefore influenced art as much as the ‘Apocalypse of John.’”² Images in Christian literature, church frescoes, and stained-glass windows often contained symbols from the book of Revelation. Also, the Apocalypse greatly influenced Christian piety.³ Promises and passages calling for faithfulness have given hope to many believers throughout Christian history. Today, the book of Revelation “continues to exert a powerful and colorful influence on all our lives, whether we are Christian or not, whether we know about the book or not.”⁴

The usual narrative of the Gospels and other books of the New Testament is much easier for the reader to understand than the Apocalypse. Surprising and unusual symbols have always caused difficulties in interpretation.⁵ Also, interpreters throughout the history of Christianity have often viewed the book of

¹ The first author who coined the term was Friedrich Lücke, *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung Johannis und in die gesammte apokalyptische Litteratur* (Bonn: Weber, 1832).

² Jörg Frey, “Die Bildersprache der Johannesapokalypse,” *ZTK* 98 (2001): 163. All translations from German are mine unless noted otherwise.

³ Frey, “Die Bildersprache der Johannesapokalypse,” 163.

⁴ Natasha O’Hear and Anthony O’Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse: The Book of Revelation in the Arts Over Two Millennia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

⁵ Because of its many confusing symbols and strange interpretations, the book of Revelation has also attracted criticism among Christians. See, e.g., the remark in Martin Luther’s preface to his translation of the New Testament: “I miss more than one thing in this book, and it makes me consider it to be neither apostolic nor prophetic. First and foremost, the apostles do not deal with visions, but prophesy in clear and plain words, as do Peter and Paul, and Christ in the Gospel. For it befits the apostolic office to speak clearly of Christ and His deeds, without images and visions. Moreover, there is no prophet in the Old Testament, to say nothing of the New, who deals so exclusively with visions and images” (Charles M. Jacobs and

Revelation as a prophecy of events, some of which have already come true, while others are still awaiting their fulfillment. Accordingly, individual visions were attributed to specific historical events, phenomena, ideologies, and personalities. The human desire to know the future and decipher the course of history led to a study of the Apocalypse.

Exceptional images and difficult to understand symbolic visions contributed to the emergence of various interpretations in the history of theology. Sigve Tonstad calls the Apocalypse “Pandora’s box in biblical interpretation.”⁶ As a result of centuries of accumulation of interpretations of the book of Revelation, today we have a variety of hermeneutical approaches which, when used by the interpreter, represent the content of the same passage diametrically opposite in meaning.

Among the hermeneutical approaches to the Apocalypse related to the time dimension, scholars distinguish four main ones: preterism, idealism, historicism, and futurism.⁷ The preterist approach primarily focuses on the historical context of the first century, while the futurist approach emphasizes events expected to occur in the future, particularly at the end of time. The idealist approach primarily emphasizes timeless principles and practical advice that remain relevant across all periods, while the historicist approach largely interprets the book of Revelation as a prophecy of events unfolding throughout church history.

Despite various studies on the last book of the New Testament, scholars have not reached a consensus on how to interpret the symbols of Revelation or which approaches of interpretation are the most appropriate.⁸ The various passages and images of the Apocalypse have different time dimensions. As Ian Paul admits, “issues around time and temporality are central to the interpretation of

E. Theodore Bachmann, *Martin Luther. Prefaces to the New Testament* [Wildside Press, 2010], 48, according to WADB VII 404,5 ff.).

⁶ Sigve K. Tonstad, *Revelation*, Paideia: Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019), 8.

⁷ See Gilbert Desrosiers, *An Introduction to Revelation: A Pathway to Interpretation*, T&T Clark Approaches to Biblical Studies (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 29–37; G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 44–48; Jörg Frey, “Was erwartet die Johannesapokalypse? Zur Eschatologie des letzten Buchs der Bibel,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Kontexte – Konzepte – Rezeption*, ed. Jörg Frey, James A. Kelhoffer, and Franz Tóth, WUNT 287 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012), 487–93; Kenneth A. Strand, *Interpreting the Book of Revelation: Hermeneutical Guidelines, with Brief Introduction to Literary Analysis* (Naples, MI: Ann Arbor Publishers, 1976), 11–16.

⁸ Jörg Frey states that “Recent research also shows great uncertainty with regard to apocalyptic imagery” (“Die Bildersprache der Johannesapokalypse,” 164). Peter Trummer even argues that the symbols in the book of Revelation are so difficult to interpret that it is necessary “to lower our standards of exegetical precision and unambiguity with regard to the imagery of Revelation” (“Einige Aspekte zur Bildersprache der Johannesapokalypse,” in *Metaphorik und Mythos im Neuen Testament* [Freiburg im Breisgau; Basel; Wien: Herder, 1990], 278).

the Book of Revelation.”⁹ Therefore, the analysis and discussion of these four main hermeneutic approaches with a special reference to the reception history remains relevant.

Reception history¹⁰ of the Bible is a rapidly developing new direction in biblical studies.¹¹ Timothy Beal writes that “Every year sees increasing numbers of reception-historical articles, monographs, books, and dissertations in biblical studies.”¹² The modern study of reception history has its roots in the philosophical hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer, who developed his view of understanding history in his book *Truth and Method*. Gadamer suggests that any understanding of history is possible only in terms of its reception. He can show that the situational nature inherent in all acts of interpretation: “This situatedness means more than acknowledging that, as an interpreter, I always work from within my historical locale; it means acknowledging that my very consciousness exists within that locale.”¹³ Gadamer writes that “If we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history,” and states that “historical consciousness is itself situated in the web of historical effects.”¹⁴ Gadamer argues that each interpretation is preceded by other interpretations, which depend on the context and emphasize particular aspects of the text. The meaning of a text is not limited to the author’s intention and the reading of the original audience. The meaning of a text “unfolds step by step, through different layers of meaning related to the historical situation. This series of readings codetermine more or less straightforwardly the interpretive process of today.”¹⁵

⁹ Ian Paul, “The Reimagining of Theological Time: Revelation’s Use of the OT in Defining Its Temporality,” in *The Scriptures in the Book of Revelation and Apocalyptic Literature: Essays in Honour of Steve Moyise*, ed. Susan E. Docherty and Steve Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2023), 101.

¹⁰ William J. Lyons notes: “Reception history aims to understand the interaction between a text, a context and an audience’s response” (“Hope for a Troubled Discipline? Contributions to New Testament Studies from Reception History,” *JSNT* 33 [2010]: 213).

¹¹ See Christina Hoegen-Rohls, “Rezeptionskritik und Rezeptionsgeschichte des Neuen Testaments: Eine methodologische Skizze,” *NTS* 69 (2023): 258–70; Régis Burnet, “What is Reception Study? A Proposal for Terminological Definitions Based on Christina Hoegen-Rohls’ Article,” *NTS* 69 (2023): 271–76; Régis Burnet, “Why ‘Reception History’ Is Not Just Another Exegetical Method: The Case of Mark’s Ending,” *NTS* 69 (2023): 277–90.

¹² Timothy Beal, “Reception History and Beyond: Toward the Cultural History of Scriptures,” *BibInt* 19 (2011): 360. For example, see Emma England and William J. Lyons, *Reception History and Biblical Studies: Theory and Practice* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015); Michael Lieb, Emma Mason, and Jonathan Roberts, *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹³ Lieb, Mason, and Roberts, *The Oxford Handbook*, 1–2.

¹⁴ Hans G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1960), 285.

¹⁵ Régis Burnet, *Exegesis and History of Reception: Reading the New Testament Today with the Readers of the Past*, WUNT 455 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2021), 62. Robert Evans writes:

Gadamer's hermeneutic ideas were adopted by Biblical interpreters¹⁶ and theologians and gradually the direction of research in the reception history of the Bible gained popularity. Scholars started an ecumenical project – the *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, which was supposed to contain the reception history.¹⁷ Ulrich Luz paid considerable attention to the reception history in his commentary on the Gospel of Matthew¹⁸ and “his main contribution has been in putting the ‘effective history’ of texts (or Wirkungsgeschichte) firmly on the map of New Testament scholarship.”¹⁹ Contemporary interest in the reception history of the Bible can be seen in projects such as *Lexikon der Bibelhermeneutik*, *Encyclopedia of the Bible and its Reception*, *New Blackwell Bible Commentaries* series, *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, Ruprecht's *The Hebrew Bible/Old Testament: The History of Interpretation*, and the *Journal of the Bible and its Reception*.²⁰ In addition, research in the reception history in French began to be published in a journal *Suppléments aux Cahiers Évangile*, Collection the *Graphè* series (University of Artois Press), the *Études d'histoire de l'exégèse* series, and the dictionary of the Bible in the world's literature (*La Bible dans les littératures du monde*).²¹ Given this trend in New Testament studies, the reception history of one of the most mysterious books of the New Testament acquires particular relevance.²²

Information about ancient and modern interpretations and their influence will always be relevant for students of the book of Revelation. Ian Boxall writes that “Reception history can... explore the trajectory of specific traditions of interpretation” and “open up forgotten or fresh perspectives.”²³ He also emphasizes two useful aspects of the reception history. The first one is “essentially

“Wirkungsgeschichte in Gadamer is not a history, nor a method, nor a type of reception, but a principle – that alongside the apparent immediacy with which we encounter a text from the past, we need a consciousness that we are already affected by history” (*Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation: Gadamer and Jauss in Current Practice* [London: Bloomsbury, 2014], 8).

¹⁶ See, most effectively, Peter Stuhlmacher, *Vom Verstehen des Neuen Testaments: Eine Hermeneutik* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986).

¹⁷ Burnet, *Exegesis*, 64–65.

¹⁸ See Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 1–7)*, EKKNT (Zurich: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger; Neukirchener Verlag, 1985); *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 8–17)*, EKKNT (Zurich: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger; Neukirchener Verlag, 1990); *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18–25)*, EKKNT (Zurich: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger; Neukirchener Verlag, 1997); *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 26–28)*, EKKNT (Zurich: Neukirchen-Vluyn: Benziger; Neukirchener Verlag, 2002).

¹⁹ Mark W. Elliott, “Effective-History and the Hermeneutics of Ulrich Luz,” *JSNT* 33 (2010): 161.

²⁰ Burnet, *Exegesis*, 65.

²¹ Burnet, *Exegesis*, 65.

²² Heikki Raisanen writes, that research the effective history of Bible is “an important area of fresh research” (“The Effective ‘History’ of the Bible: A Challenge to Biblical Scholarship?,” *SJT* 45 [1992]: 324).

²³ Ian Boxall, “Reception History and the Interpretation of Revelation,” in *The Oxford*

interdisciplinary,” and second – “ability to address ‘real life’ issues.”²⁴ Regis Burnet points out another important aspect:²⁵

Taking the past readings into account makes it possible to resist the temptation of the tabula rasa method. To believe that we are our own beginning is to smuggle into our discourse some opinions that precede us and which we will no longer question. Reading in tradition, therefore, makes it possible to fight a certain form of methodological solipsism to engage in methodological debates.

Ian Boxall states that “attention to reception history” is important “for understanding New Testament texts.”²⁶ Eric Covington proposed the analogy of the geometric principle of trilateration to demonstrate the importance of reception history.²⁷ The exegete (one hermeneutic horizon) meets the biblical text (the second hermeneutic horizon), and when the reception history is added (the third hermeneutic horizon), it provides “a more focused range of interpretative possibility within which the New Testament exegete can work.”²⁸ Covington explains:²⁹

The significance of a *Wirkungsgeschichtliches* approach in New Testament studies is that it requires interpreters to engage with voices and perspectives that occupy a different hermeneutical horizon and challenge the interpreter to recognize and engage with the blind spots that occur as a result of their own finite horizon. This also has, it should be noted, significant hermeneutical significance for understanding the necessity of intentionally engaging scholarship that originates beyond one’s own denominational, national, ethnic, and gender boundaries in the interpretive conversation.

Therefore, engaging with the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of a text is not merely an optional methodological supplement separate from New Testament interpretation; instead, it constitutes an essential part of the interpretive process itself.³⁰ Accordingly, the reception history of the book of Revelation is the third herme-

Handbook of the Book of Revelation, ed. Craig R. Koester (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 389.

²⁴ Boxall, “Reception History,” 390.

²⁵ Burnet, *Exegesis*, 72.

²⁶ Ian Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3.

²⁷ Eric Covington writes: “Trilateration, as expressed in modern location services, is based on the simple but profound idea that three satellites provide a more plausible range of locative possibility than two. If the radial distances of the satellites may be compared to the hermeneutical horizons suggested by Gadamer and Jauss, GPS trilateration provides an analogy for the significance of adding a third hermeneutical horizon” (“*Wirkungsgeschichte* and Trilateration: A Methodological Analogy for Understanding the Role of Reception-History in New Testament Exegesis,” in *Studies in the History of Exegesis*, History of Biblical Exegesis [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022], 28).

²⁸ Covington, “*Wirkungsgeschichte* and Trilateration,” 29.

²⁹ Covington, “*Wirkungsgeschichte* and Trilateration,” 31.

³⁰ Covington, “*Wirkungsgeschichte* and Trilateration,” 34.

neutic horizon that helps the exegete “to learn from the interpretive answers of the past, to recognize the limitations of those past interpretations, and to recognize the limitations of their own interpretive horizons.”³¹ The study of various hermeneutical approaches can also help to open new horizons in the study of the New Testament’s apocalyptic book. Tobias Nicklas admits:³²

There is the possibility of receiving impulses from the reception of biblical texts that can help to redefine the position of exegesis within the edifice of theological research, to formulate entrenched questions from new perspectives and to address lost dimensions of work to rediscover the Bible.

In the last century, theologians have offered certain studies of the reception history of the book of Revelation in the form of general articles or anthologies,³³ and studies covering the Middle Ages,³⁴ the Reformation,³⁵ the post-Reformation and the modern period.³⁶ Research has also emerged on the impact of the

³¹ Covington, “Wirkungsgeschichte und Trilateration,” 34.

³² Tobias Nicklas, “Die ersten neutestamentlichen Bände der ‘Blackwell Bible Commentaries’ (John, Revelation): Rezeptionsgeschichte und Exegese,” *Ann. Stor. Esegese* 24 (2007): 526–27.

³³ See Abbas Amanat, *Imagining the End: Visions of Apocalypse from the Ancient Middle East to Modern America* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2002); Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen J. Stein, *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2003); Christopher Rowland, “Imagining the Apocalypse,” *NTS* 51 (2005): 303–27; Boxall, “Reception History,” 377–93; “The Apocalypse Unveiled: Reflections on the Reception History of Revelation,” *ExpTim* 125 (2014): 261–71; Martin Karrer, “Ein optisches Instrument in der Hand der Leser. Wirkungsgeschichte und Auslegung der Johannesoffenbarung,” in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005), 402–24.

³⁴ See Caroline W. Bynum, and Paul H. Freedman, *Last Things: Death and the Apocalypse in the Middle Ages*, MAS (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000); David D. Burr, *The Book of Revelation, The Bible in Medieval Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2019); James T. Palmer, *The Apocalypse in the Early Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Richard K. Emmerson and Bernard McGinn, *The Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Roger W. Cowley, *The Traditional Interpretation of the Apocalypse of St John in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

³⁵ See Brian W. Ball, *A Great Expectation: Eschatological Thought in English Protestantism to 1660*, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions (Leiden: Brill, 2022); Hans-Ulrich Hofmann, *Luther und die Johannes-Apokalypse: dargestellt im Rahmen der Auslegungsgeschichte des letzten Buches der Bibel und im Zusammenhang der theologischen Entwicklung des Reformators* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr P. Siebeck, 1982); Irena Backus, *Reformation Readings of the Apocalypse: Geneva, Zurich, and Wittenberg*, OSHT (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Katharine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain, 1530–1645*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); Paul K. Christianson, *Reformers and Babylon: English Apocalyptic Visions from the Reformation to the Eve of the Civil War*, Heritage (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017).

³⁶ See Christopher Burdon, *The Apocalypse in England: Revelation Unravelling, 1700–1834*, Studies in Literature and Religion (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997); Constantinos A. Patrides, and Joseph Wittreich, *The Apocalypse in English Renaissance Thought and Literature: Patterns, Antecedents and Repercussions* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); Yii-Jan Lin, *Immigration and Apocalypse: How the Book of Revelation Shaped American Immigration*

Apocalypse on music, culture and art.³⁷ In this section I will review the main works covering the period of antiquity and late antiquity (2nd–7th centuries).

Some works cover the entire Apocalypse and the entire history of Christianity. LeRoy Edwin Froom conducted a monumental study. Its four volumes *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, published in the middle of the 20th century took an important and significant place in studies of the history of the exegesis of the Apocalypse.³⁸ Froom has covered the interpretation of apocalyptic biblical prophecy from apostolic times to the 20th century. Four volumes are devoted to different periods of the history of Christianity. The first volume is called *Early Church Exposition, Subsequent Deflections, and Medieval Revival*, second *Pre-Reformation and Reformation Restoration, and Second Departure*, third *Colonial American and Nineteenth-Century Old World Awakening*, and fourth *New World Recovery and Consummation of Prophetic Interpretation*.

In 1981, the book *Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche* by Gerhard Maier was published.³⁹ He takes a selective approach to the history of interpretation

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2024); Russell S. Morton, *Recent Research on Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2014).

³⁷ See Beate Kowalski, and Michaela C. Hastetter, “Musik in der Offenbarung des Johannes und die Offenbarung des Johannes in der Musik,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Geschichte – Theologie – Rezeption*, ed. Michael Sommer, Uta Poplutz and Christina Hoegen-Rohls, WUNT 508 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023): 379–429; David Ganz, “Pforten der Offenbarung. Buchvisionen und Schreibszenen in mittelalterlichen Apokalypsedarstellungen,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Geschichte – Theologie – Rezeption*, ed. Michael Sommer, Uta Poplutz and Christina Hoegen-Rohls, WUNT 508 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 267–309; Frederik van der Meer, *Apocalypse: Visions from the Book of Revelation in Western Art* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1978); Heike Stöcklein, “Die Illustrationen der Offenbarung von der Mitte des 15. Jahrhunderts bis 1530,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Geschichte – Theologie – Rezeption*, ed. Michael Sommer, Uta Poplutz, and Christina Hoegen-Rohls, WUNT 508 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 359–78; Jan Rohls, “Apokalypse und Jüngstes Gericht. Theologie im Bild: Von Dürer bis Beckmann,” in *Die Johannesapokalypse: Geschichte – Theologie – Rezeption*, ed. Michael Sommer, Uta Poplutz, and Christina Hoegen-Rohls, WUNT 508 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023), 311–58; Leona Archer, *Visions of Apocalypse: Representations of the End in French Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013); Nancy Grubb, *Revelations: Art of the Apocalypse* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997); Natasha F. H. O’Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis*, Oxford Theological Monographs (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); O’Hear and O’Hear, *Picturing the Apocalypse*; Thomas A. Seel, *A Theology of Music for Worship Derived from the Book of Revelation* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1995).

³⁸ LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, Vol. 1 (Washington: Review & Herald, 1950); LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, Vol. 2 (Washington: Review & Herald, 1950); LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, Vol. 3. *The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation* (Washington: Review & Herald, 1946); LeRoy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers: The Historical Development of Prophetic Interpretation*, Vol. 4 (Washington: Review & Herald, 1954).

³⁹ Gerhard Maier, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und die Kirche*, WUNT 25 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1981).

and focuses on key commentators throughout the history of Christianity. In five chapters, Maier describes the main characteristics of the interpretation of the Apocalypse and focuses on the early Christianity, Western Christianity, the Reformation, the Pietism movement, and the period from the Enlightenment to modern times. At the end, Maier gives his own assessment of the history of interpretation.

In 2004, Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland released the commentary *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* in the series *Blackwell Bible Commentaries*.⁴⁰ This series is about the reception history of the Bible and it “emphasizes the influence of the Bible on literature, art, music, and film, its role in the evolution of religious beliefs and practices, and its impact on social and political developments”⁴¹ The authors created their own commentary structure and divided each section of the book related to the chapter of the Apocalypse into two parts. The first part of *Ancient Literary Context* is devoted to the coverage of the Jewish and Christian literary context, and the second part of *The Interpretations* contains an anthology of various interpretations of the text of the Apocalypse.

Craig Koester wrote his Anchor-Yale Bible commentary *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, in 2014.⁴² In the introduction, he gives a brief overview of the history of the interpretation of Revelation (length – 37 pages), and also a history of interpretation in the introduction to each part of the Apocalypse. Despite the very concise nature of the presentation, the author manages to present in a meaningful way the main stages of interpretation and key figures in each period of Christianity. Koester follows a chronological methodology and divides the history of interpretation into four stages: 1) 100–500; 2) 500–1500; 3) 1500–1750; and 4) 1750–to the Present.

Recently, three publishing houses Brill, Oxford University Press, and Cambridge University Press presented books on apocalyptic literature: *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse*, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation*, and *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*.⁴³ These works are a collection of valuable articles by various authors, some of which touch on the reception history of the last book of the New Testament.

Some studies focus on specific passages in the book of Revelation. In particular, Arthur Wainwright published *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book*

⁴⁰ Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ*, Blackwell Bible Commentaries (Blackwell Publishing, 2008).

⁴¹ Kovacs and Rowland, *Revelation*, xi.

⁴² Craig Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

⁴³ Colin McAllister, *The Cambridge Companion to Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. Colin McAllister, CCR (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Michael A. Ryan, *A Companion to the Premodern Apocalypse*, Brill's Companions to the Christian Tradition (Leiden: Brill, 2016); Craig Koester, *The Oxford Handbook of the Book of Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

of *Revelation* in 1993, in which he showed the history of interpretation throughout church history.⁴⁴ He divided his study into three chapters on the Millennium, Critical Approach, and Cultural Influence. Wainwright's book not only covers the most popular interpretations of *Revelation* but also contains, albeit in a small amount "some of the lesser-known viewpoints."⁴⁵

In 2001, a new edition of the previously printed dissertation *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity* appeared, in which Charles E. Hill focuses on the question of interpreting early Christian eschatology and focuses on the millennial kingdom (Rev 20).⁴⁶ The author, analyzing early Christian literature argues that the idea of chiliasm (millennialism) and nonchiliasm (amillennialism) existed from the very beginning of the history of the church.

Ian Boxall published a revised version of his doctoral thesis *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* in 2013.⁴⁷ Although it covers the entire history of the church, it focuses on only one concept of Patmos. Boxall not only presents the history of exegesis, but places the Isle of Patmos in a broader context. In particular, a separate section is devoted to visual interpretations of Patmos.

In 2023, under the editorship of Nathan Betz, Anthony Dupont, and Johan Leemans, a volume titled *Revelation's New Jerusalem in Late Antiquity* was released, featuring fifteen scholarly essays on the reception history of the image of the New Jerusalem during the first millennium.⁴⁸ The authors examine the image of the city in Jewish and classical texts within literary, artistic, and theological contexts, spanning a broad geographic area from the Eastern Mediterranean to Western Europe and beyond.

Also, in early 2025, the monograph *City of Gods: The New Jerusalem of John's Revelation in Early Christianity* by Nathan Betz appeared, dedicated to the image of the heavenly city depicted in the last chapters of the book of *Revelation*.⁴⁹ The author focuses on the first three centuries of church history, detailing the perception and interpretation of the New Jerusalem. Betz also explores the significance of this image in the works of the Eastern and Western early Christians, considering its eschatological and theological meanings.

⁴⁴ Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993).

⁴⁵ Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 17.

⁴⁶ Charles E. Hill, *Regnum Caelorum: Patterns of Millennial Thought in Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

⁴⁷ Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History*.

⁴⁸ Nathan Betz, Anthony Dupont, and Johan Leemans, *Revelation's New Jerusalem in Late Antiquity, History of Biblical Exegesis* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2023).

⁴⁹ Nathan Betz, *City of Gods: The New Jerusalem of John's Revelation in Early Christianity*, *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements* (Leiden: Brill, 2025).

In early 2025, the monograph *Revelation 19–21 in the Exegesis of Early Christian Roman Africa* by Martina Vercesi was released.⁵⁰ The author focuses on analyzing the early Christian interpretation of chapters nineteen through twenty-one of the Apocalypse in Roman Africa from the second to the fourth century. Vercesi examines the historical, theological, and textual issues in the final part of the book of Revelation, shedding light on the eschatological views of believers through an analysis of a wide range of sources.

Some studies focus on the reception history of the Apocalypse in the first millennium. Georg Kretschmar published the monograph *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung im 1. Jahrtausend* in 1985.⁵¹ In the first half of his study, he explores Jewish apocalypticism and describes the content of the visions of the book of Revelation. The second half of the monograph is devoted to the reception history of the Apocalypse in the first millennium, both in the West and in the East.

In 2005, the anthology on Revelation was released in the *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture* series, edited by William Weinrich.⁵² The book contains quotations of interpretations from biblical times to the eighth century. In the comments “the interpretive glosses, penetrating reflections, debates, contemplations and deliberations of early Christians are ordered verse by verse.”⁵³ In the introduction, Weinrich briefly describes the history of the interpretation of the book in Ancient Christianity.

In 2011, the volume *Ancient Christian Interpretations of ‘Violent Texts’ in the Apocalypse* was published, featuring thirteen scholarly essays on the reception history of the New Testament’s final book, with a focus on its violent imagery.⁵⁴ On the one hand, some studies explore the Jewish foundations of the military imagery in the Apocalypse, its use in liturgy, and its intertextual readings. On the other hand, the authors examine how the Apocalypse is interpreted in the works of both Eastern and Western early Christians, including Oecumenius, Andreas of Caesarea, Lactantius, Tyconius, Victorinus of Pettau, Jerome, Bede, and Joachim of Fiore.

In 2014, a collection of sixteen scholarly essays titled *Tot sacrament quot verba: Die Kommentierung der Apokalypse des Johannes von den Anfängen bis ins 12. Jahrhundert* was appeared, focusing on the history of the interpretation

⁵⁰ Martina Vercesi, *Revelation 19–21 in the Exegesis of Early Christian Roman Africa*, History of Biblical Exegesis (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2025).

⁵¹ Georg Kretschmar, *Die Offenbarung des Johannes: die Geschichte ihrer Auslegung im 1. Jahrtausend*, Calwer Theologische Monographien (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1985).

⁵² William C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 12 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005).

⁵³ Weinrich, *Revelation*, xi.

⁵⁴ Jozeph Verheyden, Tobias Nicklas, Andreas Merkt, and Mark Grundeken, *Ancient Christian Interpretations of ‘Violent Texts’ in the Apocalypse*, NTOA, SUNT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011).

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