

CHAPTER SIX

ATONEMENT AND SACRIFICE IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION

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The book of Revelation has played an important role in the theological work of J. Denny Weaver, both in his teaching and writing.¹ In developing a “narrative Christus victor” model of the atonement, Weaver has turned to Revelation’s narrative as a resource for modifying the classic “Christus victor” model as articulated by Gustaf Aulén.²

After a few preliminary remarks outlining the historical and conceptual context for his book, Weaver begins his most substantial theological treatise, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, with an exposition of the book of Revelation. He does this in part because he (rightly, in my view) considers Revelation “virtually an extended, multifaceted statement of the Christus Victor image.”³

In this essay I will examine the themes of atonement and sacrifice in Revelation with the intent of uncovering the primary theological significance of Christ’s death in this book. I will argue that both *atonement* and *sacrifice* (or *sacrificial*) are slippery words that require careful definition and qualification. In Revelation, as I will explain, Christ’s death is the key to God’s victory over evil; the unfolding of God’s reign on earth, however, requires believers to emulate the faithful wit-

ness that led to Christ’s death, even though John expects that such faithfulness will mean their own martyrdom. Thus, while Christ’s death is uniquely salvific, it is also exemplary—a model for believers to follow. Insofar as Revelation supports a theory of the atonement, it clearly supports a narrative Christus victor model over Anselm’s satisfaction theory.

THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF CHRIST IN REVELATION

The death of Christ plays a pivotal role in Revelation. However, determining whether the author’s primary concern is with “the atonement” requires some provisional understanding about what *atonement* signifies. If *atonement* signifies primarily a sacrificial death that expiates sin and puts humanity right with God, we would naturally investigate the book to evaluate the centrality of and the relationship among the concepts of sin, sacrifice, expiation, alienation from God, and restored relationship with God. If *atonement* refers to the larger cosmological significance of Christ’s death as it relates to the overcoming of evil and the working out of God’s purposes on earth, then we would naturally investigate whether the book says much about the broader cosmological significance of Christ’s death and how evil is overcome.

At one level the difference lies between different theories of the atonement—especially between Anselm’s satisfaction theory and the Christus Victor theory. At another level the difference lies between the personal or individual appropriation of the power of the cross on the one hand, and the broader cosmological or social significance of the power of the cross on the other. At yet a third level, the difference is between a unique, once-for-all event and an exemplary event that is to be emulated by those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes.

Right relationship with God figures prominently in Revelation. However, right relationship is tied directly to hearing and responding to God’s call in life, not with “believing” apart from works. The first of the seven blessings in Revelation falls on the one who reads aloud the words of the prophecy and on those who hear *and who keep* what is written in it (1:3). Keeping the commandments—or the words of this prophecy (i.e., Revelation)—is quite important in this book.⁴ Doing “works” (*erga* in Greek) is also important. The word *ergon* (a “work” or “deed”) occurs 20 times in Revelation, second in the New Testament only to the gospel of John, where the word usually refers to the

“works” that *Jesus* does—works that bear witness to who he is.

Seventeen of the 20 occurrences are in the letters to the seven churches (Rev. 2–3), where the word is always used in the positive sense as something that Christ expects of the churches. The criterion for judgment in Revelation is works, not faith. Rev. 2:23 says, “I will give to each of you as your works deserve.” Rev. 2:26, “To everyone who conquers and continues to do my works to the end, I will give authority over the nations.” Rev. 20:12, “And the dead were judged according to their works, as recorded in the books.” And Rev. 22:12, “See, I am coming soon; my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work.” The verb *believe* (*pisteuô*) does not appear at all in Revelation, while the noun *faith* (*pistis*) appears four times (Rev. 2:13, 19; 13:10; 14:12) with the sense of “faithfulness.”⁵

This is not to suggest that there is a basic disagreement between John and Paul regarding Jesus’ death as a means of justification. We simply do not have enough evidence to render such a verdict, since the occasion for Paul’s letters was quite different from the occasion for the book of Revelation. Despite an emphasis on God’s just *judgments* in Revelation,⁶ *justification* in the Pauline sense is not of much concern to John. Rev. 1:5⁷ and 5:9–10⁸ suggest that John is aware of and accepts the idea that Christ’s death was unique and efficacious—and perhaps even vicarious in some way. However, a closer look at how John deals with Christ’s death in Revelation shows that his primary interest lies in Christ’s death as the key turning point in divine warfare—a warfare in which the army of believers follow the Lamb wherever he goes (i.e., in his faithful witness all the way to martyrdom).

The treatment in Revelation of Jesus’ death should not be opposed to or separated from its understanding of his resurrection. The first entrance of the Lamb in the key visions of Revelation 4 and 5 portray the Lamb as “*standing* as if it had been slaughtered.” The idea here is not only that Jesus had been killed, but also that he had risen from the dead and was now victorious. Jesus’ victory came not only in his death, nor only in his resurrection, but in his death *and* resurrection.⁹

Bauckham is right to treat the book of Revelation as an extended “Christian war scroll.”¹⁰ David Barr similarly entitles the second half of Revelation (i.e., Rev. 11:19–22:21), “The War Scroll.”¹¹ In keeping with the idea that Jesus’ death is *exemplary* in Revelation, John calls Jesus the “firstborn” from the dead (1:5), since more deaths and resurrections are on their way.

However, Christ’s uniquely efficacious death is by no means minimized in Revelation. Indeed, it is the key to the working out of God’s

plan for creation, the means by which evil is conquered. In the crucial scene in heaven in chapter 5, the connection between Christ’s slaughter and his worthiness to open the scroll is made explicit: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth” (5:9–10).

The ransoming of the saints here is not primarily *from* something (e.g., sin or death), but *to* or *for* something: to be a kingdom and priests serving God and reigning. Christ’s death is the key to God’s victory over evil, but the establishment of God’s reign on earth requires the believers to emulate the faithful witness that led to Christ’s death, even though John expects that it will mean their own martyr deaths as well. Although Stanislas Lyonett and others have attempted to find behind the concept of “purchase” in 5:9–10 evidence of the Old Testament sacrificial system, Dale Martin and Stephen Finlan claim that it is much more natural to see behind this term “the ordinary sale of a slave by one owner to another.”¹² At this level (*how* believers participate in Christ’s death), there does appear to be a difference of perspective between John and Paul.

THE WASHING OF ROBES

The final blessing in Revelation comes on those who “wash their robes” (22:14).¹³ The author of Revelation refers or alludes several times to the concept of washing one’s robes. As R. H. Charles has noted, “those who wash their robes” is functionally equivalent to “the one who conquers” in 2:7, since in both passages the reward to those who have conquered is access to the tree of life.¹⁴

Aune considers the washing of robes to be “clearly a metaphor for moral and spiritual cleansing or reformation,”¹⁵ and such an association seems natural on the surface. Bauckham’s discussion of this metaphor in the context of warfare, however, is more convincing.¹⁶ The question is whether Revelation is more interested in moral or spiritual *cleansing*, or in *holy warfare*. The latter is clearly the case. In the religion of Israel, before warriors could worship, they were required to wash their garments as part of a purification ritual following a battle in which blood was shed (Num. 31:19–20, 24; cf. also 1QM 14.2–3; 1 Enoch 90:31). The purification of which John is speaking here draws from that holy war motif. It is the purification that comes

through maintaining a faithful witness to the point of death. Martyrdom effectively sealed that witness and resulted in the paradoxical image of washing one's robes white in the blood of the Lamb (7:14; cf. 3:4; 22:14).

SIN IN REVELATION

The word *sin* does not appear very often in Revelation. In the New Testament, *sin* is most prominent in Romans (NRSV, 57 times; NIV, 74; KJV, 57). Second is Hebrews (29, 34, and 27 times respectively), then 1 John (27, 28, 24), then the gospel of John (23, 21, 23). With only three instances of the word (*hamartia* in each case; 4 in NIV,¹⁷ 3 in KJV), Revelation is near the bottom of the list, especially when its length is taken into consideration.¹⁸

The first appearance of *sin* is in the opening doxology in 1:5-6: "To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." The second and third occurrences refer to the sins of Babylon and come in the context of judgment upon Rome and warning the believers not to participate in her sins. Thus, only once in Revelation (1:5) is there a reference to believers' sins being atoned by the blood of Christ.

Sin is rarely if ever seen as a "problem" that separates humanity from God. The problem is the presence of evil and the ongoing battle for the establishment of God's reign on earth. Although Jesus' death was decisive in that battle, the believers' participation in it continues. As Richard Bauckham puts it, John "takes largely for granted that Christ's sacrificial death has liberated Christians from sin (1:5) and made them the eschatological people of God (1:5; 5:9-10). What is important, in the context of Revelation . . . is the role it [the church] has to play in the universal coming of the kingdom." Because the imagery of Christ's death is not concerned primarily with the once-for-all sacrifice that puts humanity right with God, but with the victory won by Christ in which believers *continue to participate* in overcoming evil, the references to "the blood of the Lamb" in Rev. 7:14 and 12:11 should not be understood as referring exclusively "to Christ's death, but to the deaths of the Christian martyrs."¹⁹ Christians participate "in the death of Christ through faithful witness to the point of martyrdom,"²⁰ as 12:11 implies.

CHRIST'S DEATH AS SACRIFICE

As we have already seen, the relationship between sacrifice and atonement in the book of Revelation is fraught with terminological challenges. It would be possible to foreclose the entire question about theories of the atonement by treating the word *atonement* itself as a virtual synonym for Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement. The word itself derives from the idea of being reconciled, or put "at one," with another (at-one-ment), and might thus be considered roughly equivalent to expiation and reconciliation. But that would be to beg the question of Revelation's own understanding of Christ's death.

Similarly, simply to call the theology of the cross in Revelation "sacrificial" is inadequate and misleading.²¹ As Christopher M. Tuckett warns, "One must . . . be wary of making sacrificial language too monochrome. The sacrificial cult within Judaism and elsewhere was very varied and included provision for many different kinds of sacrifice."²² Just as the practice of religion today is varied and reflects many different theologies, so the practice of sacrifice in the Greco-Roman world was varied and reflected many different theologies.

Revelation is shot through with scenes of worship that incorporate Temple and sacrificial cult imagery—along with images of royalty.²³ For instance, the decisive scene in heaven (Rev. 4–5) includes a central throne surrounded by thrones, and golden crowns. But it also has a Temple, an altar, and a censer with incense (5:8; 6:9; 8:3-5; 9:13; 11:1; 14:17-18; 16:7), though there is no Temple in the New Jerusalem (21:22). Even the seven bowls of God's wrath probably derive from the utensils used in Temple worship. The fullness of God's reign is characterized as turning the community of faith into a kingdom of priests (1:6; 5:10; 20:6). As Robert Daly says, "The entire work is a series of visions about, or occasioned by, the liturgy of the heavenly sanctuary or (after 21:1) of the New Jerusalem."²⁴ The question is not how important such worship and Temple imagery are in Revelation, but rather how those elements function. That is, with what kind of rhetorical force is it employed?

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza has contrasted the *political nature* of the book's rhetoric with its *liturgical form*. Although she notes that the book's rhetoric is "replete with cultic language and imagery," she maintains that its social location and theological goal are "not liturgical but political."²⁵ Such a sharp dichotomy between the liturgical and political may not be warranted. As Jean-Pierre Ruiz has established in several publications,²⁶ the worship scenes in Revelation are

essentially political in their rhetorical force.²⁷ Specifically, “the mediation of meaning through ritual worked to shape a strategy of resistance.”²⁸ Revelation implies that the function of worship is political. But one might also maintain that all of the political language in Revelation ultimately serves John’s interest in proper worship of God and of the Lamb. Thus, while Fiorenza is probably right to see in the cultic imagery of Revelation a political-ethical intent, it may not be legitimate or warranted to posit such a hard line between liturgical and political agendas.

In most Greco-Roman religions, sacrifice was synonymous with worship, without any necessary connection with expiation or forgiveness, though it often was connected with a community’s or individual’s obligation to appease the gods. Ritual sacrifice was widespread in the ancient world. In Greece it was as common in the ancient period as it was in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. In the Archaic and Classical periods it was not considered proper to consult or petition a deity without bringing a sacrifice. Sacrifice was “one of the three principal acts of worship”²⁹ in the ancient world and was perhaps even the most important form of action in Greek religion.³⁰

Even within Second Temple Judaism, understandings of the religious significance of sacrifice varied, and within the sacrificial cult itself, sacrifices were quite different from each other and were carried out with different purposes. The problem is not just that “diverse images associated with the word ‘sacrifice’ have become widespread in Christian tradition,” as Jonathan K. Smith has noted, but that the theology and practice of sacrifice were exceedingly diverse already in ancient times.³¹

In biblical thought, sacrifice was much broader theologically than expiation. This is even more obviously the case in the Greco-Roman religions. In the Old Testament, only *some* sacrifices were considered expiatory. Sacrifice was the central feature of worship in Israelite religion. The burnt offering was prominent in Israel’s theology and practice of sacrifice, but expiation was not the focus of burnt offering, and the lamb was not the primary offering of expiation. In other words, *lamb* was not an obvious symbol for expiation in the sacrificial cult.³² There were other sacrifices for which sin was not at issue. For instance, the peace offerings included the thank offering, the free will offering, and the votive offering, none of which had anything to do with atonement.

Even the so-called “sin” offering, which Jacob Milgrom, Gary Anderson, David Aune, and others prefer to call the “purification offer-

ing,” was not *primarily* about the expiation of sin. Indeed, this offering sometimes purified when sin was not even in view. Anderson offers for consideration “the cases of the parturient (Lev. 12), the person suffering from a discharge (Lev. 15), the Nazirite who completes a vow of abstinence (Num. 6), or the installation of a new altar (Lev. 8). In each of these cases,” Anderson argues, “the act of sacrifice serves to purge or purify something rather than to remove sin.”³³ After the destruction of the second Temple, sacrifice continued to play a theoretical role in the theology of Rabbinic Judaism. In the twelfth century, Maimonides famously systematized the sacrificial system as no one before or since. Nevertheless, he was capable of being quite critical of the whole system.³⁴ In any case, “burnt-offerings and sacrifice . . . are of secondary importance.”³⁵

Even if one grants that *some* understanding of Old Testament sacrifice must lie behind the Lamb symbolism of Revelation, it is not at all clear how that helps us understand the theology of Revelation, given the wide range of associations related to sacrifice. As David Aune puts it,

While it is likely that the figure of the Lamb in Revelation must be understood at least in part on the basis of O[ld] T[estament] sacrificial ritual, it is not at all clear *which* type of sacrifice is primarily in view, for sheep or lambs were used as sacrificial victims in several different types of sacrifice in the OT and early Judaism.³⁶

For instance, two lambs were sacrificed every day as a burnt offering in the Tamid (the daily offering). However, this daily burnt offering never carried with it any atoning significance.³⁷ The Passover lamb was a type of peace offering (*šêlâmîm*), which had nothing to do with atonement.³⁸ In general agreement with Gary Anderson, David Aune concludes that

it seems apparent that the historical *realia* of the Israelite sacrificial cult . . . do not provide anything more than a general context in which the metaphor of the slaughtered Lamb whose blood somehow effects redemption can be understood. The sacrificial features of the Lamb of Revelation are primarily a *textual phenomenon* with only very loose associations with actual cultic practice.³⁹

REVELATION AS ANTI-SACRIFICIAL

There is, in fact, some linguistic evidence that the author of Revelation took care to *avoid* a sacrificial interpretation of the death of Christ. As Sophie Laws and others have pointed out, the Seer consistently uses the Greek word *sphazô* to speak of the Lamb as having been slaughtered, or murdered, rather than *thyô*, the word that would normally have been used when speaking of ritually “sacrificing” an animal. The verb *thyô* does not appear in Revelation. *Sphazô* is slaughterhouse language, not Temple language. Though all animal sacrifice involved slaughter, not all slaughter involved sacrifice. *Sphazô* means to kill or to slaughter. Its use in Revelation to speak of deaths *other than* the Lamb’s indicates how the author likely understood its meaning with regard to the Lamb: Once in Revelation it refers to the killing or murder of people (6:4). Twice it refers to the slaughter of God’s people in martyrdom (6:9; 18:24).

In none of these cases is the slaughter considered expiatory, reducing the possibility that the rhetorical force of the slaughter of the Lamb in Revelation is primarily expiatory.⁴⁰ However, unlike *apothnēskō* (“murder”), *sphazô* may have some ritual overtones. If so, this would lend some credence to the argument of Marc Bredin that John understands the death of Jesus to challenge the mimetic desire at work in the sacrificial system.⁴¹ At the very least, John’s use of the word *slaughter* for both the death Jesus and the death of the saints implies some kind of *participation* of the latter in the shed blood of Jesus.⁴²

The word used for Lamb in Revelation is *arnion*, not *amnos*, which is the word used in the Septuagint and in other parts of the New Testament to refer to Jesus as Lamb with regard to his atoning death. *Arnion* is diminutive in form and although one should probably not translate it as a diminutive (“little lamb” or “lambkin”), it probably does serve to underline its vulnerability. In the Septuagint, *arnion* is used only of lambs that symbolize vulnerability, whereas *amnos* is used almost exclusively of sacrificial lambs.⁴³

To maintain that Christ’s death is not understood primarily in sacrificial terms in Revelation does not mean that the death of Christ has no salvific import. On the contrary! The death of Christ is central to the theology of Revelation, and central to the Revelation’s conception of how God will establish God’s kingdom on earth. Richard Bauckham maintains that Christ’s death and resurrection are “fundamental to Revelation’s whole understanding of the way in which Christ establishes God’s kingdom on earth.”⁴⁴

We have already considered signs of a more traditional atonement theology in the opening doxology, which says, “To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:5-6). Here Christ’s death is explicitly connected with being freed from sins, a feature of Anselm’s satisfaction theory of the atonement. However, four considerations temper this connection.

First, in an analysis of the hymns of Revelation, David Carnegie concludes that the hymn in Rev. 1:5-6 is likely the only one that comes from the Christian tradition—i.e., that was not created by John in the writing of the book.⁴⁵ This could suggest that although John knows and accepts this traditional theology, it is not his primary concern in the book.⁴⁶ Second, the verb *lyô* (“freed”) here⁴⁷ is more apocalyptic than forensic in its force. It is an active verb associated with redemption rather than forgiveness.⁴⁸ Third, as we saw above, Revelation has little interest in the problem of sin as such. Fourth, the doxology in this verse is “to the one who loves us,” suggesting that Jesus’ death is in part an expression of God’s love for humanity. This was the key contribution of Abelard in response to Anselm’s atonement theory.

There are, to be sure, alternative ways of understanding Revelation’s theology of Christ’s death.⁴⁹ For instance, Sir Isaac Newton (1642–1727) saw the temple as the place where *all* of the action in Revelation took place. Thus, “every aspect of the temple—its physical layout, vessels and ceremonies . . . becomes critical to the unraveling of the secrets held in the Apocalypse.”⁵⁰ In the 1930s, Johannes Pedersen argued that the concepts of expiation and atonement were becoming more and more important within the sacrificial cult in Judaism.⁵¹ Pedersen wrote in an era that was apt to use later rabbinic sources as reliable guides to the variegated Judaism of the Second Temple Period and to psychologize religious traditions.⁵² Austin Farrer’s *Rebirth of Images* also emphasized the connections with the temple cult.⁵³

More recently, John and Gloria Ben-Daniel developed an interest in cultic life and thought and wrote a book that pushes the Old Testament sacrificial cult for all its worth as a key to understanding the book of Revelation.⁵⁴ For the Ben-Daniels, the blood of the Lamb in Revelation “has a profound expiatory effect.”⁵⁵ The book of Revelation is for them an elaborate liturgy of atonement in which Satan is the scapegoat Azazel, yet the martyrdom of the saints is part of the heavenly liturgy that eventuates in atonement for the world.

In addition, some conservative evangelicals see Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement behind every mention of Christ's death in the New Testament. For instance, Roy Zuck claims that "the Johannine Epistles and the book of Revelation . . . emphasize the sacrificial nature of Jesus' death as part of God's plan of salvation."⁵⁶

Similarly, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* suggests that

John's reference to Jesus as the Lamb of God calls to mind the Old Testament sacrificial system. In the sacrifice God accepted the blood of animals as the means of atonement for sin. It is likely that John had many themes from the Old Testament in mind when he called Jesus the Lamb of God. These themes probably included the sin offering (Lev. 4), the trespass offering (Lev. 5), the sacrifice on the Day of atonement (Lev. 16), and the Passover sacrifice (Exod. 12).⁵⁷

And Gregory Beale concludes that

the Lamb's death is best understood as a removal of the divine wrath barring entrance to God's presence by means of the Lamb bearing that wrath himself as a penal substitute for his people. This notion is based on the OT sacrificial background, especially the Day of atonement, where the sacrificial animal is a representative penal substitute for Israel.⁵⁸

In each of these cases, the controlling context for understanding the meaning of Christ's death in Revelation seems to be orthodox theology, rather than the book of Revelation itself.

A key conviction in Revelation is the call for believers to conquer, just as Christ conquered. Christ clearly conquered *through his death as a faithful witness* (cf. Rev. 3:21; 5:5). The blessing to each of the seven churches is upon the one "who conquers," and the messages climax with the final blessing: "To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne."

Thus, the washing of robes in 7:14 refers not simply to their reception of cleansing or forgiveness, but to the idea that "the moral probity of their lives as faithful witnesses is sealed in their martyrdom and is their active participation in the redemption won for them by Christ."⁵⁹ Those who wash their robes are those who have come out of the great "ordeal," or "suffering" (*thlipsis* in Greek).

THE WORD ATONEMENT

As I noted above, one of the problems with using atonement terminology is its lack of precision. Does Revelation even *have* a theology of the atonement? It depends on what one means by *atonement*. Although the death of Christ in Revelation is central to its theology and clearly salvific, the book's primary focus is on how evil is conquered and how God's reign is established on earth, *not* on how sin is dealt with forensically in putting humanity into right relationship with God.

It is impossible to speak of atonement and sacrifice without some underlying understanding of how God saves—and from what. The word *sacrifice* is often associated with Anselm's satisfaction theory of the atonement—and for good reason. Anselm saw humanity as owing a debt that it could not pay. Humanity was atoned when Jesus' death "expiated" humanity's sin. The analogy in the immediate background was the sacrificial system, with which nearly everyone in the Greco-Roman world, whether Jew or Gentile, would have been familiar, though less so in Anselm's day. So the relationship between sacrifice and Anselm's satisfaction theory is a natural one.

But if one uses the word *atonement* to refer to John's understanding of Christ's death in Revelation, then one must take care not to import unwarranted expiatory or sacrificial inferences if, as I have maintained, those inferences do not derive authentically from the text itself. As Charles E. Hill notes in his essay on atonement in Revelation, the book is remarkable in part because of its emphasis on the *ethical* implications of Jesus' death and resurrection.⁶⁰

RENÉ GIRARD AND MIMETIC DESIRE

According to René Girard, the word *sacrifice* in its primary sense "stems from originary victimization or scapegoating."⁶¹ As a result, in Girard's earlier work, *sacrifice* itself was a synonym for the whole scapegoating system, since the practice of animal sacrifice likely derived from the earlier practice of human sacrifice. As a system of ritually controlled vengeance, sacrifice lies near the heart of what is wrong with all human religious systems, in Girard's view.

In his later years, however, Girard began to accept an alternative, more positive understanding of sacrifice as giving oneself to others and to God out of love and faithfulness to the other.⁶² Any understanding of the atonement through Christ that claims or implies that God the Father arranged for his Son's murder to satisfy God's wrath

would be an example of scapegoating and unworthy of the gospel. However, the New Testament Gospels do not portray Jesus' death as a sacrifice. Instead, "by focusing on the innocence of the victim, the Bible exposes the sacred justification of violence against the victim."⁶³

Unfortunately, little attention has been given to the book of Revelation in Girardian studies.⁶⁴ Some exceptions have been Mark R. Bredin,⁶⁵ Raymund Schwager,⁶⁶ Ted Grimsrud,⁶⁷ Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland,⁶⁸ and more recently, Stephen Finamore.⁶⁹ To be sure, students of Girard have said quite a bit about "apocalypse," (small a) but they tend to treat "apocalypse" as a broad philosophical category roughly equivalent to the "myth of violence" or "sacralized violence,"⁷⁰ rather than read John's Revelation carefully on its own terms. Girard maintains that the apocalyptic violence that we see in the Gospels "is always laid at the door of humanity . . . and never blamed on God."⁷¹ In fact, the book of Revelation is sometimes treated as the epitome of sacral violence in Girardian circles.⁷²

Mark Bredin argues that the Greek word *pharmakos* in Rev. 21:8 and 22:15 refers to the scapegoating mechanism, which the Seer rejects, rather than to sorcery, as it is normally translated. The word *pharmakos* did indeed refer to the scapegoat from at least Hipponax in the sixth century BCE in classical Greek literature.⁷³ In the Septuagint the word usually refers to sorcery, although in Wisdom of Solomon 1:14, it appears to refer to the scapegoating mechanism as a virtual synonym for evil.⁷⁴ The NRSV and most other versions (probably following Jerome's "*medicamentum exterminii*") translate the word "destructive poison," even though *scapegoat* or *scapegoating* fit the context much better. Wisdom 1:12-15 reads,

¹²Do not invite death by the error of your life,
or bring on destruction by the works of your hands;

¹³because God did not make death,
and he does not delight in the death of the living.

¹⁴For he created all things so that they might exist;
the generative forces of the world are wholesome,
and there is no destructive poison [*or scapegoat*] in them,
and the dominion of Hades is not on earth.

¹⁵For righteousness is immortal.

The following chapter in Wisdom goes on to describe and condemn the scapegoating mechanism.

In this sense, *pharmakos* is a synonym for *peripsçma*, *katharma*, and *perikatharma*.⁷⁵ Liddell, Scott, Jones, and McKenzie translate *phar-*

makos as "one sacrificed or executed as an atonement or purification for others, *scapegoat*."⁷⁶ Sadly, Wisdom 1:12-15 has largely been ignored by Girardian scholars.

Thus, while sacrificial images and language pervade the book of Revelation, they are used in such a way to support a message that is primary ethical. Rather than reify the sacrificial cult, these images are molded and reshaped for a different intent—one that rejects the internal logic of a scapegoating sacrificial system. As Bredin puts it, "Satan deceives the world into blaming others for the violence that is in society resulting in the violence of scapegoat sacrifice." But, he continues, "Jesus conquers Satan by uncovering this deception; he shows that the way of God is that of nonviolent faithful witness."⁷⁷

THE CHALLENGE OF IDEOLOGICAL CRITICISM

In a growing body of scholarship focusing on ideological criticism of Revelation—especially in the United States—a new challenge to such a Girardian reading has been levied.⁷⁸ This ideology has drawn significantly on recent work in feminist scholarship and rhetorical criticism, but is maturing into a recognizable school of interpretation in its own right with significant implications for Revelation studies. A number of scholars, including Robert Royalty Jr.,⁷⁹ Paul Duff,⁸⁰ Tina Pippin,⁸¹ and Greg Carey⁸² have focused their study of Revelation on the struggle for power and ascendancy among the prophetic leaders *within* the Christian communities in Asia.

These scholars agree that even if there is some unmasking of mimetic desire with regard to Jesus' death on the surface of the text, we can see a re-victimization going on at the rhetorical level. That is, at the rhetorical level, John is engaging in unethical argumentation.⁸³ For instance, "John tries to discredit his rival [unnamed in the text, but derisively dubbed 'Jezebel' by John] by indirectly tying her by means of homology and irony—to the satanic realm."⁸⁴ The primary "crisis" facing the seven churches of Revelation is an internal one that involved not only theological differences, but also conflicts over social position and economic mobility; it was *not* primarily an external crisis, such as persecution from outside.⁸⁵ Even the way that John uses the Old Testament is an expression of this power struggle.⁸⁶

This struggle for power among the leaders of the seven churches is clearly visible within the text of Revelation itself. Especially in the letters to the seven churches, we see many negative sobriquets (e.g., Nicolaitans [2:6,15], Jezebel [2:20], Balaamites [2:14]) and references

to people who “call themselves” one thing (2:2,9,20) but “are not” (2:2,9), to the blasphemy of those who consider themselves part of the believing community (2:9), to the synagogue of Satan (2:9; 3:9), to liars (2:2), and to evildoers among the people of God (2:2). Besides suggesting that the author does not share his readers’ assessment of the current situation, these references bear witness to a power struggle among the leaders of the community—a power struggle that the author is waging with questionable ethical integrity at the rhetorical level.

Greg Carey maintains that “however one negotiates Revelation’s violence, liberationist interpretations are left with a difficult moral ethos, which is inclusive in that it takes the side of the marginalized but is also exclusivist in identifying persons, groups, and structures with oppression.”⁸⁷ If Carey is right, and I think he is, the ethos of Revelation is unstable in that it is torn between egalitarian and authoritarian impulses. A similar observation has been made by Tina Pippin.

This look at the school of ideological criticism within Revelation studies indicates that, even if a Christus Victor reading of Revelation is legitimate and warranted by the text, this does not necessarily save the book from some of the ethical problems that have dogged Anselm’s theory of the atonement.

In conclusion, we see no victimization or re-victimization in the Revelation of John with regard to the death of Jesus. Jesus is portrayed as Lamb precisely because the image underscores Jesus’ vulnerability—a vulnerability manifested and sealed in his murder. But ironically, his is a vulnerability without victimization, since it is precisely through his death that Jesus overcame, or conquered. Jesus’ death in the Apocalypse is not portrayed as an expression of mimetic desire, or of sacral violence, but rather as a repudiation of it.

“atonement” in its classic, Anselmian sense was not important to the author of Revelation. While John seems to know and accept the tradition that Jesus died for humanity’s sins, his primary understanding of Jesus’ death is that it was the ultimate victory over evil.

The sacral or cultic imagery we find in Revelation is designed primarily not to correct the believers’ mode of worship or understanding of sacrifice, but rather to redirect that worship from the emperor and/or the emperor’s gods to the one true God and to the Lamb. The irony is that this book, which is perhaps second only to Hebrews in the pervasiveness of cultic language and imagery, is not concerned with the proper observance of cult, except that it is the God of Israel

who is to be worshiped, not the emperor. Instead, its burden is to elicit the kind of allegiance to God that allows no compromise with Greco-Roman religion or with emperor worship. It calls for a kind of nonviolent resistance to those forces that may well lead to the reader’s death—a death that will seal the believer’s salvation. In short, there is a kind of spiritualization of sacrifice and of cultic terms in this book.⁸⁸

There is a war going on in Revelation at several levels. The war in heaven symbolizes and gives new perspective for the war taking place on the earth.⁸⁹ But there is a rhetorical war going on as well among the leaders of the seven churches, to which we have only one remaining witness: the book of Revelation itself.

What does this mean for the believing Christian today? What difference does it make if Revelation reflects a Christus Victor understanding of the significance of Jesus’ saving death and resurrection?

Revelation’s view regarding what Jesus did privileges the ethical and political. Whatever else Jesus’ death is in this book, it is not exclusively, or even primarily, vicarious: it is unique and salvific, but it is also exemplary. In Revelation, Christ’s death and resurrection are the keys to God’s victory over evil in a battle whose outcome has already been settled, but the *working out in history* of which requires that believers maintain the same kind of faithful witness that eventuated in Jesus’ own death. Revelation thus exhibits an understanding of Jesus’ death and resurrection that directly supports a vision for discipleship. For those who wish to follow the Lamb wherever he goes must follow him in faithful witness . . . and perhaps even in death.

NOTES

1. In his teaching, Weaver often began his theology courses with a session on Revelation, focusing on how it has been and should be read. His first substantial foray into the Christus Victor view of the atonement appeared in his article, “Atonement for the Non-Constantinian Church,” *Modern Theology* 6/4 (July 1990): 307–23. Subsequent work in this area includes J. Denny Weaver, “Violence in Christian Theology,” *Cross Currents* 51, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 150–76, esp. 164–67; J. Denny Weaver, “Christus Victor, Ecclesiology, and Christology,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 68/3 (July 1994): 277–90; J. Denny Weaver, “Some Theological Implications of Christus Victor,” *The Mennonite Quarterly Review* 68/4 (October 1994): 483–99; J. Denny Weaver, *Keeping Salvation Ethical: Mennonite and Amish Atonement Theology in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1997), 39–43; J. Denny Weaver, “Reading the Past, Present, and Future in Revelation,” in *Apocalypticism and Millennialism: Shaping a Believers Church Eschatology for the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Loren L. Johns (Kitchener: Pandora Press, 2000), 104–18. Weaver re-

vised and expanded much of his work on Revelation in his book-length study, *The Nonviolent Atonement* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), esp. 20–33.

2. See Gustaf Aulén, *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of Atonement*, (New York: Macmillan, 1969). For a succinct introduction to theories of the Atonement, see Timothy J. Geddert, *Mark* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2001), 387–9.

3. Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 20. Oddly enough, Aulén himself almost completely ignored the book of Revelation in his survey of the New Testament theology of atonement.

4. For other instances of the word *tēreō* (“keep”), see 2:26; 3:3, 8, 10; 12:17; 14:12; 16:15; 22:7, 9.

5. Note that the parallel expressions in these verses may help to explain the author’s understanding of faith (*pistis*) in these verses. In 2:13 the parallel expression is holding fast to Christ’s name; in 2:19 they are love, service, works, and endurance (*hypomonē*), which Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza translates as “consistent resistance.” See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 4, 182; in 13:10 it is endurance (*hypomonē*); and in 14:12 they are endurance (*hypomonē*) and keeping the commandments.

6. See 6:10; 15:4; 16:5, 7; 18:20; 19:2, 11, 20:4.

7. “To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

8. “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation; you have made them to be a kingdom and priests serving our God, and they will reign on earth.”

⁹ See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 352, on the significance of the lamb *standing*.

10. Richard Bauckham, “The Book of Revelation as a Christian War Scroll,” *Neotestamentica* 22 (1988): 17–40, reprinted in Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 210–237. Summarizing his research, Bauckham says that “John carefully takes up Jewish expectations of a messianic war in which God’s people are to fight and to win a military victory over their enemies, and reinterprets them, substituting faithful witness to the point of martyrdom for armed violence as the means of victory. Though military means are repudiated, the imagery of holy war is employed in the interests of active participation by Christians in the divine conflict with evil, following up the decisive victory which their Messiah, the Lamb, has already won” (Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xv). Elsewhere he notes, “The messianic army is an army of martyrs who triumph through their martyrdom, because they are followers of the Lamb who participate in his victory by following his path to death” (Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 229).

11. David L. Barr, “Tales of the End,” in *Tales of the End: A Narrative Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Santa Rosa, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1998), 101.

12. See Stanislas Lyonnet, “The Terminology of Redemption,” in *Sin, Redemption and Sacrifice: A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1970), 61–184; Dale Martin, *Slavery as Salvation: The Metaphor of Slavery in Pauline Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 63; and Stephen Finlan, *The Background and Content of Paul’s Cultic Atonement Metaphors* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 166.

13. Some manuscripts have “do his commandments” here (followed by the KJV) instead of “wash their robes,” but the latter reading is to be preferred. For a discussion of the issues here, see Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies’ Greek New Testament (3d Ed.)* (London and New York: United Bible Societies, 1971), 690; and David E. Aune, *Revelation 17–22* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 1197–8.

14. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 177. Cf. also Aune, *Revelation*, 1219.

15. Aune, *Revelation*, 1219.

16. For Bauckham’s handling of this metaphor, see Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 226–9.

17. The NIV supplies the word *sin* in 2:14, where it reads, “You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols.” The Greek has simply “taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the Israelites.”

18. The word *sin* does not appear in Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, Philemon, or 2 or 3 John.

19. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 75. Similarly, David Aune notes that “though the idea of martyrdom is very much present” in 12:11, “the notion of atonement is absent.” See David E. Aune, *Revelation 6–16* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 474.

20. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 228.

21. Much as I appreciate Mark Bredin’s work in *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace*, I find his question “sacrificial lamb or military figure?” misleading. See Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace: A Nonviolent Christology in the Book of Revelation* (Carlisle, Cumbria, U.K.: Paternoster Press, 2003), 182–5. Not only must “sacrificial lamb” be defined and nuanced; so also must “military leader.” I have demonstrated that although Friedrich Spitta in the nineteenth century attracted many twentieth-century followers in his positing of the existence of a militaristic lamb redeemer tradition in Early Judaism, this tradition never existed at least not prior to the writing of Revelation. See Loren L. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John: An Investigation Into Its Origins and Rhetorical Force* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 76–107. Thus, if Jesus is a military leader in Revelation—and I would argue that he is—then he is a military leader of a much different sort—a nonviolent one. And if the Lamb is a sacrificial character—and he is, in a way—then he is a very different sort of sacrificial character.

22. C. M. Tuckett, “Atonement in the N[ew] T[estament],” in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1.519.

23. For considerations of the pervasiveness of Revelation's language of the Hebrew sacrificial system of worship—and its implications for understanding the message of Revelation—see Richard Bauckham, "Prayer in the Book of Revelation," in *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2001): 252–71; and Jon Paulien, "The Role of the Hebrew Cultus, Sanctuary, and Temple in the Plot and Structure of the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 33/2 (Autumn 1992): 245–64. The role of the Temple and of Temple worship also plays largely in the monographs by Farrer and Niles: Austin M. Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1986); and Daniel Thambyrajah Niles, *As Seeing the Invisible* (New York: Harper, 1961). Cf. also Michael D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies," *New Testament Studies* 27 (April 1981): 243–67; and Robert J. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice: The Judaeo-Christian Background before Origen* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1978), 295–307.

24. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 296.

25. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 103.

26. See Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "Betwixt and Between on the Lord's Day: Liturgy and the Apocalypse," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1992 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 654–72; and Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "The Politics of Praise: A Reading of Revelation 19:1-10," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 374–93, reprinted in Jean-Pierre Ruiz, "Praise and Politics in Revelation 19:1-10," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh and New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 69–84.

27. Nowhere, for instance, does Revelation ever mention or describe the worship of the Christian church. Cf. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 297, 304, 307.

28. Ruiz, "Praise and Politics in Revelation 19:1-10," 84.

29. Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1987), 144.

30. See "Sacrifice Traditions" in Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 62–5.

31. See the discussion in Raymond Schwager, "Christ's Death and the Prophetic Critique of Sacrifice," trans. P. Riordan, *Semeia*, no. 33 (1985): 120.

32. "The connection between the shedding of the Lamb's blood and redemption from sin . . . [is] somewhat problematic." See Charles E. Hill, "Atonement in the Apocalypse of John," in *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical and Practical Perspectives, Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole*, ed. Charles E. Hill and Frank A. James, III (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 200. See my discussion of these matters in Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, esp. p. 30.

33. Gary A. Anderson, "Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings (Old Testament)," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5.879.

34. See Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed: Translated from the*

Original Arabic Text (New York: Dover Publications), 325. See also Anderson, "Sacrifice," 5.871; and Jacob Neusner, et al., *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 2.532. For a more thorough and appreciative consideration of Maimonides' theology of sacrifice, see Josef Stern, *Problems and Parables of Law: Maimonides and Nahmanides on Reasons for the Commandments* (Ta' Amei Ha-Mitzvot) (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York, 1989).

35. Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*, 326.

36. David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* (Dallas: Word Books, 1997), 372.

37. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 372; cf. also C. H. Dodd, "Messiah," chap. 9 in *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 230–8.

38. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 372.

39. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, 373.

40. Cf. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 129.

41. See "René Girard and Mimetic Desire" below.

42. See Bauckham, "Prayer in the Book of Revelation," 260–61.

43. Cf. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 31–2, 38–9.

44. Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 73.

45. D. R. Carnegie, "Worthy is the Lamb: The Hymns in Revelation," in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie*, ed. Harold H. Rowdon (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 246–7.

46. Cf. Johns, *The Lamb Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, 130.

47. Although some manuscripts have *louō* ("washed") instead of *lyō*, Metzger strongly prefers the originality of the latter "because it has superior manuscript support . . . because it is in accord with Old Testament imagery (e. g. Is 40.2 LXX); and because it suits better the idea expressed in ver. 6a. The reading *lousanti*, which may have been pronounced like *lysanti*, seems to have arisen 'due to failure to understand the Hebraic use of *en* to denote a price and a natural misapplication of 7.14' (Hort, 'Notes on Select Readings,' *ad loc.*)." See Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament: A Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament* (3d ed.), 662.

48. Hill, "Atonement in the Apocalypse of John," 192.

49. In addition to what follows here, see fn. 23 above.

50. Matt Goldish, *Judaism in the Theology of Sir Isaac Newton* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1998), 96.

51. Johannes Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture* (reprint, 1926–40; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991) In contrast, Stephen Finlan has more recently argued that although "it will not do to be dogmatic and to insist that there were no penal ideas in Hebrew sacrifice, . . . it is true that the clear expressions of this idea are all late (rabbinic)." See Finlan, *Background and Content*, 163.

52. Ronald Ernest Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study* (Guildford, England: Lutterworth, 1976), 150–1.

53. Austin M[arsden] Farrer, *A Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John's Apocalypse* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1986).

54. John Ben-Daniel and Gloria Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple: A New Approach to the Book of Revelation* (Jerusalem: Beit Yochanan, 2003).

55. Ben-Daniel and Ben-Daniel, *The Apocalypse in the Light of the Temple*, 30.
56. Roy B. Zuck, *A Biblical Theology of the New Testament: From Members of Dallas Theological Faculty* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 212; cf. also 215.
57. Ronald F. Youngblood, ed., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995), s.v. "Lamb of God".
58. G[regory] K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, in *The New International Greek Testament Commentary*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 660.
59. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 229.
60. Hill, "Atonement in the Apocalypse of John."
61. James G. Williams, ed., *The Girard Reader* (New York: Crossroad, 1996), 292.
62. Williams, *The Girard Reader*, 292.
63. Weaver, *The Nonviolent Atonement*, 48.
64. As one example, the Book of Revelation is not even mentioned once in the issue of *Semeia* devoted to the work of René Girard: A. McKenna, ed., *René Girard and Biblical Studies* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985).
65. See Mark R. Bredin, "Hate Never Dispelled Hate: No Place for the *Pharmakos*," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, (Fall 2004), 105–13. See also Mark Bredin, *Jesus, Revolutionary of Peace*, esp. 16–19.
66. Raymund Schwager, *Must There be Scapegoats? Violence and Redemption in the Bible* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), esp. 218–9.
67. Ted Grimsrud, "Scapegoating No More: Christian Pacifism and New Testament Understandings of the Death of Jesus," in *Violence Renounced: René Girard, Biblical Studies, and Peacemaking*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Telford, Pa.: Pandora Press, 1994), 49–69; see esp. pp. 61–64.
68. Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2004), 79–80.
69. Finamore's book is a revision of his 1997 doctoral dissertation at Oxford. See Stephen Finamore, *God, Order and Chaos: René Girard and the Apocalypse* (Paternoster Press, 2006). In addition, see Paul S. Fiddes, *The Promised End: Eschatology in Theology and Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 19, and n. 57.
70. Cf. René Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 185, 253–62.
71. Girard, *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*, 186.
72. Cf., e.g., Robert Hamerton-Kelly, ed., *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan K. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987), 142–3.
73. Henry George Liddell, comp., "*Pharmakos*," in *A Greek-English Lexicon: With a Supplement*, ed., rev. and augm. throughout by Henry Stuart Jones, et al., (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968). For an explanation of how Greek religions ignorant of Israel's religions expressed their own understandings of the scapegoat mechanism, see Gerhard Friedrich, ed., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1967), s.v. *peripsēma*, 6.84–93.
74. Cf. also James Moffatt, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epis-*

tle to the Hebrews (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1924), 34.

75. See also 1 Cor. 4:13, where Paul may be claiming that he has been a scapegoat of the world, and the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, under the terms *katharos* and *peripsēma*: Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964–76), 3:413–31 and 6:84–93. For "scapegoat" in translation of 1 Cor. 4:13, see Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, edition no.3; ed. Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999), s.v. *perikatharma*.

76. Liddell, "*Pharmakos*."

77. Bredin, "Hate Never Dispelled Hate," 112.

78. Michael Harris apparently issued such a critique already in 1988 in Michael A. Harris, "Deceit, Desire, and Violence: A Critique of Girard's Reading of the Apocalypse," unpublished paper (Society of Biblical Literature, 1988). For an introduction to ideology criticism of the Bible, see David Jobling and Tina Pippin, eds., *Ideological Criticism of Biblical Texts* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1993).

79. See Robert M. Royalty Jr., "The Rhetoric of Revelation," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1997 Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 596–617; Robert M. Royalty Jr., *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1998); esp. 125–133; and especially Robert M. Royalty Jr., "Don't Touch This Book!: Revelation 22:18-19 and the Rhetoric of Reading (in) the Apocalypse of John," *Biblical Interpretation* 12/3 (2004): 282–99.

80. Paul Brooks Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

81. Tina Pippin, *Death and Desire: The Rhetoric of Gender in the Apocalypse of John* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992). See also Tina Pippin, "The Heroine and the Whore: Fantasy and the Female in the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia*, no. 60 (1992): 67–82; Tina Pippin, "Eros and the End: Reading for Gender in the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia*, no. 59 (1992): 193–217; and Tina Pippin, "Jezebel Re-Vamped," *Semeia* 69/70: *Intertextuality and the Bible* (1995): 221–34.

82. Greg Carey, *Elusive Apocalypse: Reading Authority in the Revelation to John* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1999); and L. Gregory Bloomquist and Greg Carey, eds., *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse* (St. Louis, Mo.: Chalice Press, 1999).

83. Although Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's reading of the Apocalypse is fundamentally rhetorical, her readings emphasize the constructive ethical message of the text, rather than the problematic ethos created by the author's argument. Although she considers the feminine images in Revelation to be problematic, even misogynistic, she believes that they can and should be "translated" into appropriate symbols and images for our own day. See Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, esp. 199; and Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*. Similarly, although Leonard Thompson's rhetorical criticism led him to deny the existence of any outside threat or cri-

sis at all behind Revelation, his reading does not lean in the direction of ideology criticism. See Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

84. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?* 82.

85. See Duff, *Who Rides the Beast?* 14.

86. Cf. Royalty Jr., "Don't Touch This Book!"

87. See Carey, *Elusive Apocalypse* and Steve Moyise, "The Apocalypse and Its Ambiguous Ethos," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh and New York: T&T Clark, 2001), 163–80.

88. I use the word *spiritualization* here with some caution: not in the sense of radical dematerialization, but rather in the sense of pursuing the inner, spiritual, or ethical significance of the Hebrew Temple workshop. See the comments of Robert J. Daly regarding the limits and usefulness of the word *spiritualization*. Daly, *Christian Sacrifice*, 4–5.

89. "The 'battle' depicted between forces of God and forces of Satan [in Rev. 12] was really the confrontation *in history* between the church, the earthly institution that represented the rule of God, and the Roman empire, the earthly structure used to symbolize the rule of Satan. The so-called cosmic battle was really imagery that gave . . . cosmic significance [to] the confrontation between the Roman empire and Jesus and his church." See Weaver, "Violence in Christian Theology," 165.

Part 3

THE WORK OF JESUS IN ANABAPTISM