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The Pentecostal Old and New Testament Commentary series gives voice to lesser-known Pentecostal scholarly efforts even as the movement expands globally. This series reaches beyond existing scholarship to contribute a uniquely Pentecostal perspective. It appeals to various audiences, from astute laypeople to pastors to serious Bible students. Jon Newton (Ph.D. Deakin University) of Alphacrucis College is well-published in the genre of Apocalyptic Studies from the perspective of a Pentecostal hermeneutic.

In A Pentecostal Commentary on Revelation, Newton provides background material relevant to Revelation that helps distinguish the commentary’s tone. He offers a significant introduction for the book in terms of quality and quantity, writing in an engaging and easy-to-understand style that creates accessibility for readers from both ends of the target audience. In doing so, he covers the scope of possibilities, treating each view fairly while usually adopting a pragmatic perspective that does not overly limit interpretation. The question of dating, which is often a tell of the interpreter’s disposition, is one example. Here, Newton is reluctant to provide a conclusive and precise hypothesis, stating that no interpretive endeavor should be dependent on dating. Authorship offers another source of determining Newton’s pragmatic disposition. Newton assumes the Apostle John is the author while simultaneously acknowledging the complications of that position. However, he appropriately bases no primary exegetical conclusions on the assumption of authorship. A further example of Newton’s pragmatic approach is found in terms of purpose. While he surveys the various theories, he argues that Revelation was written for discipleship, accommodating a broad scope.

Equally informative is Newton’s fine survey of Revelation’s various schools of interpretation. He addresses futurism, which he subcategorizes into multiple tribulation theories, and he summarizes the historicist view. Newton then presents varied preterist interpretations categorized according to their focus on Jerusalem, Rome, and postmodern and rhetorical thought. Finally, he describes the idealist or “spiritual” view of the apocalyptic writings. While he engages each section critically, he does so without discernable bias, remarking on the benefits and limitations of these readings.
Newton frames together principles for interpreting Revelation, which again attests to his pragmatic and compelling style. The first principle is that Revelation’s message was for the first-century church, yet the content remains applicable to Christians in all eras. Secondly, Revelation is about the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, enabled by the work of Christ through his life, death, and resurrection, which provides the restoration of Israel. Third, Revelation is about the completion of God’s redemptive plan for all creation. Newton remains grounded in principles from this hermeneutical framework while avoiding unnecessary and spectacular readings of Revelation. Beyond these interpretive principles, Newton employs specific methods that guide the interpretation. These include the historical context, the apocalyptic narrative, the original audience in an illiterate and oral world, its engagement with Old Testament themes, and Pentecostal theology.

The question inevitably arises as to how a Pentecostal reading enhances the narrative. To Newton, a Pentecostal reading of Revelation is “sympathetic and literal,” meaning that the tradition affirms a high view of Scripture; therefore, the canonical book is seen as being reliable, trustworthy, and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Naturally, Pentecostals will give increased attention to the person, role, and work of the Holy Spirit, perhaps making a unique contribution in this regard as applied to Revelation. Newton also identifies the “full” gospel—specifically, Jesus as Savior, Sanctifier, Healer, Baptizer in the Spirit, and Coming King—as having an integral role in the hermeneutical application of Revelation. An additional way that a Pentecostal reading of the text will influence interpreters, according to Newton, is the act of Pentecost itself. The broader implications of the Pentecost event include many eschatological ideas, not merely theories regarding Jesus’ return, but the rich concepts of the kingship of Jesus and the recreation of the heavens and earth. Finally, permeating Newton’s pragmatic approach to the text is an intentional reading that ensures practical application. Newton insists that the liturgy of praise and worship is a critical component throughout the book. As committed as Newton is to read the text within his Pentecostal paradigm, he still articulates the imperative to engage in broader traditions.

Newton’s commentary is an informed approach with vibrant elements from his tradition that align with broader hermeneutical principles. He blends the practical and pastoral alongside the academic. Newton makes an effort not to exclude readers from outside the Pentecostal tradition and avoids creating a dichotomy between a Jewish
and Gentile first audience. Instead, he focuses on Revelation’s universal value to all Christians from the first decades of writing to contemporary audiences. He espouses a high Christology and pneumatology. He believes redemption and discipleship are crucial principles in the text. This commentary is hardly a stand-alone, which is a nearly impossible task for the book of Revelation. However, the limitations of this commentary are compensated by the eclectic blend employed by the author. This commentary will complement many Pentecostal pastors’ and students’ collections on the topic.

Michael Blythe is a pastor and a Ph.D. candidate at South Africa Theological Seminary in Sandton, Gauteng, South Africa.