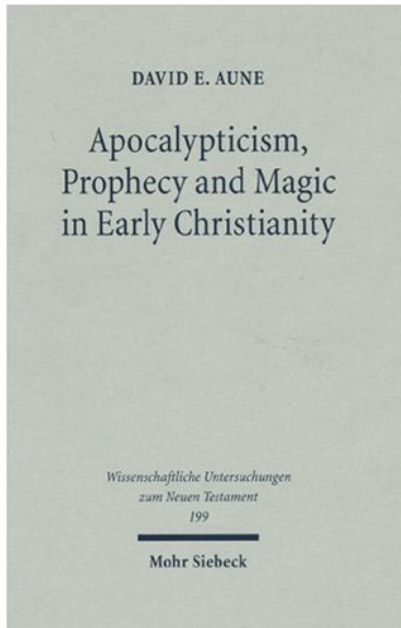


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**Aune, David E.**

***Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays***

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 199

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This volume collects twenty of David E. Aune's essays on the topics of apocalypticism, prophecy, and magic in early Christianity. It includes: "Understanding Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic (1–12), "From the Idealized Past to the Imaginary Future: Eschatological Restoration in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," with Eric Stewart (13–38), "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre" (39–65), "Following the Lamb: Discipleship in the Apocalypse" (66–78), "Qumran and the Book of Revelation" (79–98), "The Influence of Roman Imperial Court Ceremonial on the Apocalypse of John" (99–119), "An Intertextual Reading of the Apocalypse of John" (120–49), "The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic" (150–74), "The Social Matrix of the Apocalypse of John" (175–89), "Stories of Jesus in the Apocalypse of John" (190–211), "The Form and Function of the Proclamations to the Seven Churches (Revelation 2–3)" (212–32), "Revelation 5 as an Ancient Egyptian Enthronement Scene?" (233–39), "Revelation 17: A Lesson in Remedial Reading" (240–49), "The Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos and the Exegesis of Revelation 22:16" (250–60), "God and Time in the Apocalypse of John" (261–79), "Charismatic Exegesis in Early Judaism and Early Christianity" (280–99), "Christian Prophecy and the Messianic Status of Jesus" (300–319), "The *Odes of Solomon* and Early

Christian Prophecy” (320–46), “The Apocalypse of John and Graeco-Roman Revelatory Magic” (347–67), and “Magic in Early Christianity” (368–420).

All the essays except one have been published previously. Most focus on the Revelation of John, on which Aune wrote his magisterial Word Biblical Commentary and for which perhaps he has become best known. Yet despite its unquestionable utility for scholars of Revelation, the volume under review is not simply a compilation of specialist papers on selected technical topics concerning the New Testament book. Rather, its title is entirely appropriate: this is a volume that deals with ancient Jewish and Christian apocalypticism, prophecy, and magic at a very high level. For this reason even its older essays (the earliest, “Magic in Early Christianity,” *ANRW* 2.23.2, dates from 1980) remain fresh and stimulating.

What strikes one most about this collection is Aune’s tremendous breadth of interest and expertise. For example, few scholars have produced more insightful work regarding the knotty problems of the taxonomy and definition of apocalypses and related phenomena. “The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre,” which initially saw print as a contribution to the 1986 volume, *Early Christian Apocalypticism* (*Semeia* 36), remains an incisive study that dissects the various definitions of the genre current at the time but refuses to concede that the corpus that they seek to describe ought to be taxonomically classified as no more than a species of a broad *genus* such as prophecy or revelation. Although inaccurate in its forecast that John Collins’s definition of the genre “shows little hermeneutical promise” (43), Aune’s enquiry proceeds from an implicit conviction in the inherent distinctiveness of both the genre and ideology. In “The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic” (2006), Aune examines the major apocalyptic motifs common to Revelation and Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic literature, including the topos of the New Jerusalem/temple, whose basic design features in three of its most developed examples (the Temple Scroll, the Dead Sea New Jerusalem text, and Revelation) and principally derive, as Aune correctly concludes, from Ezek 40–48. This view runs counter to the opinion of several authorities, who to one degree or another see these features as having Hellenistic or Roman antecedents. The volume also contains “God and Time in the Apocalypse of John,” which was published originally in 2002 and is, in my opinion, one of the finest essays written on the subject of apocalypticism. Its observations on the nature of historical sequence and the arrow of time in apocalyptic literature represent a significant contribution to our understanding of some of the most basic (yet often unrecognized) axioms of the underlying ideology.

The essays in this collection also reveal Aune’s views on a host of associated subjects, including revelatory magic, the contours of realized eschatology, the concept of holy war and the theme of restoration, the social dimensions of apocalypticism, and the forms of

early Christian prophecy. One of his special concerns is the religious and cultural context in which Jesus (and his message) might have been understood by those of his era and by which his story was appreciated in the decades after his crucifixion. In every case Aune brings to his investigation an immense knowledge of not only the Jewish, Christian, and classical literature of the era but also the documentary evidence, including the numismatic and inscriptive. The reader's potential disappointment with the underweight index of subjects (478–82), which scarcely reflects the volume's intellectual density, should be more than offset by the pleasure of reading the essays and discovering (or rediscovering) their many treasures.

I would find it difficult to conduct research on ancient apocalypses and apocalypticism, or on the book of Revelation, without this volume by my side. Its inclusion in university and personal libraries is strongly recommended.