Waddell, Robby

*The Spirit of the Book of Revelation*

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Robby Waddell is Assistant Professor of New Testament at Southeastern University in Lakeland, Florida. This book is a revision of his Ph.D. thesis at the University of Sheffield under Professors L. C. A. Alexander and J. C. Thomas. Waddell focuses here on the pneumatology of the book of Revelation, giving particular attention to hermeneutical matters, namely, methodology and the location of the interpreter. He dubs the method “intertextuality,” approaching the issue of allusions from the Old to the New Testament from a literary perspective, as opposed to the more traditional historical perspective. This brings into play the fact that the reader must read in two directions: the old affects the new; and the new affects the way in which one reads the old. Waddell emphasizes the significant role the reader (in his case from the context of Pentecostalism) plays in the process of understanding.

The author is correct in saying that the pneumatology of the Apocalypse has received relatively little attention in comparison to other issues in the book of Revelation. Therefore, chapter 1 is dedicated to a survey of modern scholarship on the question: What is the role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse? It contains a comprehensive survey under three headings—the “seven spirits,” “in the Spirit,” and “Spirit” as such—according to the eighteen occurrences of *pneuma* referring to the Spirit: four times to “seven spirits”
(1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6); four instances of the phrase “in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10); and ten references to “Spirit” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 14:13; 19:10; 22:17)

The common thread among the majority of scholars appears to be the notion of “the Spirit of prophecy” (37) and that the Apocalypse is devoid of the notion of the Spirit who indwells the believers (excluding R. Jeske and M. W. Wilson). The identity of the “seven spirits” is interpreted by some (see E. Schweizer and D. Aune) as the seven archangels, from Judaic background, in emphasizing the religio-historical setting of the Apocalypse. Others identify the “seven spirits” as the Spirit of God (see J. Fekkes, F. F. Bruce, and R. Bauckham), emphasizing Zech 4.

Waddell makes a meaningful contribution to the debate in chapter 2, which I thoroughly enjoyed! This chapter focuses on an articulation of his theoretical framework concerning intertextuality and serves as a roundabout where literary theory, exegetical studies on Revelation, Old Testament texts, and contextual theology all come together. Julia Kristeva develops her notion of intertextuality from the Soviet theorist Mikhail Bakhtin’s work on literary theory, and Waddell applies the literary theory of Kristeva as well as the one by T. R. Hatina to his own instrumentarium in understanding intertextuality. In some sense (see R. Barthes), all texts are products of other texts. In that sense textuality exposes the incompatibility between intertextuality and traditional historical studies. Waddell’s discussion of J. Culler’s critique of Fish’s literary theory is excellent and worth reading. The comments by S. D. Moore and A. C. Thiselton on the Fishian literary theory are substantial in this debate on intertextuality. It is clear that Waddell is also serious about contextualization, which means that the sociocultural context of a group plays a vital role in the formation of its theology. This role differs from typical reader-response theories. Contextualization should, however, never be seen as an invitation to a new tribalism in theological discourse (D. T. Irvin 1994, 84).

I found the arguments concerning Old Testament thoughts employed by New Testament writers, proposed by G. K. Beale, very helpful in this regard. He is convinced that the authors of the New Testament wrote with complete respect for the context of the passages they cite or to which they allude, as in the Apocalypse. According to Beale, contextual sensitivity is not uncharacteristic in Qumran or in Jewish apocalyptic. He also states that it should not be assumed that the noncontextual exegesis commonly associated with early Pharisaic and Qumran interpretations predate A.D. 70 because most of the examples of such readings are after A.D. 70. R. N. Longenecker’s reaction to Beale concerning the apostles’ ahistorical methods is illuminating. The author’s view on and use of S. Moyise’s threefold intertextual echo, dialogical intertextuality, and postmodern intertextuality wraps up a meaningful chapter on textuality and intertextuality. Moyise’s views are...
legitimate applications after making use of the literary work by J. Hollander and T. M. Greene (see 75).

The next part of the research to be investigated is to apply Waddell’s concept of intertextuality to another “text” that intersects with the text of Revelation, the context of the interpreter. In this instance Waddell introduces himself as a Pentecostal reader of the Apocalypse. He seeks to venture in a postmodern direction “by unequivocally acknowledging my own socio-religious context, namely Pentecostalism” (97). Although chapter 3 tends to lean to a one-sidedness, the author has been honest in his presentation of a Pentecostal theological hermeneutic. According to Waddell, there is no longer need to acquiesce to the evangelical doctrine sola Scriptura because the revelation of God is transmitted by the work of the Holy Spirit to new generations. The doctrine solus Spiritus would be more appropriate. This emphasis by some exegetes about the role of particularly Pentecostal receivers in the process of interpretation may be heavily debated by others, when it comes to the issues of exclusivity and the role of the Spirit in doing theology.

The last chapter contains a comprehensive analysis of Rev 11:1–13, which according to Waddell “sits at the center of the book literally and … theologically and forms the intertextual center of the role of the Spirit in the Apocalypse.” Zechariah 4 is considered the key intertext. To fit in with his views on literary contextualization and intertextuality, the author uses the expression en pneumi (in the Spirit) to come up with an outline of the Apocalypse. The structure divides the Apocalypse into four major visions, interrupted between the third and the fourth with the climax of the story, namely, the contrast between Babylon and the New Jerusalem (19:11–21:8 ) The use of pneuma in 11:11 and pneumatikōs in 11:8, together with the intertextuality of Zech 4, convince Waddell of the role of the Spirit in the prophetic ministry of the church to bear witness to Jesus in the world. It is necessary to take notice of Waddell’s outline in order to understand his conclusions:

Prologue (1:1–8)
First vision: Christ and the churches (1:9–3:22)
Second vision: The Lamb and the scroll (4:1–16:21)
   The throne room: God, Lamb and the Scroll (4:1–5:14)
   Seven Seal Openings (6:1–8:1 and 8:3–5)
   Seven trumpet blasts (8:2; 8:6–11:19)
   Cosmic Recapitulation: Interpreting the Scroll (12:1–14:20; 15:2–4)
   Seven Bowl pourings (15:1; 15:5–16:21)
Third vision: The harlot Babylon (17:1–19:10)
   The climax of the story: Between Babylon and Jerusalem (19:11–21:8)
Fourth vision: The bride Jerusalem (21:9–22:9)
Epilogue (22:6–21)

To conclude: (1) the comprehensive survey in chapter 1 is meaningful, although selective concerning sources; (2) the focus on an interdisciplinary discussion of intertextuality and the theological implications of a poststructural definition of text(uality) in chapter 2 is very stimulating and worth reading; (3) the intertextual reading of Rev 11:1–13 by making use of Moyise’s theoretical theories in chapter 4 is enriching; (4) to see the Spirit as the agent of revelation is not the exclusive “intellectual property” of any one interpretive group but probably also the view of the majority of exegetes; and (5) this book is highly readable and a meaningful contribution to hermeneutics as well as to pneumatology, ecclesiology, and missiology in the Apocalypse, although I do not share Waddell’s view on a “prophethood of all believers,” and I do have reservations about the title of the book. What about The Spirit IN the Book of Revelation?