

## Chapter 1 : Nonviolence and the Book of Revelation

*I looked and there was a pale green horse! Its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed with him; they were given authority over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, famine, and pestilence, and by the wild animals of the earth.*

War of the Lamb: For these reasons and others it is hardly surprising that those Christian groups which are most obsessed with studying the details of the Book of Revelation are usually also the most militant: Most of these groups also justify Christian participation in military violence. Many sermons from popular TV evangelists from this school are hardly more restrained. Passages such as Mark 13 are seen by these scholars as coming later than Jesus and being read back onto him. But that is an argument for another time. Sermons in progressive or peace-oriented churches seldom come from Revelation. This strikes me as understandable-but-mistaken. It allows a very thorough misreading of the Revelation to continue to dominate popular Christian thought. In the Revelation to John, the followers of the Beasts and the Dragon do violence, but the followers of the Lamb do not. Instead, a central theme throughout the book is that the followers of the Lamb do the deeds that Jesus taught Rev. The verse then gives a call for endurance and faith. Richard Bauckham, a perceptive student of apocalyptic writing in general and Revelation in particular, observes: No doubt in the Jewish circles with which John and his churches had contact. Therefore, instead of simply repudiating apocalyptic militancy, [John of Patmos] reinterprets it in a Christian sense, taking up its reading of Old Testament prophecy into a specifically Christian reading of the Old Testament. Christians are called to participate in his war and his victoryâ€”but by the same means as he employed: Caird, an Anglican New Testament scholar and pacifist of a generation ago, is also helpful: Throughout the welter of Old Testament images in the chapters that follow, almost without exception the only title for Christ is the Lamb, and this title is meant to control and interpret all the rest of the symbolism. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation to St. John*. The two witnesses of Rev. Likewise, the prophet Elijah had not learned nonviolence, but had the priests of Baal put to the sword. But in Revelation these two witnesses to God, standing for the Torah and the Prophets, slay with fire that comes from their mouths, that is, with prophetic word, not physical violence. The theme of the prophetic word as fire or sword is woven throughout Revelation 1: That is, evangelism backed up by Christian faithfulness may convert all cultures. The Old Testament predicts the smashing of the nations with an iron bar, but the only weapon the Lamb wields is his own cross and the martyrdom of his followers 2: John of Patmos, like Jesus before him, does not reject the Hebrew Scriptures, but reads them selectively, with a different interpretive grid than that of Essenes, the Pharisees, the social bandits of popular messianic movements, or the revolutionary Zealots whose actions led to the destruction of the Temple in 70 C. It seems to me as if Christian proponents of gospel nonviolence must cautiously re-embrace Revelation and the language of apocalyptic, instead of simply leaving them to the war-mongering fanatics. Nonviolent ministers must do the hard work of preaching from Revelation, because only by teaching our people to read this book as a handbook of nonviolent patience for persecuted churches can we inoculate them against the virulent war-mad interpretations so popular in many U. Why do so many resist reading Revelation in a nonviolent perspective? I have come to suspect that many of us Christians are embarrassed by the nonviolent Jesus of the Gospels. It is very possible to affirm the atoning work of Christ in a way which supports nonviolence, but that is a topic for another time. There is no other Savior, no other Way. Some would say that the way out of religiously-motivated holy wars and violence is to excise all military and violent images from our language, even our religious language and our hymns. I respect their motives, but I dissent. Following the example of Jesus, Paul, and even John of Patmos, I encourage rather the reinterpretation of military imagery for nonviolent purposes, subverting the standard uses of violent imagery and war language.

**Chapter 2 : Religion and Spirituality: God and Violence**

*The violence in the book of Revelation is self-inflicted, and God's judgment is the abandonment of those who reject him to their own preference and its consequences, which includes both ecological disaster and the ravages of war.*

I became aware from reading an earlier Crossan book, *God and Empire*, that he is not a fan of the book of Revelation. Sadly, Crossan profoundly misreads Revelation—at least in my opinion. And his misreading weakens the overall argument of the book. Crossan begins the book by describing how he was motivated to write it by questions he received from audiences on various speaking engagements. So he set out to respond to those questions and to make the case that the Bible can be read to support nonviolence—especially if we understand the message of the historical Jesus as the core. One difficult set of questions concerns the book of Revelation. Crossan was continually asked: No matter what I said about the nonviolence of the first coming, questioners objected that the second coming was to be supremely violent, was to be a war to end all wars. Such questions about Revelation are indeed common for me, too, whenever I speak about the Bible and peace. Crossan does not question the accuracy of the portrayal of Revelation as pro-violence implied in the questions he cites. The key questions Crossan begins his slightly more than 4-page long discussion of Revelation at beginning of the book he will return to a fuller engagement later with a positive comment: It is a serene conclusion that establishes a transformed world, a hauntingly beautiful vision not of an Earth ascending to heaven, but of a heaven descending to Earth. He goes on, after quoting Revelation The biblical story ends, as do most comedic stories and romantic narratives, with a wedding feast. Crossan does recognize that Revelation gives us a picture of Jesus, the Lamb, as an embodiment of self-giving love and that the book is full of symbolism and is not meant to be read literally. However, he nonetheless portrays the book as giving the reader strongly mixed messages—nonviolent and profoundly violent. Rather than trying to resolve the apparent contradictions in light of the self-giving love of the Lamb as the controlling metaphor, Crossan leaves the contradictions unresolved, and in reality allows the violent symbolism to determine his sense of the overall message of the book. I have written at great length showing why I believe that Revelation should be read, from start to finish, as a book of peace. What about the massively bloody punitive judgment of God? We do indeed encounter a lot of blood in Revelation. At the beginning of Revelation, we are told about Jesus 1: He is described as well as the firstborn of the dead—his life was vindicated when God raised him. Because of this witness and vindication, he is also described as the true ruler of the kings of the earth. Then we are told that he loves us and frees us from the power of sin by his blood, that is, by his ministry as faithful witness. This exact same point is made in chapter 5. Jesus, the executed and resurrected Lamb is the true Lion of Judah that is, the Messiah who has the power to open the great scroll that tells of the ultimate victory of God. An uncountable number of creatures worship Jesus here as God, a powerful image of his divinity, of how his life revealed the character of God. The worship includes these words of praise: Yet a third time, in chapter seven, the same exact point is made. Here we have an amazing vision of the , who are actually a countless multitude who find healing amidst the terrible plagues. They praise God and the Lamb. Who are these multitudes? John emphasizes again the faithful witness of the Lamb to the point of crucifixion. Such an approach to life leads to some kind of cross, resistance from the powers-that-be, self-sacrifice or, as Gandhi term it, self-suffering. And, as it turns out, this self-giving love actually is the very force that takes down the Powers and brings in the New Jerusalem. That the victory over the Harlot and the Powers of evil is the same as the victory of the Lamb portrayed in chapter 5 and not some future literal battle is made clear in chapter And there is no actual battle. Jesus simply captures the Powers of evil and throws them into the lake of fire. There are no bloody battles where the human enemies of God are judged and slain. Is there an exception? But what about These verses are notoriously difficult to interpret. They likely stand as the strongest portrayal of direct and punitive judgment from God against human beings—if such judgment is present in Revelation. However, I think it is important to notice several points that actually together provide a sense that these actually are verses that reinforce the peaceable message of Revelation. We are not told whose blood is being pictured here—and the identity of the source of the blood is crucial to understanding the meaning of the reference to the harvest of the

ripe grapes. They have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Finally, the white rider who defeats the forces of the Dragon in Revelation 19, rides forth already having shed his blood. But what about the Lamb unleashing plagues of judgment? Like many interpreters, Crossan seems to accept that Revelation makes a dizzying and seemingly inexplicable leap from chapter 5 to chapter 6. Jesus, the Lamb, transforms from the loving, self-giving Lamb who shows he can open the scroll due to his faithful life of nonviolent resistance that culminates in the cross, to one who unleashes the terrible four horsemen, authors of unspeakable violence when he actually begins to open the scroll. However, that Jesus would be responsible for such violence simply does not make sense given the vision of chapter 5. Is there any other way to read chapter 6 and its portrayal of his role in the plagues that accompany the breaking of the seals of the scroll? The role of the Lamb in the plagues. I think John brings together two truths in chapter 6. First, he affirms that the one on the throne made, sustains, and heals creation. But the second truth cannot be avoided. And it is this: The world we live in remains broken. It remains powerfully alienated. It remains the home of terrible injustices, violence, and domination. The need for healing remains all too obvious—as does the influence of the powers of greed and inhumanity. That is the question Revelation 6 and the bulk of the rest of the book tries to respond to with these horrific visions of destruction. How could this be in light of what we learned from Revelation 4 and 5? How could this be if truly we see God in Jesus, the Jesus who shows us, above everything else, that God is love? So, we remember, front and center, what Revelation has already told us about God and the Lamb. Then we look more closely at the imagery of chapter 6 itself. This act does not reveal the content of the scroll. These plagues are not the message of the scroll—that message is the New Jerusalem, the healing and renewing of heaven and earth. I suggest we best see the opening of the scrolls as a metaphor. The Lamb in this way provides insight into how we understand the world we live in right now. These are not visions of a future catastrophe a punishing God is going to visit on rebellious creation. Rather they are visions of the world in which we now live. That the Lamb opens the scrolls does not mean the Lamb causes the violence and destruction. Note the passive voice: This passive voice makes the source of the plagues ambiguous. The source actually could be the Dragon. Chapter 12 will imply this. At the least, the passive voice creates distance. If it is God, in some mysterious providential way, still God does not intervene directly. God does not reach down to make the plagues happen. Many other wills shape these dynamics—especially those who oppose God. Wrath has to do with the processes of life. We tend to become like that which we trust in the most—if we trust in lifeless idols, our hearts are darkened. God lets us make our choices and then face the consequences. Revelation 6, then, does not picture an active, punishing, angry God and an angry, vicious Lamb. Rather, Revelation 6, through the breaking of the scrolls, helps readers understand better the world in which we live so we might better follow the Lamb wherever he goes—the way of persevering love. Clearly a cry for punishing revenge, right? Biblical justice is not about vengeance but about restoring relationships; biblical justice is about healing that which has been damaged. Maybe this is what the martyrs cry out: The white robes throughout Revelation are the garments worn by those who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. And then, second, after their call for justice, the martyrs are told to remain patient. This time of struggle we live in will continue for a while longer. But how does this all end? How is the call for justice answered? How do God and the Lamb bring justice? The story ends in the New Jerusalem. How does this happen? There is no battle in chapters 17 and 18. This great city commits a kind of suicide as its own death-dealing dynamics turn on the city itself and bring it down.

### Chapter 3 : Revelation and the Question of Violence | The Busybody

*The horror! The horror! Revelation sure is a blood and gore fest. So why all the violence? Well, there's the revenge angle—the punishment has to fit the crime, after all.*

This is even true of His own Son. Why would a God of love allow His Son to die one of the most excruciating deaths? How can a God who claims to be a loving Father condone violence and be unwilling to prevent suffering? And if you were to identify yourself as the hand of God and decide that you want to take it that far, you could use this text—and people have used this text—as license to do fairly violent things. Religion professors Judith Kovacs and Christopher Rowland acknowledge this critical view of Revelation on the part of many: I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. This is necessary only because human beings have willingly gone the way that Satan has led. These authors suggest that it can be difficult to reconcile the Jesus of the Gospels with the Jesus of Revelation. Yet Matthew, Mark, Luke and John all reveal a Jesus who makes declarative statements and takes definitive action against human wrong. In considering the question of violence, it helps to distinguish between the human and the godly. Is there a difference between human war and godly war? In Revelation the returning Messiah is presented as a bloodstained warrior on horseback. The key difference between Christ and His enemies is that He acts based on righteousness or right principles. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war [emphasis added]. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: Exactly who are the protagonists in this ultimate confrontation? This superleader comes to the fore in a time of universal crisis. The armies will have been gathered together by evil spirits: Violence is part of his nature and underlies his activities Ezekiel Among those fighting Christ will be 10 leaders and their armies: These are of one mind, and they will give their power and authority to the beast. Once the nations have massed at Armageddon, they will make their way south and be gathered by God near Jerusalem. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. The answer lies in how God can deal with human nature and its underlying attitude, which originates with an ungodly being. His violence is ungodly. He does not make war in righteousness. Satan is the one behind human opposition to God. The book of Revelation deals with the final end of this system that has plagued humanity. This is an economic order that enslaves and does massive violence to all human beings. Immediately after the Flood, He had already concluded that humanity could not change of itself: As far as humans go, war is more often than not the only answer, but for unrighteous reasons. Yet they could not produce peace from their wars and violence—just more of the same. The horror of war has taught some military men important truths. The utter destructiveness of war now blocks out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past two thousand years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh. Another who knew that spiritual principles are the only answer to human violence and aggression was American general Omar Bradley. We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. The world has achieved brilliance without wisdom, power without conscience. Ours is a world of nuclear giants and ethical infants. Historian Victor Davis Hanson puts it this way: War and History, Ancient and Modern, That last statement is a partial truth. War is not entirely a human work. Satan is also involved, and he is the mastermind behind unrighteous war. Jesus prophesied that total war would come because of human will. Death does not carry the finality that it does in the minds of most human beings. They know that

resurrection or change to spirit life is possible. They know that humanity can be brought back to life from the grave, from the depths of the oceans to the reaches of outer space. The Father knows that His desire is to see all humanity saved. They also know that the human evil that comes from sin cannot be atoned for without the death of a replacement, a sacrificial lamb. This is what Jesus willingly became and what the Father had to allow by turning away from the sin it covered. Peace is one of the things to be restored. We are going to see the closing down of the military-industrial complex. Aggression is not going to be viewed as the way ahead. The way of God will be centrally sought and taught, and the human proclivity for war will be prevented:

**Chapter 4 : THE VIOLENT JESUS OF REVELATION | Galilean Fellows**

*Violence Denied: Violence, Non-Violence and the Rationalization of Violence in South Asian Cultural History Read more From Melos to My Lai: A Study in Violence, Culture and Social Survival.*

There are sixty-six books in the Christian Bible, none of which has provoked more controversy, esoteric speculation, or misunderstanding than the very last one – Revelation. In the fourth century notable scholars like Chrysostom and Eusebius hesitated to include Revelation in the canon. My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. I stick to the books which present Christ to me clearly and purely. Not in the mainstream of the Christian faith, Revelation has, however, been the favorite book of the Bible of many marginal Christian groups. Is it time for other Christians to wake up and add their voices to the mix? If that would happen, they would find that there is a more recent trend in the interpretation of this mystifying book that may be even the most surprising yet: The Book of Revelation, I believe, shows us a picture of the beastly powers of violence finally collapsing into their own hell-hole of violence, together with a plea to the faithful to maintain their faith. In the midst of relating his vision, John the Seer pauses to speak directly to those faithful: Let anyone who has an ear listen: If you are to be taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. Yet the images of violence, including the possibility of divine vengeance, seem to overpower such a call to nonviolence. How does one sort through this barrage of images that are rather foreign to our modern worldview? For those who see the New Testament as a call to nonviolence, being able to interpret the Book of Revelation as part of that overall message depends primarily on a strategy of seeing how Revelation takes violent apocalyptic imagery from the Hebrew tradition and means to subvert it from within, primarily through the dominant actor in Revelation, the Lamb slain. Laboring to offer a thorough-going interpretation from the perspective of nonviolence is admittedly not an easy chore, but it is one that has been taken up in recent years. What I aim to do here is to give a brief introduction to such a reading and then follow it with an annotated bibliography. Disciples of the Lamb follow not in a hope that there would be a different kind of victory someday, a victory in which the Lamb became a Lion and devoured all its enemies. We pick up the drama at 5: And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. And the Lamb is never portrayed as someday coming back like a lion. No, the emphasis is not on the future but on the continuing present. It is something that has already happened and is continuing on into the future. The other crucial passage comes in chapter 12 describing the war in heaven: And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world – he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! In short, they lose their transcendence. Exposed by the greater power of loving self-giving, human beings need no longer look to the Satanic powers of violence as heavenly powers. Duped by the beastly deception, we will continue to be led astray for a time. But the battle has already been fought and won, signified by Michael and the angels throwing Satan out of heaven. And was this victory won by superior divine firepower? No, the nature of the victory is made crystal clear: Is this way of discipleship an easy choice? It requires great faith, the kind of faith that says to the sacrificial system – represented by Mt. The hope for sacred, divine violence to vanquish evil-doers, represented by symbols such as the Lion of Judah, is a hope deeply engrained in our anthropology of creating gods to justify our own violent actions against enemies. The Satanic powers of violence have been our heavenly powers since the foundations of our human worlds. Gandhi is named as a model for many, many subsequent movements, perhaps the most significant of which

has been the Civil Rights movement in the United States led by Martin Luther King, Jr. When I wrote the first draft of this page May , I was wondering if one of the most popular phenomenons of our time would be on the side of this way of nonviolent love. But he also persists in teaching Harry that the most powerful force in the world is that of love, the kind of self-giving love which his mother showed in dying for him. Or is it a staged murder that is, in reality, an act of self-giving love? Book 7 has arrived and we now know that Rowling stayed true to the end with a Christian theme of nonviolent love. Even in the showdown with Voldemort, Harry offers him a last chance to repent and then attempts to disarm him rather than kill him.

*Walter Brueggemann is William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary. He is the world's leading interpreter of the Old Testament and is the author of numerous books, including Westminster John Knox Press best sellers such as Genesis and First and Second Samuel in the Interpretation series, An Introduction to the Old Testament: The Canon and Christ.*

By that I mean the conscious attempt to relate the teaching of Revelation back to the cross in a meaningful way, working with the assumption that the cross ultimately governs everything else in scripture. I will try to show the relevance of the cross to the battle stories of Revelation. In this chapter, the victory celebration precedes the battle. Before the battle begins in verse 11, the conquering hero is already covered with blood v13, but not the blood of his enemies. His garment is soaked in the blood of his own demise. The sword is his powerful word also in v13, and this word of truth destroys the enemy on contact. It is a word of testimony from their mouth. When we go back further to chapter 7 v14 the conquering army wears the same uniform as the commander-in-chief, a robe dipped in the blood of the lamb. If we make the cross the hub of our interpretive method, then to interpret these texts nonviolently is the way to do justice, both to the cross and to the context of each respective chapter. The cross defines our understanding of the whole. The one who conquers is the one who died rather than those who killed. Earlier in the same book in 1: Here are the main examples: This sounds like it could be the smoke, fire, and sulphur of war, but verse 20 says clearly these also are plagues, not human warfare perhaps volcanoes exploding worldwide. These judgments appear to be overwhelmingly environmental. They reflect the plagues of Egypt. Also fire coming out of the mouth may be another metaphor for the powerful Word that comes from the witnesses elsewhere. There may be violence, but no follower of Jesus is asked to participate in the violence. I find these objections uninformed and perhaps a little arrogant. If anyone has the right to be violent, it would be the Creator by virtue of being the Creator. Of course in this case, his goodness can be questioned, but there has to be an assumed moral order in the first place to even discuss the question. Here the cross again is central. If there ever is justification for violence, one needs a flawlessly good person to be in charge of it. The Lamb who absorbed the harshest violence within himself and did it for our benefit—yes, this Lamb has earned the right to be the Lion and do violence if and when it is appropriate, and he alone can be trusted with this authority. Of course, we still need to define the nature of that violence and how it is exercised. The end of chapter 19 is violent. Those who opposed the Rider on the white horse are killed by the sword v 21 of his mouth. This is a one-man show by Jesus himself. The revealed presence of God destroys everything opposed to God, because the light of truth is unbearable for those opposed to it. If God were to allow sinners to avoid the violence of their own choices, then God would have to diminish himself to being something less than God and less than truth. Here again the cross is central, because in the incarnation God did diminish himself, but not at the expense of truth. Those who do not allow Jesus to stand between them and the violence will have to bear the consequences themselves. Apart from faith in him there is no escape from this violence. Violence is a violation, and the Creator does not violate what he created. But his holy presence destroys whatever has become vile. It turns the violence back on those from whom it originated. At the end of the millennium in chapter 20 death and hell are thrown into the lake of fire v I propose that hell and the lake of fire are two different entities. The one destroys the other. When one considers how often the presence of God is described as fire in the Bible, the most reasonable explanation for this verse is that the lake of fire is nothing other than the full glory of the presence of God. The presence of God is light and life for those who receive forgiveness, and heat for those whose burning shame and accusing conscience prevent them from seeing God as Jesus has revealed God to be by his death on the cross and his resurrection. When Satan is kept locked up during the millennium in Revelation 20 there is no war. As soon as Satan is released back into the world, he deceives the nations and war resumes. This suggests that belief in the necessity of war is precisely the issue in which Satan has deceived the nations, and lines up well with my exegesis of Deuteronomy. I propose this to be the best explanation for the violence in Revelation. Three witnesses, Moses, Jesus, and John in the Revelation agree on this issue when we make

the cross the hub of our interpretative method. Write me back or leave a comment if you wish to continue the conversation. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, Re 5: There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, Re 7: A third of the earth was burned up, a third of the trees were burned up, and all the green grass was burned up. A third of the sea turned into blood, Re When I saw her, I was greatly astonished. He has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth by her adulteries. He has avenged on her the blood of his servants. Leave a Reply Your email address will not be published.

**Chapter 6 : Revelation and Violence | Walter Brueggemann**

*I having been doing a lot of research on the book of Revelation as part of a book I'm writing on the topic of non-violence in the New Testament (tentatively titled, A Questionable Peace: Responding to Alleged Violence in the New Testament).*

It is hard to make sense of all of the violence in this book, especially when it is attributed to God. In chapter six we encounter the wrath of the lamb that causes people to hide out in caves and beg to be spared. Throughout the book demonic locusts torment people, idolaters are burned with sulphurous fire, and angels swinging sharp sickles cause blood to flow. How does this imagery connect with the picture of Jesus we read about in the gospels? Did our loving savior suddenly turn into a capricious tyrant prone to emotional outbursts? A surface reading of Revelation can easily lead us to this picture of God. Mark Driscoll recently wrote a blog post suggesting that the book of Revelation teaches us that Jesus will eventually trade in the non-violent ethic we see in the gospel for a more aggressive response to evil. He writes, Those who want to portray Jesus as a pansy or a pacifist are prone to be very selective in the parts of the Bible they quote. The European, long-haired, dress-wearing, hippie Jesus is a bad myth from a bad artist who mistook Jesus for a community college humanities professor. But if we want to learn all about Jesus we have to read all that the Bible says about him. Driscoll then proceeds to quote some of the graphic parts of Revelation that I have referenced above to prove his point. He then concludes by saying. He has a long wick, but the anger of his wrath is burning. Once the wick is burned up, he is saddling up on a white horse and coming to slaughter his enemies and usher in his kingdom. Then there will be peace forever as the Prince of Peace takes his rightful throne. Jesus is no one to mess with. I do not disagree with everything Driscoll says. Sometimes we do not treat sin as seriously as we should. God is indeed angry at everything that has so horribly spoiled his wonderful world. His anger is righteous. Thankfully he is going to provide justice for those who are oppressed. It is also important for us to recognize that the imagery used in Revelation is just that "imagery"! It is not to be taken literally. On their heads they wore something like crowns of gold, and their faces resembled human faces. To properly interpret the violent imagery used in Revelation we need to understand the point it is trying to make. This imagery would have been very powerful to a group of Christians who were facing extreme persecution. The images in Revelation are meant to evoke hope for those who are oppressed. They do not, however, show us the literal method by which he is going to overtake evil. Peterson says that the images in Revelation are creative ways of saying that the way of the cross will be successful. Eugene Boring makes a similar point. He argues that we have to hold the images of violence in Revelation in tension with the image of the slain lamb. These images are contradictory in a way. This weak animal that has been sacrificed is simultaneously powerful at overcoming evil. Boring uses a metaphor from mathematics to help us understand how this works. The imagery of the lion is still used, but the Messiah is the slain Lamb. As in mathematics when one changes the valence of the sign outside the parentheses, the formulae within the parentheses are retained, but all their values are reversed. The same imagery is used, but its valence is changed Revelation: In other words, we need to read the violent imagery in relation to the broader perspective of Christ and his mission. The slain lamb is the interpretive key to understanding the violence in Revelation. The lamb negates any attempt at concluding that Jesus is an evil tyrant that is out for blood. The violent imagery simply communicates that the slain lamb will triumph. Perhaps this explanation might help us understand and apply the powerful imagery being used in Revelation. Revelation does not provide us with biblical support for extreme violence. It does not describe a change of heart on the part of Jesus. The purpose of Revelation is to give us hope in the face of evil. Thanks be to God, evil will not have the last word. The slain lamb will indeed disarm the powers of this world!

*The PÃre Marquette Lecture is the seventeenth in a series inaugurated to celebrate the Tercentenary of the missions and explorations of PÃre Marquette, S.J. ( ). The Marquette University Theology Department, founded in , launched these annual lectures by distinguished theologians.*

Hey Matt, Thanks for this post. My question not a trick one I should point out is how you reconcile the image of the non-violent Jesus of the Gospels with the recurrently violent image of Him portrayed in Revelation? With justice he judges and wages war. Are you arguing that He is specifically calling us to model His non-violent attitude demonstrated in the Gospels but ignore or at least disregard for the moment His violent responses in other parts of the Bible in a Deuteronomy This certainly gets back to your point about what constitutes violence. This may be a subject for another post, but would love to know your thoughts. In saying that the breadth of the question will mean I will only be able to deal with the issue of violence in the book of Revelation; the other concerns will need to wait for another time and post. What do we make of the apparently violent images in the book of Revelation? One very famous pastor has said this condensed, full quote here: In Revelation, Jesus is a pride fighter with a tattoo down His leg, a sword in His hand and the commitment to make someone bleed. That is a guy I can worship. I cannot worship the hippie, diaper, halo Christ because I cannot worship a guy I can beat up. I find this a rather puzzling statement, as we did indeed beat Jesus up; we even crucified him. This kind of statement seems to suppose that the Jesus on the cross is somehow different from the Jesus of Revelation. Apocalyptic literature was a genre that was slowly developed from the period of the Exile onwards mid-first millennium BCE. It tended to be authored by those who were part of a marginalised and persecuted group namely Jews in exile, or later under the Roman Empire and expressed in symbolic terms a positive vision of the future and an alternative to the dominant order in the present. Why not just say what you mean in a straightforward way? There are a number of reasons that could be listed, though the most relevant to our current discussion is given by Bauckham: This power needed to be subverted with an alternative vision of an alternative kingdom. One way to do this was through combating symbols and myths with alternative symbols and myths. What did such subversion look like? One way demonstrated by Revelation was to draw readers into familiar visions of violence, but then twist them at crucial points to satirise that violence. For example, Jesus is said in Revelation Hardly a nonviolent image the warring at least. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. No notion of violence here. In fact the sword wielded by Jesus is not even in his hand, it is in his mouth! Surely this is a hint as to its symbolic nature; the sword is his words, his truth. Jesus is seen confronting and judging the nations, not least the violent, war-waging empire of Rome, not with violence as they do, but with truth, his only sword. Indeed the blood on his robe is not that of his enemies, for a battle has not even begun; it is assumedly his own. Do you see why this might be subversive to the dominant Roman order of the time? The saints, like the Lamb in Revelation 5, conquer not through waging war, but through their own martyrdom. Indeed, the Lion himself is quickly morphed into a slain Lamb. To conclude, yes there is violent imagery in Revelation. But the whole point of that imagery is not to sanction violence, but to subvert it, to parody it. Jesus wages a war in which he has died and in which he calls his saints to die with him. He then subverts the weapons of war and defeats his enemies with a sword out of his mouth, which is not a sword at all, but is his truth. Hopefully this response proves to be at most a cursory exposition of the seemingly violent symbolism in Revelation and at least some material to induce reflection. I would love to get your thoughts as we work through these issues together. Cambridge University Press, ,

**Chapter 8 : Revelation and violence: a study in contextualization - PDF Free Download**

*The Book of Revelation and the Problem of Violence: A Response to John Dominic Crossan Why World War II was a moral disaster for the United States (Part two) Christian faith and religious pluralism.*

There are sixty-six books in the Christian Bible, none of which has provoked more controversy, esoteric speculation, or misunderstanding than the very last one -- Revelation. In the fourth century notable scholars like Chrysostom and Eusebius hesitated to include Revelation in the canon. The Protestant reformer Martin Luther described it as "neither apostolic nor prophetic. My spirit cannot accommodate itself to this book. I stick to the books which present Christ to me clearly and purely. Not in the mainstream of the Christian faith, Revelation has, however, been the favorite book of the Bible of many marginal Christian groups. More troubling is the extent to which Revelation is fascinating larger numbers of contemporary "evangelical" Christians, especially in the United States, who have made the "Premillennial Dispensationalism" of John Nelson Darby ; British preacher a central part of their faith -- as manifested, for example, in the popularity over 50 million books sold of a fictionalized version of dispensationalism, the Left Behind series of novels by Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Is it time for other Christians to wake up and add their voices to the mix? If that would happen, they would find that there is a more recent trend in the interpretation of this mystifying book that may be even the most surprising yet: The Book of Revelation, I believe, shows us a picture of the beastly powers of violence finally collapsing into their own hell-hole of violence, together with a plea to the faithful to maintain their faith. In the midst of relating his vision, John the Seer pauses to speak directly to those faithful: Let anyone who has an ear listen: If you are to be taken captive, into captivity you go; if you kill with the sword, with the sword you must be killed. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints. Yet the images of violence, including the possibility of divine vengeance, seem to overpower such a call to nonviolence. How does one sort through this barrage of images that are rather foreign to our modern worldview? For those who see the New Testament as a call to nonviolence, being able to interpret the Book of Revelation as part of that overall message depends primarily on a strategy of seeing how Revelation takes violent apocalyptic imagery from the Hebrew tradition and means to subvert it from within, primarily through the dominant actor in Revelation, the Lamb slain. Laboring to offer a thorough-going interpretation from the perspective of nonviolence is admittedly not an easy chore, but it is one that has been taken up in recent years. What I aim to do here is to give a brief introduction to such a reading and then follow it with an annotated bibliography. Disciples of the Lamb follow not in a hope that there would be a different kind of victory someday, a victory in which the Lamb became a Lion and devoured all its enemies. We pick up the drama at 5: And I began to weep bitterly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals. He went and took the scroll from the right hand of the one who was seated on the throne. And the Lamb is never portrayed as someday coming back like a lion. No, the emphasis is not on the future but on the continuing present. The Greek for "a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered" uses participles in the perfect tense: It is something that has already happened and is continuing on into the future. The other crucial passage comes in chapter 12 describing the war in heaven: And war broke out in heaven; Michael and his angels fought against the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but they were defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world-- he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Then I heard a loud voice in heaven, proclaiming, "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Messiah, for the accuser of our comrades has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God. But they have conquered him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, for they did not cling to life even in the face of death. Rejoice then, you heavens and those who dwell in them! But woe to the earth and the sea, for the devil has come down to you with great wrath, because he knows that his time is short! In short, they lose their transcendence. Exposed by the greater power of loving self-giving,

human beings need no longer look to the Satanic powers of violence as heavenly powers. Duped by the beastly deception, we will continue to be led astray for a time. But the battle has already been fought and won, signified by Michael and the angels throwing Satan out of heaven. And was this victory won by superior divine firepower? No, the nature of the victory is made crystal clear: Is this way of discipleship an easy choice? It requires great faith, the kind of faith that says to the sacrificial system -- represented by Mt. The hope for sacred, divine violence to vanquish evil-doers, represented by symbols such as the Lion of Judah, is a hope deeply engrained in our anthropology of creating gods to justify our own violent actions against enemies. The Satanic powers of violence have been our heavenly powers since the foundations of our human worlds. But the revelation from the heavenly Father of Jesus Christ -- in giving over his Son into the human hands of sacrificial, sacred violence and then raising him up to new Life on Easter -- has begun to unveil that violence as less than the heavenly power of unconditional love and forgiveness, a revelation that continues to take place through the work of the Holy Spirit of Truth the Paraclete as partly manifested in the witnesses who do not "cling to life even in the face of death. Gandhi is named as a model for many, many subsequent movements, perhaps the most significant of which has been the Civil Rights movement in the United States led by Martin Luther King, Jr. In fact, Gandhi has become a new symbol who for many who need to distance themselves from the many so-called followers of Christ, "Christians," who have fallen back into the Satanic ways of violence and remain duped along with the "kings and nations" by the deceptions of the dragon -- making it all that much more important for a Christian voice to strongly put forward a more faithful reading of the Book of Revelation. As I write the first draft of this page May , I wonder if one of the most popular phenomenons of our time will also be on the side of this way of nonviolent love. We await the seventh and final book of J. But he also persists in teaching Harry that the most powerful force in the world is that of love, the kind of self-giving love which his mother showed in dying for him. Or is it a staged murder that is, in reality, an act of self-giving love? I argue for the latter in a paper entitled " Harry Potter and the Power of Love.

**Chapter 9 : Revelation and violence : a study in contextualization (eBook, ) [calendrierdelascience.com]**

*Closely related to the question of divine violence and the image of Jesus in Revelation is the question of ethics: does the book of Revelation call on followers of Jesus to participate in violence? Some argue that Revelation calls Christian soldiers to prepare to fight God's end-times war.*