

Back to my possible trade book on the book of Revelation and the way it has affected not just modern conservative Christianity but also secular society (literature, film) and political policy (environmental legislation; second Amendment discussions; policy on the Middle East). In my description-to-myself of what I'm imagining the book to be, after discussing these various effects of Revelation, I start talking about Revelation itself, and how it came to be read as a blueprint for our future (a reading that seems so *natural* today, but is not how the book was read until the 19th century).

Armageddon in the Book of Revelation

The thesis of my book is that all of these manifestations of apocalyptic thought in American discourse - religious, literary, cinematic, social, and political - ultimately stem from a particular way of reading the book of Revelation, a reading that, despite a few scattered precedents throughout history, came to the fore only at the end of the 19th century. Critical biblical scholars are unified in thinking it is based on entirely false premises.

The book of Revelation records a series of visions concerning what is "soon to take place," given to a Christian prophet named John in exile on the Island of Patmos. The prophet is taken up to heaven itself, to the throne room of God, and there witnesses what will occur in both heaven and earth as history comes to its climax. These visions are (intentionally) mystifying, baffling, and highly symbolic, portraying divinely sanctioned catastrophes on earth — wars, famines, earthquakes, and the collapse of the entire universe — which, if taken literally, would destroy the entire world and everything on it, already a third of the way through the book (chapter 6)!

In the midst of the mind-boggling calamities, the ultimate enemy of God, called ...

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