

dahinter „a way of describing who Jesus is“. Dieser ist (unter Verweis auf Joh 6:33,38,42,51,58,62) „both an ‘ascending’ and a ‘descending’ Son of man (...), for he knows ‘heavenly things,’ and makes them known on earth“ (196-197).

Im Hinblick auf 6:52-59 bemerkt Michaels gegen eine Vielzahl von Exegeten, dass der unmittelbare literarische Kontext keine eucharistische Interpretation dieser Verse erlaube. Die Ausdrücke „Fleisch essen“ und „Blut trinken“ bezieht er in der Folge zwar zu Recht in erster Linie auf den Tod Jesu, fügt dann aber unter Bezugnahme auf das Wort vom Weizenkorn in 12:24-25 hinzu, „that it may be that to eat Jesus’ flesh and to drink his blood implies not only benefiting from his death but to some degree sharing or participating in that death“ (396-397). Damit würde dieser Teil der Johannesreden auch inhaltlich näher an die synoptische Lehre Jesu heranrücken, wie die von Michaels genannten Parallelen in Mt 10:38-39; 16:24-25; Mk 8:34-35; Lk 9:23-24; 14:27; 17:33 zeigen.

Schließlich bleibt Michaels auch im Blick auf die christologisch weitreichende Aussage in Joh 14:28, wonach der Vater „größer“ sei als Jesus, bei seinem konsequenten Interpretationsansatz, der konkrete Stellen primär im Licht anderer Passagen des Johannesevangeliums interpretiert. In dieser Hinsicht hält er Jesu Erklärung der eigenen (sicher nicht ontologisch zu fassenden) Nachrangigkeit für wenig überraschend, da der johanneische Kontext wiederum deutlich mache, dass die „Priorität des Vaters“ unbestreitbar sei.

Der Kommentar von Michaels wird in Zukunft seinen Platz in der Riege ausgezeichneter Auslegungen des vierten Evangeliums einnehmen. Wer eine umfassende Bibliografie sowie eine ausführliche Behandlung der historischen Fragen zum Johannesevangelium sucht, wird bei Keener eher fündig (*The Gospel of John: A Commentary*, 2 Bde., Peabody: Hendrickson, 2005). Dagegen bietet Michaels eine sorgfältige und detaillierte Exegese, die den vorliegenden Text in seiner Gesamtheit ernst nimmt und in vorbildlicher Weise zur Erhellung der Textaussage beiträgt. Ob zu Predigt- oder Forschungszwecken – alle am Inhalt des Johannesevangeliums Interessierte werden mit Gewinn zu diesem gut lesbaren Werk greifen.

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*A Jelenések könyvének magyarázata, 2 vols.
(A major commentary on Revelation in
Hungarian)*

Klára Lenkeyné Semsey

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SUMMARY

The Revelation commentary of Klára Lenkeyné Semsey is the most profound Hungarian work on Revelation published so far. The author reads the last book of the New Testament through the lens of Christ’s conquest and sets the conflict motif at the heart of its argument. While this idea is not new, the author develops it in a creative way that merits our attention. Readers who share the author’s perspective of faith will find this resource not only a useful source of text critical and exegetical insights, but also a significant tool of spiritual formation and an aid for preaching. The short ‘meditations’ following each major section are a valuable contribution not characteristic of Revelation commentaries.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Der Kommentar zur Offenbarung von Klára Lenkeyné Semsey ist das umfassendste ungarische Werk zur Offenbarung, das bisher publiziert wurde. Die Autorin liest das letzte Buch des Neuen Testaments aus der Sicht des Sieges Christi und stellt das Konflikt-Motiv ins Zentrum ihrer Argumentation. Wenn diese Idee auch nicht neu ist, so verdient die kreative Herangehensweise der Autorin dennoch unsere Aufmerksamkeit. Die Leser, die ihre Glaubensvorstellung teilen, werden in diesem Kommentar nicht nur eine nützliche Quelle an textkritischen und exegetischen Erkenntnissen finden, sondern auch ein bedeutendes Werkzeug zur geistlichen Bildung und eine Hilfe zur Predigtvorbereitung. Die kurzen „Meditationen“ am Ende eines jeden größeren Abschnittes sind ein für Kommentare zur Offenbarung unüblicher, aber wertvoller Beitrag.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce commentaire sur l’Apocalypse est l’ouvrage le plus élaboré qui ait été publié à ce jour en hongrois sur l’Apocalypse. L’auteur considère que le dernier livre du Nouveau Testament a pour but de proclamer la victoire de Christ et elle voit dans le thème du conflit le cœur de sa problématique. Cette ligne d’interprétation n’est pas nouvelle, mais l’auteur la présente d’une manière créative qui mérite de retenir l’attention. Les lecteurs qui partagent la foi de l’auteur trouveront en cet ouvrage bien des remarques utiles et perspicaces de critique textuelle et d’exégèse, ainsi qu’un apport pour la vie spirituelle, et une aide pour la prédication. Les courtes méditations qui suivent l’étude de chaque section principale du livre sont bienvenues, d’autant plus qu’il n’est pas habituel d’en trouver dans les commentaires sur l’Apocalypse.

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The last decades have seen an explosion of knowledge in Revelation studies. This period was marked by raising new questions, the use of new approaches and the emergence of a consensus on different critical issues. Never were more commentaries written on the last book of the New Testament than in this period. Whereas the extensive commentaries of Aune (1997–98), Beale (1999), Osborne (2002), Prigent (2001), Maier (2009–11) and some others became standard works in the field, the wider scholarly community is often unaware of major works written in minority languages. Such is the case with the Hungarian scholarly literature on Revelation, among which the recent two-volume commentary of Lenkeyné Semsey Klára, the distinguished New Testament professor emerita of Debrecen Reformed Theological University, stands out as the most extensive and most thorough Hungarian work on Revelation written so far.

The conviction of Lenkeyné Semsey (II, 290–291) is that Revelation is the detailed exposition of Jesus' logion in the farewell discourse: 'I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!' (Jn 16:33). She argues that the last book of the New Testament is focused on the proclamation of Christ's conquest to the church militant with the purpose of stirring perseverance and faithfulness until death. This viewpoint sets the conflict motif at the heart of the book's argument. The significance of this motif for the theology of Revelation has previously been argued, though rarely, in the scholarly literature; for a recent example, see S.K. Tonstad, *Saving God's reputation: the theological function of Pistis Iesou in the cosmic narratives of Revelation* (LNTS 337; London: T & T Clark, 2006). But Lenkeyné Semsey develops it in an unexpected way through her commentary. While the conflict motif is generally viewed as focused on the cosmic struggle between the divine and the demonic powers with a particular reference to the people of God, she shifts the emphasis. She argues that for the conflict motif, the struggle of the divine powers for the nations is more essential than the cosmic combat of the supernatural powers for sovereignty over the universe. Though she acknowledges the basic apocalyptic outlook according to which God's conquering programme includes 'dethroning the enemy' (I, 11), she puts the emphasis rather on God's initiative for the salvation of humankind. As reflected in the subtitle of the commentary, this divine initiative includes awakening, warning and struggle. This theological emphasis is in agreement with the pastoral agenda of Lenkeyné Semsey, who writes from the perspective of faith, but at the same time sacrifices no scholarly rigour on the altar of pastoral concern.

The second most important motif in Revelation for Lenkeyné Semsey is worship. In the introductory section of the commentary she launches the idea that the universal call to worship in 14:7 is the thematic centre of Revelation (I, 12). This idea has been recently argued

independently by Jon Paulien, *Seven keys: unlocking the secrets of Revelation* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press, 2009), 39–43, who claims to follow the lead of Schüssler Fiorenza on the centrality of chapter 14 in the book. Whereas Lenkeyné Semsey arrives independently at the same conclusion, she nowhere provides a substantial argument for it – only a brief reference to the research of Lohmeyer (II, 71 n. 87). Even in the detailed exegetical discussion of chapter 14 (II, 71–102) no argument is set out in favour of this crucial thesis, neither does she discuss its significance for the theology of the work as a whole. The agreement with Paulien is even more surprising in light of the fundamental difference between the views of these two scholars on the structure of Revelation: whereas Paulien is a proponent of a chiasmic structure with 11:19 – 15:4 at the centre, Lenkeyné Semsey argues for a linear structure comprising eight basic sections in which chapter 14 is viewed as part of the fifth major section (12:1 – 14:20).

One of the greatest strengths of this commentary is the profound textual critical discussion (often marginalized in the commentaries) after the author's own translation, but preceding the exegetical analysis of the individual sections. Also worthy of attention is the author's interest in the christological aspects of the book and its trinitarian theology. Whereas other commentaries often limit their christological discussion to the exegesis of chapter 5, Lenkeyné Semsey tries to develop the topic as much as she can in the discussion of other texts.

A valuable part of the work is the detailed discussion of Revelation's thorny history of canonisation (17–18). Unique to the commentary is that all exegetical discussions are followed by short 'meditations', reflections on the text with the aim of spiritual formation. These sections are of particular value for readers who are interested in preaching from Revelation, since they resemble homiletical notes. The beautifully rich, clear and sometimes even poetic Hungarian language of the author also merits commendation, although it is unfortunate that some sections of this commentary lack final proofreading.

Although this is the most profound Hungarian commentary on Revelation, Lenkeyné Semsey should pay more attention to recent scholarly literature. Authors quoted or referred to regularly include mostly scholars of previous generations writing in German such as Zahn, Lohmeyer, Kraft, Brütsch and Rissi. The commentary does not use the insights of recent major works such as those of Aune, Bauckham and Beale. If this work will see a new edition, more careful attention to the use of the Old Testament and Graeco-Roman sources in Revelation and the analysis of the historical-religious context of first-century Asia Minor are also desirable. Nevertheless, the commentary of Lenkeyné Semsey is a capital resource for the Hungarian scholarly community – a major work that needs to be found on the shelf of any Revelation scholar who reads Hungarian.

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