

Being in the Name of God

The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology, by Stanley J. Grenz.
Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005.

Early in his first Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul addressed two problems that have had influence upon the church from the time of her earliest existence: Judaic superstition and Hellenic preoccupation with philosophical wisdom (1:20-24). If believers have often been bewitched by the former problem, they have just as often fallen under the sway of the latter. Stanley J. Grenz examines this latter phenomenon, that is, the extent to which philosophy and Christian theology can and should be called upon to inform one another, in his book *The Named God and the Question of Being: A Trinitarian Theo-Ontology* (hereafter *Named*).

Named is the second volume in Grenz's *The Matrix of Christian Theology*, a series of books that engages the challenges of postmodernity from the standpoint of the canonical Scriptures, the theological heritage of the church, and a thoroughgoing trinitarianism. Grenz studied with Wolfhart Pannenberg and served as Pioneer McDonald Professor of Theology at Carey Theological College, Vancouver, and Professor of Theological Studies at Mars Hill Graduate School, Seattle, before recently passing away in March 2005. In this volume Grenz explores the Christian church's historical approach to the discipline of metaphysics called ontology (the study of being in itself). As Grenz reads history,

Christian thinkers tended to understand the God of the Bible in accordance with a conceptual framework derived from metaphysics. In short, they moved from philosophy (Being) to theology (God). The result of their efforts was the construction of what came to be called "onto-theology," a perspective in which God is understood on the basis of a prior knowledge of Being; God is made to fit within the concerns that motivated the discussions in classical ontology. (249)

According to *Named*, the grand synthesis of theology and ontology forged, critiqued, and amended by the likes of Augustine, Aquinas, Ockham, Schopenhauer, and Heidegger collapsed by the middle part of the twentieth century. Yet, *Named* notes, the demise of onto-theology did not mark the end of the philosophical-theological

relationship; rather, it allowed the relationship to be radically reoriented by drawing from orthodox Trinitarian theology in order to build a richer, fuller, and truer ontology—indeed, a *theo*-ontology. In its examination of this reorientation, *Named* takes the divine self-designation I AM as its starting point and gradually unfolds the narrative of the I AM throughout the Scriptures. *Named*'s *theo*-ontology goes beyond seeing a reference to the classical conception of Being in the tetragrammaton and describes in the divine name the identity of a God who both is Being in Himself as the Father, the Son, and the Spirit and who, in a profound extension of intra-trinitarian love, gifts humanity with His triune name and being. This rethinking of the interplay between theology and ontology allows God as being to break the bands of the classical onto-theological synthesis and enfold redeemed humanity into Himself, thus allowing humanity to know and enjoy in Him authentic ontological reality.

Named is a trove of insights into the ramifications upon ontology of the fact that the I AM is self-named. Yet the real strength of the book lies in its careful unfolding of the implications of God's name, I AM for human existence. *Named* devotes two-thirds of the book to the unfolding revelation of the name I AM in the Scriptures and its implications for us today. It presents the biblical story line, beginning in Exodus 3:14, which contains the first explicit enunciation by God in the Scriptures of His name. *Named* then traces the unfolding revelation of this name through such passages as Hosea 1:2-9 (a negative reiteration of Exodus 3:14) and Isaiah 40—55 (where I AM is revealed as "He" and "the First" and "the Last") before finding the incarnate I AM in Christ's *ego eimi* ("I am") sayings. Drawing on Christ's repeated "I am" statements, *Named* affirms that "just as the Father is rightly declared to be Yahweh, so also Jesus can rightly be identified, together with the Father, as the Yahweh of the Old Testament story" (205). Furthermore, *Named* recognizes in Revelation 1:4-8 what it calls "the Trinitarian I AM" (228). In this triune I AM, the Father, the Son, and "the seven(fold) Spirit(s)" all participate equally "in the eternity of the one who is and who was and who is to come" (230, 236).

Named's insight into the divine name vis-à-vis *God* leads to the importance of divine self-naming in the Bible and its implications for our existence as believers. *Named* asserts that I AM, as it is shared among the three of the Godhead, is in fact a triune name, and that implicit in the

name is the suggestion that “the saga of the divine name...is the saga of the relationships among the three persons of the Trinity” (270). Yet the narrative of the divine name concerns not merely the relationship among the three of the Trinity but the relationship between the three of the Trinity and the one whom God created in His own trinitarian image. *Named* demonstrates this in a precisely arranged and exegeted sequence of verses. First, it establishes that the name “which no one knows but [the Rider] Himself” in Revelation 19:12 is in fact “nothing less than the divine name itself, the great I AM connected as it is to the ineffable name, the tetragrammaton” (240). Yet this name is not reserved for the revealed, incarnate, and exalted Deity alone. On the contrary, “through him this great privilege is extended to believers as well” (241). Here, *Named* marshals Revelation 14:1 and speaks of “a hundred and forty-four thousand, having His name and the name of His Father written on their foreheads.” Linking the presence of the divine name on the overcomers’ foreheads to the probability that the name inscribed on the front of Aaron’s turban was the divine name, Yahweh (I AM), and the fact that these overcomers are “priests of God and of Christ” (20:6) and are thus likely to bear the same name on their foreheads, it references Revelation 3:12, where Christ declares to the church in Philadelphia,

He who overcomes, him I will make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall by no means go out anymore, and I will write upon him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which descends out of heaven from My God, and My new name.

Named concludes that the first name, “the name of My God,” must be I AM. The second name, the name of the New Jerusalem, according to Ezekiel 48:35, is “Yahweh Is There.” *Named* claims that the third name, which is referred to by the cryptic designation “My new name,” must be “Yahweh is our righteousness” (246)—the name revealed in Jeremiah 23:6. Thus, all the names granted to the overcomers in Revelation 3:12 and 14:1

connect the name bestowed on others to the divine name itself. Moreover, the names that are spoken in each case...anticipate a future instantiation of the divine being with or being present that were readily associated in the Old Testament with the I AM. (246)

Named presents the significance of our bearing the divine name in the final chapter, “From God’s Triune Being to Human Being: Our Inclusion into the Divine Name.” While the readers are reminded that I AM is a shared name “initially and primarily among the three Trinitarian members,” it also points out that the “intent of the triune God is to incorporate humankind, indeed all

creation, into the dynamic of that eternal/historical self-naming. God intends to share the divine name with humans!” (343). Thus, we find ourselves in a “story of the incorporation of human being in the dynamic of the triune name” (343). This, *Named* reminds us, was God’s intention from the beginning (Gen. 1:26-27). By forsaking and repenting of our inappropriate ways of seeking God, we receive “the Gift who is the Spirit” (359-360), the giving and receiving of whom is “for the sake of our living in the one who is the way, the truth, and the life” (360). Thus, it is in God, that is, in Christ, that we are brought into the narrative of the divine name and are led into “the divinely purposed destiny of humankind” (362). Joining Christ, who is the “head of the new humanity” which is “destined to be formed according to [His] image,” we will shine forth “the divine character that has been revealed in Jesus,” and in so doing will replicate His glorious image as “copies of God’s Son” (362-363).

Named links our being “in Christ” with participation in God and draws on a number of verses from both the Gospels and the Epistles to make the connection. These verses, *Named* points out, form the biblical basis for a connection between the concept of our being “in Christ” and the patristic idea of *theosis* (or deification), and, by extension, what contemporary Orthodox theologian Panayiotis Nellas calls “Christification” (365). The Pauline verses in particular

imply that by incorporating the new humanity into Christ, the Spirit gathers them into the dynamic of the divine life as those who are placed by the Spirit “in the Son.” Through the Spirit, those who are “in Christ” come to share the eternal relationship that the Son enjoys with the Father. (366)

Named sums up the development of what it means for us to share in the divine name and thereby become the glorious recipients of the gift of the trinitarian Being as follows:

God’s intention for all humans, therefore, can be capitalized by asserting that we are created so that we might be the *imago Dei*. The fulfillment of this intent—our imaging of God—ultimately occurs by means of our participation in the divine life as those whom the Spirit places in Christ, who is the image of God. (366-367)

Although the apex of the drama came with the incarnation of the divine I AM name, the biblical texts present the story’s climax as being yet future. The future, dramatic climax entails the eschatological sharing of the divine name with those who are marked by that name and who come to be so marked through the work of the Spirit. The eschatological act that stands at the end of the biblical story, therefore, entails the Spirit’s act of drawing the

new humanity to participate in the dynamic of the self-naming of the self-naming triune God. (370)

In relating what it calls the “saga” of the self-naming Triune God (370), *Named* cracks open a window into the economy of the mystery, which throughout the ages has been hidden in God (Eph. 3:9). However, it also contains a number of ambiguities and inaccuracies that detract from its otherwise helpful presentation of the divine-human narrative of the Triune name.

For example, *Named* never explains the extent to which we share in the triune being of God. Given the fact that *Named* cleaves so closely to orthodoxy, we are left to presume that man participates only in the communicable attributes of God and has no part in the Godhead itself. The readers are similarly left wondering how it is possible to participate in the Triune God practically. Since the book helpfully points out that the door into the trinitarian narrative is repentance, it would have been appropriate if it had marked out the path to those who wish to continue their journey into God.

Another important question that is left open is the point or time when we will share the divine name. At times *Named* seems to imply that this incorporation occurs only after the “eschatological resurrection” has taken place (363):

God’s intention is that we might experience eschatological transformation after the pattern of the resurrected Christ, who is the Second Adam. Or, viewing our destiny from another perspective, God desires that we find our being as we are caught up in the narrative of the Son. In this manner, the *imago Dei* emerges as the christologically focused and eschatologically oriented, universal human vocation. (364)

Yet *Named* seems to qualify this view when it speaks of our being “marked through the work of the Spirit” and of our experience of deification (370, 365). While these references to the Spirit’s work and deification do not clearly refer to a present activity of the Spirit in the being of the believer, *Named*’s language concerning our being in God “in the present” seems to confirm this:

The eschatological vision of the fulfillment of our destiny as those who are “in Christ” by the Spirit, in turn, provides the context for our being “in God” in the present. Even now all humans are given “life and breath and everything” with a view toward participation in the one human vocation that we all share. (367)

Ultimately, however, *Named* fails to clarify, much less enlarge upon, the believers’ present participation in this divine-human drama. Given the tight focus that the New

Testament draws on the here-and-now of the Christian life, *Named* could have demonstrated a corresponding interest.

By far, *Named*’s most glaring omission is any meaningful consideration of the place of the church in the drama of the divine name. Indeed, *Named* goes to great lengths to avoid using the word *church* or any other biblical signifier of it. One striking example of *Named*’s circuitous way of speaking of the church is found on page 371:

The divinely given promise that our name will be gathered into the story of the self-naming God does not find its fulfillment in us as solitary creatures. On the contrary, it includes our being named within a named community.

A careful reading reveals no appearance of the word *church* anywhere in the book’s 386 pages. Since *church* is a divine term, it is puzzling that *Named* resorts to other, non-biblical appellations, such as “a named community” and “the new humanity” (363). Granted, *Named*’s silence may well be by design. The book may be underscoring the fact that the church finds its full identity only in the name of the One in whom it exists and consequently has no name of its own. By avoiding the term *church*, *Named* may also be seeking to disassociate the church as it truly is from the physical and religious baggage that the word *church* has picked up throughout the course of the Christian era. Regardless, for whatever reason *Named* ignores the biblical name for its nameless “named community.”

Intentional though the avoidance of the term *church* may be, it de-emphasizes one of the most crucial matters in the Scriptures. Appearing in type and prophecy as early as Genesis 2:18, forming the express subject of Christ’s greatest prophecy (Matt. 16:18), developing into both the named recipient or the primary topic of most of the Epistles, and consummating in Revelation as a named city, the New Jerusalem, the church is arguably the most named entity in the Scriptures after Christ Himself. A cursory search of the New Testament reveals that the church is identified by means of a concrete descriptor, e.g., *church*, *Body of Christ*, *bride of Christ*, no fewer than one hundred forty times. The sheer quantity of references alone supports the point that the church is an entity which consistently bears a definite appellation with corresponding significances.

The church’s status as the companion to Christ is also a strong argument in favor of its importance in God’s purpose as a named entity. Revelations of the named church in the Scriptures are very frequently located in close proximity to revelations of the named Christ. The most conspicuous occurrence of such a dual revelation occurs in Matthew 16, where following the Father’s revelation of

Jesus' status as God's Messiah, Christ reveals the church: "Simon Peter answered and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said to him, ...you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church" (vv. 16-18). When Peter said, "Christ," Christ responded, "church." A similar passage is found at the beginning of Revelation, where the vision of Christ as the High Priest is followed immediately by an unveiling of "the things which are," that is, the seven churches in Asia (1:13-16, 19; 2:1—3:22). Equally compelling are the coupled revelations of the Spirit as the consummation of the Triune God and the New Jerusalem as the ultimate consummation of the church in Revelation 21 and 22. In those chapters the revelation of Christ and the church are so tightly intertwined and mutually complementary that John makes no attempt to separate the two and simply describes "the Spirit and the bride" as speaking as one (22:17). Such a description underscores Paul's earlier reference to the great mystery, which is "Christ and the church" (Eph. 5:32). Ultimately, *Named's* unwillingness to use any of the Bible's many clear designations for the church detracts from the larger (and valid) point it is apparently trying to convey concerning the identity of the church within the named Triune God by robbing it of the name that God Himself grants it.

Finally, *Named's* method is clearly the work of a scholar of the first order who is fluent in both theology and philosophy. However, at times the author as scholar overwhelms the author as believer and ultimately to deleterious effect. *Named* was written at least in part for an audience of secularly oriented metaphysicians. In an attempt to craft a compelling argument for this audience, it often makes an appearance of appealing to the intellectually fashionable method of higher criticism. Yet, it should be clear that acceptance of *Named's* argument concerning the value of a biblically based, orthodox Trinitarian theology presupposes that the reader will take both its philosophical associations and scriptural proofs at face value; and, to be sure, a secular metaphysician may be more accepting of arguments rooted in the former than of those arguments that embrace the latter presuppositions. But this is hardly reason to so privilege the arguments that are rooted in higher criticism. This is especially true if the method is used only to score points with one's secular audience by using it as a cover for core biblical assumptions that cannot be validated by these methods. Appealing to the divine authority of the Scriptures needs no apology, and trying to maintain an authoritative and scholarly appearance by referencing to anything less ultimately undermines the integrity of the argument. Ironically, one could charge *Named* with doing what it condemns most in onto-theology—employing (or at least making a show of employing) the methods and assumptions of philosophy to make a case for divine revelation. So while many of *Named's* central points deserve to be considered by

both the secular and Christian communities, all would be better served if the onto-theological pretensions had been scaled back.

This criticism notwithstanding, *Named* performs a service to the church by exposing the non-biblical basis of onto-theology and reorienting the ontological quest so that it begins and ends within a Trinitarian theology that is based on God's self-revelation to man. Yet *Named's* value extends beyond its theo-ontological proposal. At its heart, *Named's* concern is not with philosophy at all. There is no connection between philosophy as such and the ultimate incorporation of repentant and transformed humanity into the name and being of the I AM. Like Paul, when he addressed the wisdom-seeking Greeks at Corinth, *Named* realizes that while God's purpose, no doubt, has implications for philosophy, philosophy is neither the beginning nor the end nor even a means to the end where God's purpose is concerned. What truly matters is the story of the named Triune God and His history with humanity. And it is precisely this story that *Named* most forcefully narrates to its audience.

by Nathan Betz

Discursing on the New Jerusalem

The Descent of the New Jerusalem: A Discourse Analysis of Rev 21:1-22:5, by Andreas Hoeck. Bern: Peter Lang, 2003.

Andreas Hoeck's book, (hereafter *Descent*), a revision of his doctoral thesis, is probably, as he proposes, "the first monograph on the last and longest of Revelation's visions, i.e., 21:1—22:5, interpreted with the aid of discourse-linguistic tools" (3). It attempts to deal with perceived difficulties in this passage, such as the fragmentary and repetitive presentation of images, its textual integrity (as opposed to considering it as coming from different sources), and John's seemingly irregular use of various Greek verb tenses through the application of discourse analysis, which looks at the text as a larger unit, beyond sentence boundaries. In this highly technical publication Hoeck combines discourse analysis with covenant theology to extract meaning from the symbolic presentation of the New Jerusalem. Regrettably, perhaps because of the shortages of covenant theology more than discourse analysis, he misses some of the rich significance of its symbolism, particularly in the believers' experience, and is still largely accommodative of physical interpretations of the New Jerusalem.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part introduces discourse analysis and the particular discourse features that Hoeck will apply to the text: the dialogical sequence (God's voice as seen through direct speech, descriptive, explanatory, and predictive discourse), tense sequence, prosopological sequence (who says what to whom and when), symbology axis (dealing with the perplexing array of images that converge in this section), and intertextual awareness (particularly with the context of 21:1—22:5 in the book of Revelation and the unity of this particular pericope). He then divides the text into smaller (mostly clause) units for the purpose of analysis in a way that is sensible and logical. The second part looks at how six commentaries (four thematic and two text-linguistic) have approached the problems that this text poses.

The third part, comprising the bulk of the book, deals with the actual discourse analysis of the text. It is divided into four chapters. The first chapter deals with the communication situation, in which Hoeck identifies the seven communication actants (God, a voice from the throne, One seated on the throne, a bowl angel, the Spirit,¹ John, and the epistolary recipients—the seven churches). Hoeck also identifies six communication modes: vision, audition, displacement, seeing “in Spirit,” symbolic action, and epistolary writing. He then assesses the status of these communication actants both within the text examined and in the larger context of the book of Revelation and the Bible. Hoeck identifies the loud voice out of the throne (21:3), considered unidentifiable by most commentaries, as belonging to one of the living creatures. He bases his conclusion on the fact that the voice comes out of (ἐκ) the throne (cf. 4:6, where the four living creatures are seen in the midst of the throne) and that they utter other messages of prominence (v. 8; 15:7; 16:1), and he considers that the voice should be neither divine nor human (since it announces the tabernacle of God with men in the third person). He also identifies one of the seven bowl angels as being particularly close to Christ and whose mission is to resolve “the good/evil dualism underlying the entire book” (103).

In the second chapter Hoeck divides the discourse into seven “macro-sentences” (21:1-2, 3-4, 5-8, 9-14, 15-21, 22-27, and 22:1-5), primarily according to the “alternation of active subjects, followed by the determination of the principal macro-syntactic predicate” (106). He identifies various clause types within the macro-sentences along with other text-linguistic data, such as the use of tenses to distinguish the discourse framework and descriptive and/or interpretive narration.

In the third chapter, containing the bulk of the dissertation and exegetical analysis, Hoeck divides the text into two units: the presentation of the holy city (21:1-8) and

the portrayal of the holy city (v. 9—22:5). He analyzes the text according to the macro-sentences outlined in the previous section.

A few comments on some of Hoeck's exegetical observations are to be made. He acknowledges the symbolic nature of the images of Revelation, pointing out difficulties in understanding them literally. As part of his method of interpretation Hoeck does draw from other images alluded to elsewhere in the book of Revelation and the Bible. However, he does not always choose the most appropriate images, especially those that accord with God's intention to be united (in life), mingled (in nature), and incorporated (in persons) with humankind.

Descent considers the city mostly as a heavenly entity, pointing out its heavenly source in its descent and ultimate provenance from God (21:1-2), and God's presence in it (vv. 11, 22-23; 22:3, 5). In its descent it “never lands” and “never really comes in contact with earthly realities” (132).² While *Descent* also points out that the city is the bride, the wife of the Lamb (19:7; 21:9), it does not develop this further, for example, by relating the bride to the church as God's people and considering the city as not simply a divine entity but also a human entity.³ The closest it comes to this can be found in statements like, “The City is an image signifying the nuptial communion between God and Lamb on the one hand, and humanity on the other” (134).

Descent also considers the image of the city/bride as the tent or tabernacle of God as a heavenly entity (v. 3), being of God. Although it links the tent of verse 3 to the Old Testament tabernacle and considers it as the better and true tabernacle (Heb. 8:2; 9:8, 11), it otherwise overlooks the connection of the tabernacle to humanity (apart from citing John 1:14 among his references). Although *Descent* states that the images of city and tent reflect “two poles of human civilization...and at the beginning is the tent, and at the end is urbanization” that “somehow embrace human history” (142), it considers them mostly from the point of a dwelling place for man rather than God's dwelling place. It fails to mention anything regarding the church as the fulfillment of the tabernacle and the temple as God's dwelling place and building in the New Testament (e.g., 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:21-22; cf. Rev. 3:12).

When it comes to humanity in relation to the New Jerusalem, *Descent* follows most commentators to interpret the men and peoples in 21:3 and the nations of 21:24 and 22:2 as referring to the believers who have come from among the Gentiles and are to inhabit the New Jerusalem.⁴ This gives an impression of a rather objective and distant relationship between God and man. Identifying a parallel configuration between 21:3-4 and

21:5-8, it confuses the men and peoples of verse 3 with God's sons in verse 7, although it does acknowledge that there are some discrepancies between the two sets of verses, for example, stating that verse 7 "expresses a much deeper union of divinity and humanity" (190).

However, it is better to treat the men/peoples and sons as referring to two distinct groups of people to be consistent with the context of Revelation and indeed the whole Bible. The peoples of verse 3 are not the believers or the nation of Israel but the nations inhabiting the new earth. While similar language is used in other verses to refer to Israel and the church, *people* is always singular (Exo. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Jer. 7:23; 11:4; 24:7; 30:22; 31:1, 33; 32:38; Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 34:30; 36:28; 37:23, 27; Zech. 8:8; 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 8:10). On the other hand, *peoples* refers to the nations in contrast to God's people (Exo. 19:5; Deut. 14:2; 1 Kings 9:7). Elsewhere in Revelation *peoples* is always a reference to the nations of the world rather than God's people (7:9; 10:11; 11:9; 17:15). Also, God is referred to as their God (i.e., their Creator) but not as their Father, as in Matthew 13:43, which would indicate that they have received the life of God and have become His sons.

The nations, which are referred to eighteen times in the book of Revelation, always refer to the Gentiles, not to God's people. The overcomers are given authority over the nations (2:26), the man-child shepherds the nations with an iron rod (12:5), and there are the nations on the earth during the millennial kingdom (20:3, 8). The nations in Revelation 21—22 who walk in the light of the New Jerusalem (21:24-26) and who are healed by the leaves of the tree of life (22:2) are better considered as the nations who inhabit the earth in the millennial kingdom and who do not participate in the final rebellion of Gog and Magog. The history of these nations is outlined in the Recovery Version in footnote 1 on Revelation 21:24:

At the end of [the church] age a great part of the inhabitants of the earth will be killed as a result of the sixth and seventh trumpets. The rest will be judged by Christ at the throne of His glory when He comes back to earth. The condemned ones, the "goats," will be cursed and will perish in the lake of fire, while the justified ones, the "sheep," will be blessed and will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:31-46). Unlike the New Testament believers, the "sheep" will not be saved and regenerated; they will only be restored to the original state of man as he was created by God. They will be the nations as citizens of the millennial kingdom, in which the overcoming believers will be the kings (20:4, 6) and the saved remnant of Israel will be the priests (Zech. 8:20-23). After the millennial kingdom, a part of these nations, deceived by the devil, will

rebel against the Lord and will be consumed by fire from heaven (20:7-9). The rest will be transferred to the new earth to be the nations, which will live around the New Jerusalem and walk by its light. They will be the peoples mentioned in vv. 3 and 4. They, as created but unregenerated men, will be maintained to live forever in their created state through the healing of the leaves of the tree of life (22:2). Even for them there will be no more death (v. 4). Under the shining of the New Jerusalem with the divine glory, neither will they be in darkness.

In addition, the kings of the earth (21:24) are better considered as the kings of the nations in the new earth. The redeemed and regenerated saints will be kings over these kings (5:10; 20:6; 22:5), and Christ will be the King of kings in the millennial kingdom and for eternity.

It is better to understand the tabernacle of God as the bride, the wife of the Lamb, being composed of the believers as God's sons, whereas the peoples are the nations, the inhabitants of the new earth. The New Jerusalem is actually the means for the invisible God to relate and be expressed to the nations on the new earth for eternity.

In places *Descent* does make some nice observations to suggest that the New Jerusalem indicates the union between God and man. For example, it points out that the measurements of the city of one hundred and forty-four thousand stadia (resulting in a two thousand two hundred kilometer cube) are an allusion to saved humanity, to be compared with the one hundred and forty-four thousand sealed of Israel (7:4) and the one hundred and forty-four thousand redeemed who stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion (14:1-3) (239). In another place, which regrettably is not developed, *Descent* mentions that the materials of the New Jerusalem are pure gold ("relating to the sphere of transcendence and divine timelessness") like glass, stating, "God's eternity (gold) is allied to the redeemed humanity (glass)" (244). It also states that the image of precious stone combined with the number twelve "seems to indicate once more God's union with redeemed humanity" (247). However, its consideration of the precious stones is not so much on how they were formed or how they got there (i.e., the transformation of the believers as living stones, cf. 1 Pet. 2:5) but on the "surpassing affluence" or "wealth and luxury" of the city (246).

Descent considers that the complementary imagery or symbolism in the text depicts "an ultimate articulation of the Covenant between God and man," signaling "that perfect divine-human union, the consummation of the covenant, appertaining to both time and eternity" (304-305). This may explain why its concept is based mainly on a somewhat objective view of God's relationship with

man, that of covenant theology. *Descent* seems to consider that the union of God and man is according to a covenant rather than a life union, which is indicated by other symbols, such as the river of water of life, the tree of life, and thirsting for the spring of the water of life (Rev. 22:1-2; 21:6).

Descent argues convincingly from the text that “John’s characteristic stylistic device of anticipating and resuming visions” (214) and repeating motifs, reflect not redactional work or combining of separate sources but framing devices for textual cohesion, a “constant textual interweaving” (237). Throughout the work it cites numerous examples of parallel and chiasmic structures to illustrate this. For example, it points out some nice parallels and contrasts between the holy city and the great Babylon when John is shown both cities by one of the seven bowl angels, after having been carried away in spirit (vv. 9-10; 17:1-3), portraying both cities as women, the former the bride of the Lamb (21:2, 9), the latter a harlot (17:1).

In the final chapter Hoeck analyzes the tenses in the discourse. Although many commentators have been critical of John’s switching of tenses, blaming his Semitic background or lack of competence in Greek grammar, Hoeck accounts for the shifts according to three main text-linguistic functions—frame, comment, and direct speech. The aorist tense is used for the discourse frame and has the effect of notifying “the recipient that these visionary experiences happened in his subjective past” (308). He divides the comment sections into descriptive and explanatory (in which the present tense predominates) and predictive (in which the future tense predominates). Finally, in the portions of direct speech there are three distinct manners of communication: imperative (aorist), explanatory (present), and predictive (future). By paying attention to discourse types, he is able to account for most, if not all, of the tense variations in Revelation 21:1—22:5.

In its conclusion *Descent* brings together the most striking text-linguistic topoi that it has referred to in various and sundry places throughout the book—anticipation/resumption, contrast, parallelism, inclusion, repetition, context/intertext, and finally the double-climactic arrangement of describing (21:1-8), and then picturing the New Jerusalem (21:9—22:5) as the “absolute climax not just of John’s Apocalypse, but also the entire Bible” (322). It revisits and reviews the tense fluctuation and the dialogical sequence before concluding that discourse analysis has validated the textual integrity of 21:1-8 as it relates to 21:9—22:5 and its topical homogeneity and refined composition, confirming its relative tense regularity and unique intarsia [inlaid mosaic]-like imagery.

Hoeck’s book is a systematic and informed approach to

exegesis using a sophisticated text-linguistic model for the analysis of a text. It is a detailed and complex study, repetitious at times, and possibly not accessible to those outside academia (assuming a working knowledge of Greek, German, French, and even some knowledge of Hebrew and Latin). Hoeck also uses many nuanced technical terms from the field of text linguistics and perhaps some of his own. In order to carefully follow the flow of his presentation, an open and markable Greek text is desirable. There are a few places where the Greek font is not formatted properly, which is regrettable in a paperback book that retails for more than \$70.⁵

Descent’s attempt to use discourse analysis to unravel some of the problems of Revelation 21:1—22:5 only partially succeeds. It demonstrates the unity of the text and defends John’s seemingly arbitrary use of the Greek tenses. It also makes some nice exegetical observations. However, its reliance on covenant theology as a base to understand the symbolism in Revelation comes short of the mark of God’s New Testament economy.

by Roger Good

Notes

¹It is better to understand the expressions “was in spirit” or “he carried me away in spirit” as referring to John’s human spirit rather than the divine Spirit, which Hoeck terms “a communication intensifier” (83). This would simplify his analysis and reduce the number of actants. Hoeck is not consistent in following a convention of capitalization for the word Spirit when it refers to the divine Spirit, using both upper case *in Spirit* and lower case *in spirit* for the same expression.

²He considers that it never lands, in spite of the fact that the tabernacle/tent referring to the New Jerusalem is with men.

³He asks the question, Who is the husband? But does not ask, where is He? The answer is found in the incorporation of the bride and Bridegroom—the Husband is in the bride, and the bride is in the Husband (John 14:20; 15:4).

⁴Hoeck considers that the men in 21:3 are those whose names are written in the book of life (20:15). The apparent difficulty in properly understanding who these men, people, and nations are is perhaps reflected in the variant in the Textus Receptus and followed in the King James Version, which refers to the nations as τῶν σωζομένων (of those who are saved). In fact, they are better understood as a group of people distinct from those who are regenerated.

⁵E.g., pages 131, 144, 160, 165, 187, 204, and 226.

Works Cited

Lee, Witness. Footnotes. Recovery Version of the Bible. Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 2003.