

intellect, while in chapter 3 Alexander Spieth focuses on the issue of mystical theology. In chapter 4, Arne Moritz addresses Aristotle's natural philosophy on Cusanus's notion of infinity and the coincidence of opposites. Chapters 5 and 6 deal with Aristotelian psychology and epistemology: Matthias Perkams presents the theory of the soul and knowledge in the Aristotelian tradition, while Christian Kny thematizes the role of ideas in Cusanus's thought. Chapters 7 and 8 deal with the reception of Aristotle's metaphysics: Andrea Fiamma discusses the theory of substance, while Davide Monaco focuses on the notions of act and potency in *De posset* and *De apice theoriae*. In chapter 9 Isabelle Mandrella offers an approach into Aristotelian ethics, while in chapter 10 Gerhard Krieger explores Aristotelian politics. Finally, in chapter 11, Valentina Zaffino explores the reception of Aristotle in Cusanus's sermons.

As a whole, the volume assumes a task which is difficult to deal with exhaustively, but it invites a change of perspective in Cusanus's studies, opening a debate that will undoubtedly be the appropriate context for future contributions, especially among new researchers of Nicholas of Cusa's thought.

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Revelation and the Apocalypse in Late Medieval Literature: The Writings of Julian of Norwich and William Langland. Justin M. Byron-Davies.
Religion and Culture in the Middle Ages. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2020.
xii + 212 pp. \$90.

In this intriguing study, Justin M. Byron-Davies demonstrates that late medieval vernacular spiritual writing owed considerable, and still underacknowledged, debts to the defining work of Christian apocalypticism, the biblical Book of Revelation attributed to Saint John of Patmos. Working in an exegetical vein, Byron-Davies explores the influence of John's Apocalypse upon the poetics and theology of two canonical Middle English texts, Julian of Norwich's *Revelations of Love* and William Langland's *Piers Plowman*. A major strength of *Revelation and the Apocalypse* lies in its attention to the complex ends of apocalyptic thinking within Middle English religious writing. As Byron-Davies shows, Apocalypse foretold not only a final judgment for believers and nonbelievers alike, but also a new beginning, or *repristination*, instantiated in the New Jerusalem. This restoration completed the soteriological narrative of Christianity, from the Fall through the Redemption and beyond, and thus carried profound implications for how writers understood the nature of sin and the prospect of salvation.

Bracketed by an introduction and an epilogue, the book consists of four chapters divided between the two authors. In the introduction, Byron-Davies surveys medieval

millenarian thought, focusing particularly on competing interpretations of Revelations 20, which describes Satan being bound for a thousand years after Christ's Resurrection until the end times would see him loosed again. One of the most influential interpreters of this passage, Augustine, read it allegorically; as an "amillennialist," Byron-Davies writes, he considered the millennium already under way, with Christ currently at the head of the Church. For a postmillennialist such as Joachim de Fiore, by contrast, Christ's Second Coming constituted an imminent, prophesied phase of Church history. Julian of Norwich and William Langland present opportunities to explore the theological and literary implications of these two broad views across a shared historical context.

The book identifies several themes connecting Julian and Langland's interest in John's Apocalypse. First are the central theological questions of judgment and mercy: who will be saved at the end of time, and is Christ's sacrifice truly for everyone? Byron-Davies also interweaves discussion of revelation and authority, central to the visionary structures of both texts and to the gendered experience of Julian in particular. Finally, the study considers the "voicing of Apocalypse," arguing that the kaleidoscopic drama of John's visions encourages a heteroglossic writing style, with *Piers Plowman* serving here as the primary example.

This brief review cannot do justice to the subtlety of Byron-Davies's theological engagement with Apocalypse and its undercurrents in the *Revelations of Love* and *Piers Plowman*. Chapters 1 and 2 present a convincing claim for reading Julian as an apocalyptic writer, deeply invested in the imagery as well as eschatology of Revelation. For Julian, Christ's Crucifixion and the Harrowing of Hell not only diminish Satan's power over humanity but undergird the essential optimism of her theology of universal salvation. In chapters 3 and 4, Byron-Davies looks to connect Langland's well-known poetic polyvocality to John of Patmos's self-styled role as scribe, recording the play of competing voices in his visions. The book employs Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia to theorize the mix of allegorical voices and language hierarchies across *Piers Plowman*. While the move to connect Langland's famously complex poetics to the temporal and linguistic asynchronies of Revelation is promising, the lack of engagement with the many recent, richly detailed studies in this area limits the persuasiveness of the discussion. Chapter 4 turns from poetics to genre, using allegorical dream vision to parse the enigmatic conclusion of the poem. Bryon-Davies argues that Langland, like Julian of Norwich, ultimately endorses a broadly liberal soteriology, in which Apocalypse theoretically offers salvation to the many rather than the chosen few.

Revelation and the Apocalypse in Late Medieval Literature unfolds as a close study of two writers' engagement with the text of Revelation, and herein lies both its strengths and weaknesses. The book is densely argued, presuming a working knowledge of John's Apocalypse, as well as the *Revelations of Love* and *Piers Plowman*. Within this context, it offers subtle and often insightful readings of its texts. One wishes, however, for an occasionally broadened view, not just upon the other competing strains of apocalyptic

thinking in late medieval England (engagement with the *Revelations* of Pseudo-Methodius would be useful, for example) but also upon the present field of Middle English studies, which is only selectively referenced throughout. As a searching theological study of two writers' quest to reconcile God's mercy and judgment, however, *Revelation and the Apocalypse* offers the careful reader many rewards.

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Ringleaders of Redemption: How Medieval Dance Became Sacred.

Kathryn Dickason.

Oxford Studies in Historical Theology. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021. xviii + 370 pp. \$99.

In *Ringleaders of Redemption: How Medieval Dance Became Sacred* Kathryn Dickason brings out of the darkness a little-known period of the history of dance, revealing its significance within medieval Christianity. The author highlights the function of dance as an element of cohesion within the community of the faithful, as a means of encountering divinity, a form of penance, an instrument for moral education, or a metaphor of beatitude.

Through the study of the practices and discourses related to dance in the Middle Ages, the author challenges the widespread and erroneous idea of dance as an activity radically tainted by sin and far removed from the feelings, beliefs, and practices of Christian religion. "The mainstream assumption that denies Christianity's historical inclusion of dance is, as this book has demonstrated, a fallacy. Aesthetic, political, and philosophical maneuvers managed to overshadow a longstanding tradition of Christian thought and practice. Retrospectively, this study unveils a history that has been obscured" (236).

Dickason builds a dynamic vision of dance during the Middle Ages and shows its authorization and incorporation as part of religious practice. The author draws on a vast bibliography and on the analysis and interpretation of religious texts of a theological, liturgical, hagiographical, educational, or penitential nature. These reveal the long and inconclusive debate that took place within the medieval church in Europe about the moral valorization of dance per se, and as part of the religious practices of the clergy and laity. Other historical, literary, and iconographical sources reveal the interaction between these conceptions imbued with religious values and the practice of dance in the secular sphere.

The book is organized in two sections. In the first section, the author shows how through biblical exegesis Christianity defined two antithetical models of dance—a positive one, represented by the dances of praise for God of Miriam and King David, and a