Southwestern

JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

The Use of the Old Testament
in the New Testament

THE USE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE APOCALYPSE

Gregory K. Beale[*]

Until the early 1980s the use of the OT in the Apocalypse of John received less attention than the use of the OT elsewhere in the NT—merely two books[1] and six significant articles.[2] Important discussion of the subject could be found in commentaries and other books, especially Swete,[3] Charles,[4] Vos,[5] Caird,[6] Van der Waal,[7] Ford,[8] Beasley-Murray,[9]

---

[1] Adolf Schlatter, *Das Alte Testament in der johanneischen Apokalypse* (Gütersloh, Germany: C. Bertelsmann, 1912); Ferrell Jenkins, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976).

[2] Albert Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du Livre d'Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Biblica* 43, no. 3 (1962): 436–76; Angelo Lancellotti, "L'Antico Testamento nell'Apocalisse," *RivB* 14, no. 4 (1966): 369–84; L. Paul Trudinger, "Some Observations concerning the Text of the Old Testament in Revelation," *JTS* 17, no. 1 (1966); Attilio Gangemi, "L'utilizzazione del deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni," *Euntes Docete* 27 (1974): 109–44; Benito Marconcini, "L'utilizzazione del T.M. nelle citazione isaiane dell' Apocalisse," *RivB* 24 (1976): 113–36; Michael Douglas Goulder, "Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies," *NTS* 27, no. 3 (1981): 342–67; cf. also J. Cambier, "Les images de l'Ancien Testament dans l'Apocalypse de saint Jean," *NRTh* 77 (1955): 113–22; and Eduard Lohse, "Die alttestamentliche Sprache des Sehers Johannes," *ZNW* 52, no. 1–2 (1961): 122–26, which are of more limited value.

[3] H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Indices* (London: Macmillan, 1911), passim, but esp. cxl–clvi.

[4] R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), passim, but esp. 1:lxv–lxxxii.

[5] Louis A. Vos, *The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse* (Kampen, Netherlands: J. H. Kok, 1965), 16–53.

[6] G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine, BNTC* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1966).

[7] C. van der Waal, *Openbaring van Jezus Christus: Inleiding en vertaling* (Groningen: de Vuurbaak, 1971), 174–241.

[8] Desmond Ford, *Crisis: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (Desmond Ford Pubns, 1982), 243–306.

[9] George R. Beasley-Murray, *Revelation*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981).

[*] Gregory K. Beale is professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary-Dallas.

and, to a lesser degree, Delling,[10] Comblin,[11] Farrer,[12] and Holtz.[13] Since the early 1980s, however, six significant books have been written on the topic: Beale's *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (1984; based on a 1980 Cambridge dissertation), J. M. Vogelgesang's "Interpretation of Ezekiel in Revelation" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1985), J. Paulien's *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets* (1988),[14] Ruiz's (1989), Fekkes's (1994), and Moyise's (1995). Since the same period, a number of articles on the same subject have appeared.[15] Since 2000, there have been a spate of books and articles on Revelation's use of the OT.

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

1. There is general acknowledgment that the Apocalypse contains more OT references than any other NT book, although past attempts to tally the total number have varied[16] because of the different criteria employed to determine the validity of an OT reference and the inclusion by some authors of "echoes" and parallels of a very general nature.[17] The range of

---

[10]Gerhard Delling, "Zum Gottesdienstlichen Stil der Johannes-Apokalypse" *NovT* 3, no. 1–2 (1959): 107–37.

[11]José Comblin, *Le Christ dans l'Apocalypse,* Bibliothèque de théologie; Serie 3: Theologie Biblique V. 6 (Paris: Desclee, 1965).

[12]Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964).

[13]Traugott Holtz, *Die Christologie der Apokalypse des Johannes*, TUGAL 85 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1962).

[14]For a summary and evaluation of Paulien see G. K. Beale, review of *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets, by Jon Paulien, JBL* 111, no. 2 (1992): 358–61.

[15]Reference to and evaluation of these six books, as well as the articles, can be found to varying degrees throughout the commentary and in the discussion that follows here, as well as in Gregory K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1998), Chapter 1. Likewise, see also the discussion of recent literature in F. J. Murphy, "The Book of Revelation," *CBR 2* (1994): 200–201. Among recent articles see G. K. Beale, "The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation" in *It Is Written,* eds. D. A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 318–36; A. S. Bøe, "Bruken av det Gamle Testament i Johannes'Åpenbaring," *TTKi* 63 (1992): 253–69; Thomas E. McComiskey, "Alteration of OT Imagery in the Book of Revelation," *JETS* 36, no. 3 (1993): 307–16. The present section is a minor revision of my "Use of the Old Testament in Revelation."

[16]UBS3, 901–11 = 394; NA26, 739–74 = 635; G. D. Kilpatrick, ed., (London: British and Foreign Bible Society, 1958), 734–87 = 493; Eugen Hühn, (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1900), 269ff. = 455; Wilhelm Dittmar, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1899), 263–79 = 195; Swete, xcl = 278; Charles, lxv–lxxxii = 226; van der Waal, 174–241 = 1000 (approximately). For statistics from other commentators see Jan Fekkes III, (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994),62. See Jon Paulien, "Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," 33 (1988): 37–53., for an example of the varying lists of allusions in a particular segment of Revelation (8:7–9:21 and 11:15–18). One reason for the varying statistics is that some of these lists include parallels together with allusions and citations.

[17]Cf. the survey and evaluation in Vos, *Synoptic Traditions*, 17–19; and Vanhoye, "Utilisation du

OT usage includes the Pentateuch, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, Psalms, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Job, and the Major and the Minor Prophets. Roughly more than half the references are from the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and in proportion to its length Daniel yields the most.[18]

The evaluation of Daniel as very influential is supported by focused study.[19] Among the allusions to Daniel, the greatest number are from Daniel 7. In terms of actual number of allusions, Isaiah is first, followed by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalms, though statistics differ.[20] There is more agreement that Ezekiel exerts greater influence in Revelation than Daniel. The OT in general plays such a major role that a proper understanding of its use is necessary for an adequate view of the Apocalypse as a whole.

The text form of OT references in Revelation needs in-depth discussion since there are no formal quotations and most are allusions, a phenomenon often making identification of such references more difficult. The complex relationship of the Hebrew text to early Greek versions, the history of which is largely unknown to us, makes it difficult to know whether John depends on the Hebrew or the Greek.[21] Unfortunately, however, the scope of the present discussion precludes thorough analysis of this important subject.[22] The majority of commentators have not followed Swete's assessment that John depended mainly on the LXX[23] and have apparently followed Charles's conclusion that John was influenced more by the Hebrew rather than the Greek OT,[24] a conclusion based mainly on the observation that John's allusions depart from the wording of the LXX.[25]

Livre d'Ezéchiel," 438–40.

[18] So Swete, *Apocalypse,* cliii, where numerical statistics are also given for many of the OT books used.

[19] Cf. G. K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

[20] E.g., Swete lists forty-six from Isaiah, while the more trenchant analysis of Fekkes, *Isaiah in Revelation,* 280–81, finds fifty "certain and probable" allusions to Isaiah. Swete also lists thirty-one from Daniel, twenty-nine from Ezekiel, and twenty-seven from the Psalms.

[21] So J. M. Vogelgesang, "The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 19–22.

[22] But see further Trudinger, "Observations concerning the Text of the Old Testament"; Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 154–259; 306–13; G. K. Beale, "The Origin of the Title 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords' in *Revelation* 17:4," NTS 31, no. 4 (1985): 618–20; G. K. Beale, "A Reconsideration of the Text of Daniel in the Apocalypse," *Biblica* 67, no. 4 (1986): 539–43.

[23] Swete, *Apocalypse,* clv–clvi.

[24] Charles, *Revelation*, 1:lxvi–lxvii, as well as lxviii–lxxxii; C G. Ozanne, "The Language of the Apocalypse," *TynBul 16* (1965): 3–9; Trudinger, "Observations concerning the Text of the Old Testament"; Steven Thompson, *Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–2, 102–8.

[25] Charles, *Revelation,* 1:lxvi.

But the wording also departs from the Hebrew at significant points.[26] The likelihood is that John draws from both Semitic and Greek biblical sources and often modifies both.[27] Charles himself acknowledged that although John's pattern was to translate the Hebrew text and not to quote from the Greek version, nevertheless "he was often influenced in his renderings by the LXX and another Greek version," namely proto-Theodotion.[28]

The following criteria can be used to identify OT allusions in Revelation:

1. *Clear allusion:* the wording is almost identical to the OT source, shares some common core meaning, and could not likely have come from anywhere else.
2. *Probable allusion:* though the wording is not as close, it still contains an idea or wording that is uniquely traceable to the OT text or exhibits a structure of ideas uniquely traceable to the OT passage.
3. *Possible allusion:* the language is only generally similar to the purported source, echoing either its wording or concepts.

Furthermore, a reasonable explanation of authorial motive should be given if a proposed OT allusion is to be accepted as clear or probable. For example, John appears to allude to the OT to show how prophecy has been and is being fulfilled in Christ's coming, Pentecost, and the creation of the church.[29] These criteria for allusions are also applicable in recognizing the presence of allusions to sources other than the OT, whether Jewish[30] or Greco-Roman. One must be circumspect in the search for dependence

---

[26] See further Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 17.

[27] So Moyise, *Old Testament in Revelation,* 17, though this is a conclusion reached already by the mid-nineteenth-century commentator Moses Stuart, *A Commentary on the Apocalypse* (Andover: Allen, Morrill, and Wardwell, 1845), 1:231–32; and by T. C. Laughlin, *The Solecisms of the Apocalypse* (Princeton: C. S. Robinson & Co., 1902), 21; cf. likewise W. F. Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1929), 2:480; for LXX influence cf. also Beale, "'Kings of Kings and Lord of Lords' in Rev. 17:14"; Beale, "Text of Daniel in the Apocalypse."

[28] Charles, *Revelation,* 1:lxvii.

[29] Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 308. See also Paulien, "Elusive Allusions," for additional discussion of criteria and validity of allusions.

[30] See, e.g., Harold M. Parker, "The Scriptures of the Author of the Revelation of John," *Iliff Review 37,* no. 1 (1980): 35–51, who contends that John was saturated with noncanonical apocalyptic Jewish tradition, though direct dependence on this material is small in comparison with direct OT references. For further evaluation see Frederick D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 47–49; in fact, Parker's references to this material fall into the category of broad conceptual parallels and not verbal literary dependence.

on such other literary sources and resist the temptation to find parallels where there are none.[31]

2. *Contextual and noncontextual use.* It is important to ask whether or not John uses OT texts in harmony with their broader contextual meanings. There is unanimous consensus that John uses the OT with a high degree of liberty and creativity. As a result, many conclude that he handles numerous OT passages without consideration of their original contextual meanings, even assigning quite contradictory meanings. The reasons for this conclusion are numerous but cannot be elaborated here because of space considerations.

However, we may viably speak of changes of application, but need not conclude that this means a *disregard* for OT context. The passages we discuss below are test cases and our conclusions in regard to them are applicable to other OT references: it is probable that John is making *intentional allusions* and demonstrates varying degrees of respect for the OT contexts.[32] The full exposition of the text of Revelation in my commentary includes numerous other case studies in which it is concluded that varying degrees of contextual usage of OT passages have occurred.

Admittedly, it is sometimes difficult to know whether there has been conscious or unconscious activity. Noncontextual use of the OT can be expected to occur where there is unconscious allusion. No doubt the apocalyptist's mind was so saturated with OT language from the tradition he had learned that when he described his vision he sometimes spontaneously used this language without much forethought.

To clarify what is meant by "context" is important. What is usually meant is *literary* context: how a passage functions in the logical flow of a book's argument. But there is also *historical* context. For example, the historical context of Hos 11:1 is the exodus and not the argument of the book of Hosea. In addition, there is also the *thematic* OT context: a NT writer might focus first on a general OT theme (e.g., judgment or restoration) and then appeal to a number of specific passages from different OT books that pertain to that theme.[33] An author might reflect on only

---

[31] In this respect, note the warnings of Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," *JBL 81,* no. 1 (1962): 1–13; and Terence L. Donaldson, "Parallels: Use, Misuse and Limitations," *EvQ 55* (1983): 193–210.

[32] An assessment corroborated by Fekkes, *Isaiah in Revelation,* e.g., 70–103 and generally by Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7–12* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988).

[33] For development of the thematic OT context see Fekkes, *Isaiah in Revelation,* 70–103.

one of these three contexts, or on all three, or entirely disregard them. In the light of the passages discussed above, John appears to display varying degrees of awareness of literary context and thematic context and perhaps historical context, although appeal to literary and thematic contexts is predominant. Interest in thematic context is really an explanation for why particular literary contexts are focused on. Those texts with a low degree of correspondence with the OT literary context can be referred to as semicontextual since they seem to fall between the opposite poles of what we ordinarily call "contextual" and "noncontextual" usages.[34] The categories of use to be considered below should further clarify and illustrate these initial conclusions.

II. VARIOUS USES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT IN THE APOCALYPSE[35]

1. *Old Testament segments as literary prototypes.* Sometimes John takes over OT contexts or sequences as models after which to pattern his creative compositions.[36] Such modeling can be apparent from a thematic structure that is traceable to only one OT context or from a cluster of clear allusions to the same OT context. Sometimes both are observable, thus enhancing the clarity of the OT prototype. It has been argued in some depth that broad patterns from Daniel (esp. chs. 2 and 7) have been followed in Revelation 1, 4–5, 13, and 17, chs. 1 and 4–5 especially exhibiting both allusive clusters and structural outlines from segments of Daniel.[37] Incidentally, this would show further design in these chapters and point

---

[34]See McComiskey, "Alteration of OT" for an attempt to perceive degrees of OT contextual awareness based on the determinative intention of John in the light of his own contextual usage in Revelation, though McComiskey deemphasizes the role of the OT too much.

[35]In addition to the following uses, see further subcategories of usage in Fekkes, *Isaiah in Revelation,* 70–103. For amplification of examples of uses of the OT in this section, see Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (ch. 2).

[36]Cf. Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, "Apokalypsis and Propheteia: The Book of Revelation in the Context of Early Christian Prophecy," in *L' Apocalypse johannique et l'apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament* (Gembloux, Belguim: Editions J Duculot University Press, 1980), 108.

[37]Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 154–305, 313–20. See Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,*17 – 19,10 (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 1989), 123–28, who is unconvinced by this evidence, esp. the notion that Daniel 7 rather than Ezekiel is the model for Revelation 4–5. But his evaluation does not take into sufficient account the inductive evidence of specific verbal allusions to Daniel throughout Revelation 4–5 (see Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 185–222), the broad outline of Daniel 7 in comparison with that of Ezekiel 1 or Isaiah 6 (cf. Beale, 181–228), or the qualifications made about Daniel 7 as a model (Beale, 224–27). For fuller response to skepticism about my proposal here, see Beale, John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation (ch. 2, Excursus: "Rejoinder to Critical Evaluations of the Use of Segments of Daniel as Midrashic Prototypes for Various Chapters in Revelation").

further away from an unconscious use of the OT. The same use of Daniel as a midrashic model is also observable in Jewish apocalyptic works, indicating that this kind of use of the OT was not uncommon (e.g., 1QM 1; 1 En. 69:26–71:17; 90:9–19; 4 Ezra 11–13; 2 Baruch 36–40).[38] The suggestion is also made that this influence of Daniel may even extend to the structure of the whole Apocalypse, since allusions to Dan 2:28–29 punctuate the book at major divisional transitions (1:1; 1:19; 4:1; 22:6). Furthermore, the five apocalyptic visions in Daniel (chs. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10–12) cover the same time of the eschatological future, which may be the prototypical structure followed by Revelation in some of its purported synchronously parallel sections.[39]

In a somewhat similar vein, Goulder has argued that broad portions of Ezekiel have been the dominant influence on at least eleven major sections of the Apocalypse (Rev 4; 5; 6:1–8; 6:12–7:1; 7:2–8; 8:1–5; 14:6–12; 17:1–6; 18:9–24; 20:7–10; 21:22).[40] Goulder observes that these uses of Ezekiel are a dominant influence on the structure of Revelation since they are placed to a marked extent in the same order as they are found in Ezekiel.[41] However, Goulder proposes that a liturgical rather than a literary explanation accounts better for the parallel order of Ezekiel and Revelation. He attempts to demonstrate this by speculating that the Apocalypse is generally aligned with the Jewish calendar, especially its festivals and holy days, and that this liturgical-calendrical pattern is even more formative on the structure of Revelation than Ezekiel.[42] Although he does not follow Goulder's liturgical theory, S. Moyise has also concluded that Ezekiel has provided more of the model for Revelation than Daniel.[43] Virtually identical to Goulder's view, though also not positing a liturgical background, is that of J. M. Vogelgesang, who has gone so far as to conclude that John used Ezekiel as the model for the book's overall structure, so that it is "the key to understanding the message of the book altogether."[44] Others have also recognized Ezekiel's broad influence, especially in Revelation 20–22, where the order of events appears to have

---

[38] Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testamen*t, 67–153.

[39] Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 271–85; G. K. Beale, "The Influence of Daniel upon the Structure and Theology of John's Apocalypse," *JETS* 27, no. 4 (1984): 413–23.

[40] Cf. Goulder, "Apocalypse as Annual Cycle of Prophecies," 343–49.

[41] Goulder, "Apocalypse as Annual Cycle of Prophecies," 353–54.

[42] Goulder, "Apocalypse as Annual Cycle of Prophecies," 349–64.

[43] Moyise, *Old Testament in Revelation,* 74–83; similarly, Mazzaferri, *Genre of Revelation,* 365.

[44] Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel in Revelation," 394, as well as 16, 66–71.

been taken from Ezekiel 37–48.[45] Many commentators see Ezekiel as the paradigm either for Revelation 4[46] or 4:1–5:1 (e.g., Caird, Sweet). And other liturgical paradigms for the book have been proposed, from either early Jewish or Christian liturgical traditions.[47]

There is a consensus that the plagues of the "trumpets" in Rev 8:6–12 and those of the bowls in 16:1–9 follow the paradigm of the Exodus plagues and trials (Exod 7–14), though they are creatively reworked and applied (e.g., Beasley-Murray, Caird, Sweet). Already this Exodus model had been used in Amos 8–9 and creatively applied in Wisdom 11–19, the latter perhaps influencing John's application.[48] J. S. Casey has argued for a significant influence of an Exodus typology in the trumpets and bowls, as well as in other segments of Revelation.[49] Draper proposes that the eschatological scheme in Zechariah 14 "provides the basis for a midrashic development in Revelation 7,"[50] while Sweet more tentatively suggests the same thing for Revelation 20–22.[51]

All of the above proposed OT models have woven within them allusions from other parts of the same OT book and from elsewhere in the OT corpus, and many of these are based on common themes, pictures, catch phrases, and the like. Often these other references serve as interpretative expansions of an OT prototype. On the reasonable assumption that these models were followed intentionally, two primary uses of them can be discerned. First, the OT patterns appear to be used as forms through which future (sometimes imminent) eschatological fulfillment is understood

[45] E. C. Selwyn, "Dialogues on the Christian Prophets," *Expositor 6,* no. 5 (1902): 332–34; Alfred Wikenhauser, "Das Problem des tausendjährigen Reiches in der Johannes-Apokalypse," *ZKT* 57, no. 2 (1933): 13–25; Karl G. Kuhn, "Gog-Magog," in *TWNT* (Stuttgart, 1933); J. Lust, "The Order of the Final Events in Revelation and in Ezekiel," *in L'Apocalypse johannique et l'Apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament,* ed. J. Lambrecht, BETL 53 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1980): 179–83.

[46] As does Goulder, "Interpretation of Ezekiel in Revelation," 43–51.

[47] Cf. David R. Carnegie, "Hymns in Revelation" (PhD diss., London School of Theology, 1978); Samuel Läuchli, "Eine Gottesdienststruktur in der Johannesoffenbarung," *ThZ 16 (1960): 359–78;* see also Carnegie's evaluation in "Worthy Is the Lamb: the Hymns in Revelation," *in Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie,* ed H. H. Rowden (Downers Grove, IVP, 1982), 245; Pierre Prigent, *Apocalypse et Liturgie,* CahT 52 (Paris: Delachaux et Niestle, 1964) (see Beale's evaluation in Use of Daniel, 184).

[48] Sweet, *Revelation,* 161–62.

[49] Jay Smith Casey, "Exodus Typology in the Book of Revelation" (PhD diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1981). For a convenient summary of Casey's dissertation see Mazzaferri, *Genre of Revelation,* 367–73.

[50] J. A. Draper, "The Heavenly Feast of Tabernacles: Revelation 7.1–17," *JSNT* 6 (1983): 133–47.

[51] J. P. M. Sweet, Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus: the Suffering of Christians in the Revelation of John (London: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 112.

and predicted (cf. chs. 13 and 17).[52] Second, the prototypes are utilized as lenses through which past and present eschatological fulfillment is understood (cf. chs. 1 and 4–5). It is not always clear whether these OT prototypes are the means or the object of interpretation, and perhaps there is an oscillation between the two: The OT interprets the NT, and the NT interprets the OT.

2. *Thematic uses.* In addition to alluding to specific OT texts, the author of Revelation develops important OT *themes.* Many of these themes are delineated throughout the major commentaries. J. Fekkes has shown that, among other themes, John develops extensively such OT themes as end-time judgment and salvation, each of which has thematic sub-categories.[53] Some special studies of note are Ford's tracing of Daniel's "abomination of desolation" theme,[54] Longman's study of the OT divine warrior concept,[55] Bauckham's articles on the OT earthquake idea[56] and John's reinterpretation of the OT "holy war" theme,[57] recent articles on the employment of the ancient Near Eastern/OT covenant form in Revelation 2–3 and throughout the book,[58] and the OT concept of the "day of the Lord."[59] Of particular note is C. H. Giblin's further development of the "holy war" theme, in which he makes a case that this OT notion "in all its essential [eightfold] institutional features structures the entire course of events" in Revelation 4–22[60] and is formative for the overall thought of chs. 1–3 as well.[61]

Carnegie has offered a most interesting study on the function of hymns in the OT and their reuse in Revelation. He shows that the various songs

---

[52] Also see the same employment of the Daniel models in 1QM 1; 1 Enoch 46–47; 69:26–71:17; 90; 4 Ezra 11–13; 2 Baruch 36:1–42:2.

[53] Fekkes, *Isaiah in Revelation,* 70–103.

[54] Desmond Ford, *Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology* (Washington: University Press of America, 1979), 243–314.

[55] Tremper Longman III, "The Divine Warrior: The New Testament use of an Old Testament Motif," *WTJ* 44 (1982): 291–302.

[56] Richard Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," *NovT,* vol. 19 (1977).

[57] Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), 210–37.

[58] William H. Shea, "The Covenantal Form of the Letters to the Seven Churches," *AUSS,* vol. 21, no. 1 (1983): 71–84; Kenneth A. Strand, "A Further Note on the Covenantal Form in the Book of Revelation," *AUSS,* vol. 21, no. 3 (1983): 251–64.

[59] Donald A. Gray, "The Day of the Lord and its Culmination in the Book of Revelation related to the Theology of Hope" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1974).

[60] Charles H. Giblin, *The Book of Revelation: The Open Book of Prophecy* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 29, as well as 25–34, 224–31.

[61] Giblin, *Revelation*, 25–36, 224–31.

in Isaiah 40–55 come at the ends of subsections and round them off, not only by offering a concluding thanksgiving, but also by giving an interpretive summary of the theme of the whole previous section (cf. Isa 48:20ff.; 52:9, etc.). The series of hymns in Revelation are seen to have the same function under the inspiration of the Isaianic songs (Rev 4:11; 5:13ff.; 7:9–12; 11:15–18; 19:1–8).[62]

3. *Analogical uses.* Analogy can be considered the most general description of OT usage in the Apocalypse, since the very act of referring to an OT text is to place it in some comparative relationship to something in the NT. But we are concerned here with specific well-known persons, places, and events. The pictures undergo creative changes (expansions, condensations, supplemental imagery, etc.) and are, of course, applied to different historical situations.[63] Nevertheless, a key idea in the OT context is usually carried over as the main characteristic or principle to be applied in the NT situation.[64] Therefore, even though John handles these OT figures with creative freedom, they almost always broadly retain an essential OT association and convey principles of continuity between the OT and NT.[65]

For example, the image of the deceiving "serpent of old" in Rev 12:9 (cf. 20:2) evokes an episode of primitive religious history, which maintains the same meaning for the final, eschatological phase of theological history.[66] The author's theological basis for maintaining such continuities lies in his conviction that OT and NT history is but the working out of God's unified design of salvation and deals throughout with the unchanging principles of faith in God, God's faithfulness in fulfilling his salvific promises, the antitheocratic forces attempting to thwart such promises, and the victory of God's kingdom over that of Satan.[67]

The following is a sampling of these analogies with a brief description of the primary point of continuity:

---

[62] Carnegie, "Worthy Is the Lamb," 250–52.

[63] For a superb example of such alteration see Vos's discussion of the Exodus plague imagery in Rev 8:6–12; 16:2–13 in *Synoptic Traditions,* 45–47.

[64] Vos, Synoptic Traditions, 47–48.

[65] So Cambier, "Images de l'Ancien Testament," 116–20; cf. Gangemi, "Utilizzazoine del deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse," 322–39.

[66] So Cambier, "Images de l'Ancien Testament," 118–19.

[67] Cambier, "Images de l'Ancien Testament," 119–20.

Judgment
- theophanies introducing judgment (Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, Daniel 7/Revelation 4–5)
- books of judgment (Ezekiel 2, Daniel 7, Daniel 12/Rev 5:1–5 and Ezekiel 2/Revelation 10)
- the lion from Judah exercising judgment (Gen 49:9/Rev 5:5)
- "the Lord of lords and King of kings" exercising judgment (Dan 4:37 [LXX]/Rev 17:14; 19:16)
- horsemen as divine agents of judgment (Zechariah 1 and 6/Rev 6:1–8)
- Exodus plagues inflicting judgment (Exod 7:14–12:57/Rev 8:6–12; 16:1–14
- locusts as agents of judgment (Joel 1–2/Rev 9:7–10),
- prophets giving testimony through judgment (Exod 7:17; 1 Kgs 17:1/Rev 11:6)
- "Babylon" judged by God in "one hour" (Dan 4:17a [LXX]/Rev 18:10, 17, 19)

Tribulation and persecution of God's people
- ten days of tribulation (Dan 1:12/Rev 2:10)
- three-and-a-half years of tribulation (Dan 7:25; 12:7/Rev 11:2; 12:14; 13:5)
- Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem as infamous places where persecution occurs (Rev 11:8)
- persecuting rulers symbolized as beasts (Daniel 7/Revelation 11–13, 17)
- "Babylon the Great" (Dan 4:30, etc./Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2)

Seductive, idolatrous teaching
- Balaam (Numbers 25; 31:16/Rev 2:14)
- Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31; 2 Kgs 9:22/Rev 2:20–23)

Divine protection
- the tree of life (Gen 2:9/Rev 2:7; 22:2, 14, 19)
- the "sealed" Israelites (Ezekiel 9/Rev 7:2–8)
- the wings of the eagle (Exod 19:4; Deut 32:11/Rev 12:14)

Victorious battle of God's people over the enemy
- Armageddon (Zech 12:11/Rev 16:16 [19:19]; cf. Gog and Magog in Ezek 38–39:16/Rev 20:8)

Apostasy
- the harlot (Ezek 16:15, etc./Revelation 17)

Divine Spirit as the power for God's people
- (Zech 4:1–6/Rev 1:12–20; 11:4)

Some analogies are repeated and creatively developed in different ways, though usually to some degree within the parameters of their OT contexts.

4. *Universalization.* Vanhoye has apparently been the only author to discuss this as a formal category of OT usage. The apocalyptist has a tendency to apply to the world what the OT applied only to Israel or to other entities.[68] There are several examples of this phenomenon. The title that Yahweh gave Israel in Exod 19:6 ("kingdom of priests") is applied in Rev 1:6 and 5:10 to the church, which is composed of kingly priests "from every tribe, people, and nation" (Rev 5:9). Indeed, this very phrase of universality in Rev 5:9 is most likely taken from Dan 7:14, where it refers to the nations of the world subjugated to Israel's rule, which is now extended to the rule by all these very nations (cf. Rev 5:10).[69] In Rev 1:7, "and every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over him," refers to peoples throughout the earth, although in Zech 12:10 it is limited to the Israelite tribes. The same widening application of Zech 12:10 is also seen in John 19:31–37, where the action of a Roman soldier is viewed as a beginning fulfillment of this prophecy.[70]

Another classic example of this tendency is the extension of the Exodus plague imagery from the land of Egypt to the whole "earth" in Rev 8:6–12 and 16:1–14. For example, in 8:9 a third of the sea, including fish and ships, is affected, instead of merely a river and its fish; in 16:10 rather than the sun being darkened, the kingdom of the satanic beast becomes darkened. The "ten days of tribulation" experienced by Daniel and his friends (Dan 1:12) and the three-and-a-half years of Israel's tribulation

---

[68] Cf. Vanhoye with reference to Ezekiel, "Utilisation du Livre d'Ezéchiel," 446–67.
[69] Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 214–29.
[70] So J. R. Michaels, "The Centurion's Confession and the Spear Thrust," *CBQ* 29, no. 1 (1967): 102–29; Sweet, *Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus,* 112.

(Dan 7:25; 12:7) are both extended to the tribulation of the church — the eschatological, true Israel — throughout the world. Part of this tribulation is instigated by the latter-day "Babylon the Great" (Dan 4:30), who persecutes not merely ethnic Israelite believers, but also saints throughout the earth (Rev 17:5–8; 18:24), and harmfully affects "nations," "kings of the earth," and the world's economy (18:1–23). Therefore, when "Babylon the Great" falls, rather than the effect being provincial, "the cities of the nations" also fall (16:19). Likewise, the former persecutors of God's people in the OT (Sodom, Egypt, and Jerusalem) are now defined as "peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations" (Rev 11:8–10).

The Apocalypse concludes with references from the predicted end-time temple reserved for Israel, although now its cultic benefits are extended to the Gentiles (cf. Ezek 37:27; 44:9; and 48:35 in Rev 21:3). In Rev 22:2 the "leaves of healing" foretold in Ezek 47:12 as an aid to the Israelites become "leaves… for the healing of the *nations.*"

Sometimes the rationale for universalization is found already in the OT contexts (cf. Ezek 14:12–21 in Rev 6:8), although the inspiration can also arise from the combination of a narrower OT reference to Israel with a similar OT text that is, however, universal. For example, the Israelite-oriented book of judgment from Ezek 2:9–10 is given cosmic dimensions in Rev 5:1 and 10:8–11 because it has been attracted to other OT judgment book allusions that have wider cosmic applications (cf. Dan 7:10; 12:4, 9 in Rev 5:1–5 and Dan 12:4–9 in Rev 10:1–6). Nevertheless, the primary reason for the extended applications is the NT's and John's assumption concerning the cosmic dimensions of Christ's lordship and death (cf. Rev 1:5; 5:9–10; for other examples of universalization see 1:12–13, 20 [lampstands]; 2:17 [manna]; 7:9, 15 [Ezek 37:26]; 17:1ff. [harlot]; 18:9 [Ezek 26:16ff.; 27:29–35]; 19:7 [the bride]; 3:12 and 21:2 [Jerusalem]).

It is tempting to conclude that John does not handle the OT according to its original contextual meaning when he universalizes. Vanhoye's evaluation, however, is plausible. He says that while the universalization is motivated by the Christian spirit to explain redemptive fulfillment, it is not contrary to the OT sense. Although the author certainly makes different applications and executes developments beyond those of his OT predecessors, he stays within the same interpretative framework and is conscious of being profoundly faithful to the overall parameters of their message.[71] This is a viable analysis since all of these universalizations can

---

[71] Vanhoye, "Utilisation du Livre d'Ezéchiel," 467.

be considered subcategories of the analogical use of the OT, with regard to which we have proposed that, although John creatively reworks the OT and changes its application, his pictures retain significant points of correspondence with the OT context and express salvation-historical principles of continuity. All the examples of universalization that we have cited appear to be harmonious developments of these principles, as is the case with the OT texts pertaining to ethnic Israel's redemption and applied in Revelation to the world's redemption on the basis of defining the true people of God according to their faith in Christ and their corporate representation in Christ, the one who sums up true Israel in himself. Thus, the church comes to be viewed as the true Israel.

5. *Possible indirect fulfillment uses.* Although Revelation contains no formal OT quotations (with introductory formulas) used as prooftexts to indicate prophetic fulfillment, it is still probable that some OT texts are *informally* referred to in order to designate present or future fulfillment of OT verbal prophecy. The determination of whether a text refers to future or present fulfillment often depends on one's overall view of the book (e.g., preterist, historicist, idealist, futurist).

Of special note is the introduction to the book, which alludes to Dan 2:28–29, 45: *deixai… ha dei genesthai* ("to show… what must take place"), followed directly by *en tachei* ("quickly"), with Dan 2:28 (LXX), *edēlōse… ha dei genesthai ep' eschatōn tōn hēmerōn* ("he showed… what must take place in the latter days," Rev 1:1). John's "quickly" is substituted for Daniel's "in the latter days" so that what Daniel expected to occur in the distant future, the defeat of cosmic evil and ushering in of the kingdom, John expects to begin in his own generation, and perhaps it has already been inaugurated. Such imminence and even *incipient inauguration,* is corroborated by the phrase *ho gar kairos engus* ("for the time is near") in 1:3, which elsewhere includes *both* the "already" and "not yet" element (so Mark 1:15; Matt 26:45; Lam 4:18; cf. Matt 3:2 with 4:17).[72]

Daniel 12:4, 9 is used likewise in 22:10: whereas Daniel is commanded to "conceal these words and seal up the book until the end of time" (12:4), John is given the consummatory command not to "seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." This use of Daniel in Rev 22:10 intensifies that of 1:1–3 since it is directly linked to a verbatim repetition of 1:1 in 22:6.

The reference to the Son of Man (1:13–14) probably indicates John's

---

[72] Cf. Beale, "Influence of Daniel," 415–20.

belief that Jesus had begun to fulfill the Dan 7:13 prophecy of the Son of Man's exaltation, although the similar reference in 1:7 may also refer to a further phase of the same prophecy that still awaits realization. The same kind of "already and not yet" idea is found in 2:26–27, where Jesus says that he has started to fulfill the Ps 2:7 prediction and that his followers will also take part in the fulfillment at a future time (probably at death).

If the argument that Revelation 1 and 4–5 are both modeled on Daniel 7 can be sustained,[73] then John's intention may be to indicate that Jesus's death, resurrection, and gathered church is the inaugurated fulfillment of Daniel. There is also evidence of expectations of exclusive future fulfillment, of which the clearest examples are Ps 2:1/Rev 11:18; Ps 2:8/Rev 12:5 and 19:15; Isa 25:8/Rev 21:4; Isa 65:17 and 66:22/Rev 21:1; Ezek 47:1, 12/Rev 22:1–2.

All these passages concern fulfillments of OT texts that are clearly direct verbal prophecies. There may also be texts appearing in OT historical narratives that John understands as *indirect typological prophecies.* Many of the passages listed in our discussion above of analogical uses are potential candidates for this category. That is, are they all merely analogies? We have already found that the essence of the analogies is a basic *correspondence* of meaning between OT prophecy or *historical* narrative and something in the NT. Some of these OT historical elements have also undergone an escalation, even a universalization, under John's hand. Perhaps there was a prophetic rationale in escalating these historical texts. At any rate, such uses are worth further inquiry in this regard, especially against the background of John's and the NT's awareness that the "latter days" had been inaugurated, that the church was the latter-day Israel, and that the whole OT pointed toward this climax of salvation history.[74] The precedent of overt typological-prophetic uses in Matthew and Hebrews and elsewhere in the NT should leave open the same possibility in Revelation.

6. *Inverted uses.* Some allusions to the OT are on the surface distinctly contradictory to their OT contextual meanings. Further study again, however, reveals the imprecise nature of such categories. The clearest example of this is Rev 3:9, which refers to Isaianic prophecies that the Gentiles will

---

[73]Cf. Beale, *Use of Daniel,* 154–228.

[74]For inaugurated eschatological language cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:17; 1 Cor 10:11; 2 Cor 6:2; Gal 4:4; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:1; Heb 1:2; 9:26; Jas 5:3; 1 Pet 1:20; 1 John 2:18; Jude 18; Rev 1:1; 1:19; 4:1; 22:6, 10; cf. Beale, "Influence of Daniel," 415–20. On the "already and not yet" nature of NT eschatology, see G. K. Beale, "Eschatology," *DLNT* 330–45; G. K. Beale, "The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology," *Doon Theological Journal* 10, no. 2 (2013).

come and bow down before Israel and recognize Israel as God's chosen people (Isa 45:14; 49:23; 60:14). This Jewish hope has been turned upside down. Now it is Jewish persecutors of Christians whom God will make to submit to the church. This reversal of Isaiah's language is probably a conscious attempt to express the irony that the submission that unbelieving ethnic Jews hoped to receive from Gentiles, they themselves will be forced to render to the church.[75] John concludes that ethnic Jews have become like unbelieving Gentiles because of their rejection of Christ and persecution of Christians. In fact, this ironic element is intensified at the end of v. 9 through John's reference to the predominantly Gentile church as being in the position of true Israel. This he accomplishes with a reverse application of Isa 43:4, which originally spoke of God's love and honor for Israel above the nations. Vos is therefore inconsistent in recognizing an irony in the first part of v. 9 but concluding with respect to the Isa 43:4 citation that "the context of the alleged quotation has been totally disregarded."[76] John shows, rather, a consistent ironic understanding of some of the major themes in Isaiah 40–66. And while such a view arises out of a contextual awareness of the OT, the NT use is so diametrically opposite that it is best to categorize this as an inverted or ironic use.

The terminology of cosmic universality from Dan 7:14 in Rev 5:9 also reveals an intended inversion. Whereas in Daniel the phrase refers to the nations subjugated to Israel's rule, now these very nations rule together with the Messiah.

A sampling of other such uses is noteworthy. Daniel 7:21 refers to an oppressive "horn" that "was waging war with the saints and overpowering them." This is applied in reverse fashion in Rev 12:7–8 to describe the overthrow of Satan by Michael and his angels. Such reverse application probably does not reflect unconscious activity or an atomistic exegesis but polemical irony expressed by portraying the theocratic forces' defeat of the cosmic enemy through the same imagery that was used in Daniel 7 to describe how this enemy began to defeat God's forces. This may be a figurative expression of a *lex talionis* irony: God will subdue the enemy by the same method that the enemy has used to try to subdue God. That this language is intentionally drawn in reverse manner from Dan 7:21 is evident not only from the verbal likeness (cf. Theod.) but also from the

---

[75]So Vos, *Synoptic Traditions,* 25; Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977), 118.

[76]Vos, *Synoptic Traditions,* 26.

allusion to Dan 2:35 (Rev 12:8b) that immediately follows *and* from the same Dan 7:21 reversal in Rev 17:14, where the Danielic "Lord of lords and King of kings" (= Dan 4:37 [LXX]) is the one who carries out the polemical overthrow.

The same kind of retributive ironies can be observed elsewhere in the Apocalypse: Dan 8:10 in Rev 12:4, 9, 10; Dan 7:7ff. in Rev 5:6–7 (so also 1 En. 90:9–13, 16; T.Jos. 19:6–8; 4 Ezra 13:1ff.; cf. *Midr. Rab.* Gen. 99.2);[77] Dan 7:14 in Rev 13:7–8; Exod 8:10 and 15:11, etc., in Rev 13:4; Exod 3:14 (esp. *Midr. Rab.* Exod. 3:14) in Rev 17:8 (cf. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5; cf. also Ezra 9:14b in 1QM 1.6b and Dan 11:40, 44–5 in 1QM 1.4). The point of these kinds of ironic uses is to mock the enemy's proud attempt to overcome God and his people and to underscore the fitting justice of the punishment.

There may be other examples of this reversal phenomenon, but the ones discussed should alert us to caution in making facile statements about noncontextual, atomistic, or straightforward contextual use, since the apocalyptic style is not always susceptible to such categories. Furthermore, every OT reference we have mentioned can be categorized as at least *broadly* contextual. Vanhoye has noted that John always employs OT references with a view to having them contribute to the unified argument of his work and that every page "witnesses to a penetrating intelligence of the ancient prophecies and of a perfect familiarity with their mode of expression."[78] Gangemi observes that John does not choose OT allusions at random but in accord with the main themes of the Apocalypse: divine transcendence, redemption, Yahweh's servant, Babylon's judgment, and the new creation of the heavenly Jerusalem.[79] And it is clear that John drew these unifying themes of his work from the OT and is, indeed, continuing the development of fundamental lines of OT salvation history.[80]

7. *Stylistic use of Old Testament language.* This use represents the most general category so far discussed. It has long been recognized that the Apocalypse contains a multitude of grammatical solecisms. Charles claimed it contained more grammatical irregularities than any other Greek document of the ancient world. He accounted for this with his famous dictum

---

[77] Cf. G. K. Beale, "The Problem of the Man from the Sea in IV Ezra 13 and Its Relation to the Messianic Concept in John's Apocalypse," *NovT* 25 (1983): 182–88.

[78] Vanhoye, "Utilisation du Livre d'Ezéchiel," 462–64.

[79] Gangemi, "Deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse," 322–38.

[80] Cambier, "Images de l'Ancien Testament," 118–21; Gangemi, "Deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse," 332–39.

that "while [John] writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew, and the thought has naturally affected the vehicle of expression," a judgment that has met with subsequent agreement, especially recently.[81]

But was this intentional on John's part or an unconscious by-product of his Semitic mind? It seems that his grammatical "howlers" are deliberate attempts to express Semitisms and Septuagintalisms in his Greek, the closest analogy being that of the Greek translations, especially that of Aquila.[82] The fact that most of the time the author does keep the rules further points to the solecisms being intentional.

Why did John write this way? His purpose was deliberately to create a "biblical" effect in the hearer and thus to demonstrate the solidarity of his work with that of the divinely inspired OT Scriptures.[83] A polemical purpose may also have been at work. John may have been expressing the idea that OT truth via the church as the new Israel was uncompromisingly penetrating the Gentile world and would continue to do so until the parousia.[84]

III. CONCLUSION

Perhaps one reason for the high degree of OT influence in the Apocalypse is that the author could think of no better way to describe some of his visions than with language used by the OT prophets to describe similar visions. Our examination of the use of the OT in the Apocalypse, particularly of its categories of usage, favors Fransen's evaluation: "The familiarity with the Old Testament, with the spirit which lives in the Old Testament, is a most essential condition for a fruitful reading of the Apocalypse."[85]

This conclusion runs counter to the conclusion of many scholars. However, the analysis throughout my commentary on Revelation provides further evidence pointing in the direction of a consistent contextual use of the OT.

Therefore, the conclusion of this brief overview is that the place of the

---

[81] Charles, *Revelation,* 1:cxliii. Cf. Sweet, *Revelation,* 16–17; Adela Y. Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: the Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 47; and above all Thompson, *Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax;* though Porter is a dissenting voice, arguing that what some have called Semitisms fall "within the range of possible registers of Greek usage in the 1st century" (S. E. Porter, *"The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion," NTS* 35 [1989]: 582–603).

[82] Sweet, *Revelation,* 16; see esp. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax,* 108.

[83] Sweet, *Revelation,* 16.

[84] Cf. somewhat similarly Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis,* 47; Thompson, *Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax,* 108.

[85] I. Fransen, "Cahier de Bible. Jesus, le Témoin Fidèle," *BVC* 16 (1956–57): 67; likewise Sweet, *Maintaining the Testimony of Jesus,* 111.

OT in the formation of thought in the Apocalypse is that of both a servant and a guide: for John the Christ-event is the key to understanding the OT, and yet reflection on the OT context leads the way to further comprehension of this event and provides the redemptive-historical background against which the apocalyptic visions are better understood; the New Testament interprets the Old and the Old interprets the New.[86]

✦

---

[86]Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse,* 120–21, holds, unconvincingly in my view, the one-sided view that the OT was not an object of interpretation by John but only the means of his own creative interpretation. For further discussion of the OT as an object and means of interpretation and the problems associated with this, see Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (ch. 2), "Excursus: Rejoinder to Evaluations of Daniel as Midrashic."