

# CONCEPTUALIZING HISTORICAL PERIODIZATION IN THE APOCALYPSE

THE CANONICAL SHAPING OF THE BEAST WITH SEVEN HEADS AND TEN HORNS

by

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# Abstract

The academic study of the seven-headed sea beast symbolism in the Apocalypse has proceeded along contemporary historical lines since the modern period. This approach seeks to locate the meaning of this symbolic reference within the historical context from which the book derives. While it remains true that careful historical analysis has advanced our understanding of the world in which the seer of Patmos lived and wrote, a strictly contemporary historical focus threatens to confine the significance of this apocalyptic symbol to the environs of the first century. In seeking to recover the theological and contemporary relevance of this symbol as a critique of imperial ambitions, this thesis argues for a reading strategy which locates the Book of Revelation foremost in the context of "canon." Such a reading stance illuminates the meaning of the symbolic beast in relationship to the deep intertextual and theological history which the final book of the Bible shares with the canonical corpus of Christian Scriptures.

# Preface

I was about nine or ten years old when I heard for the first time that our planet was destined to be devastated by a terrible monster in the not-too-distant future. This creature, with seven heads and ten horns, was about to emerge from the sea where it had been concealed till the last days. Its activities would be so devastating that whole cities, countries and islands would be annihilated. No one would be spared—except those who had given their lives to Jesus and were under his special protection. All of this was predicted in the Book of Revelation. This report came from a boy of about fourteen or fifteen, who had pieced together the disparate pieces of information he remembered from Bible studies his parents regularly held on their veranda. Needless to say that I was terrified by the whole idea and determined that I would not fall victim to the devilish sea monster. From that conversation, my interest in the Book of Revelation was ignited and the light shows no sign of going out anytime soon. This thesis is a continuation of that conversation held so long ago, although I hope that my musings on the Book of Revelation will be found to be much more informed and my arguments more cogent.

Having reached this point in the thesis writing process, I make only a modest attempt here to pay the debt of gratitude which I owe to the many individuals and institutions that have contributed to the completion of this project. I am first of all indebted to the religious studies professors in my undergraduate program, Dr. Larry Herr, Dr. Doug Matacio and Dr. Bruce Boyd; and to the administration at Canadian University College for perceiving "potential" in me and for their kind encouragement and support toward further education and professional development. Without their collective support, I might never have undertaken this most rewarding challenge. Special thanks is due to the BC Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for affording me the necessary time off from work to complete the writing process, as for my colleagues in pastoral ministry for the many

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I am most appreciative to my thesis advisor, Dr. Kent Clarke, and second reader, Dr. Tony Cummins, for their very valuable critiques and suggestions which have help me to think more clearly about my viewpoints. Their assistance is especially appreciated in consideration of the fact that the first introduction they had to my work was a completed first draft. Notwithstanding their valuable guidance, it goes without saying that the views expressed herein are entirely my own. I am also thankful to all the professors in the Biblical Studies Department for challenging my thinking in multitudinous and beneficial ways. My fellow students, James Tucker, David Sigrist and Kyle Parsons have been most helpful in pointing me to resources, inviting me to conferences and providing helpful feedback along the way. Their individual and collective help have contributed to the completion of this thesis, and for this I am very much appreciative.

In a class by themselves are the members of my immediate family: my wife Valita, son Jonathan and daughter Jesse. Without their support (and deprivation) the completion of this project would not have been possible. Val, it is your love for adventure and your spirit of endurance which set you apart as my most trustworthy human support. I look forward to many more adventures (and endurance) together. Lastly, and most important, all praise, laud and honour belong to my firmest and most enduring Support—God Almighty. *Except the Lord builds the house, the builders labour but in vain* (Ps. 127:1).

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# Introduction: Current Approaches

## I. Introduction

It would not be far-fetched to say that we live in an apocalyptic culture. The "mark of the beast" and the number 666 have captured the imagination of a growing segment within contemporary society. With best-selling books on fabulous end-time scenarios, opinions on the "number" and the "mark" of the beast abound. The beast itself is often identified with some contemporary entity within the religio-political sphere, one that is vilified in some way or another. In popular culture, the beast is amorphous, easily changed to fit the current political climate. One could say that the hermeneutical adaptability of the beast is characteristic of interpretations of this symbol since the Apocalypse first came ashore in Asia Minor some 2000 years ago.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Commentators usually identify four major "approaches" to the Book of Revelation: preterism, futurism, historicism, and idealism. See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1999), 44-49, and David A. DeSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 1-28, for overviews and critiques of these approaches. Preterists generally maintain that the "fulfillment" of the prophecies occurred in the distant past. In this view, the fulfilled predictions happened in close historical proximity to the author's own time, though some interpretations specify the time of Constantine as the *terminus ad quem* of the visions. Futurism proposes that most of Revelation's prophetic fulfillment (usually Chps. 4-22) is to happen in a brief time period just prior to the end of the world. One variety of futurist interpretations is seen in Hal Lindsey's best-selling *Left Behind* series. The historicist approach (sometimes called the "church-historical" view) sees Revelation as an outline of history from the author's time at the end of the first century A.D. up to the *eschaton*. In this perspective, the visions of Revelation unfold more or less sequentially, providing a "prophetic timeline" whereby the interpreter may judge his or her proximity to the eschatological culmination of history. Idealism (also called "spiritual" or "allegorical" interpretations) conceive of the visions of the Apocalypse not as predictions, but as timeless truths intended to put the Christian struggle against evil in perspective. While many commentators treat the "contemporary historical" method as a sub-category of preterism [See Ranko Stefanovic, *Revelation of Jesus Christ: Commentary on the Book of Revelation* (2nd ed.; Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2009), 11-12; Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 44-49, for example], historical critical scholars often distinguish their approach from preterism on the basis that the contemporary historical method does not envision "prediction" in the Apocalypse, but rather sees it as a book written to address specific historical situations of real Christian communities at the end of the first century. See for instance, DeSilva, *Rhetoric*, 6-8. This method proposes that the original recipients understood the messages being communicated by the visions of Revelation and responded appropriately. Cf. Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse: Interpreting the Book of Revelation*

Yet in another direction, the academic study of "the beast" of Revelation 13 has, in a sense, crystalized its identity.<sup>2</sup> There is near universal consensus that the beast, true to the original historical situation the Apocalypse is intended to address, depicts the villainy of a specific political opponent. With Ancient Rome identified as the contemporary political power, and a reference to the *Nero redivivus* myth discerned in the "wounded head" of the beast, its identity is near assured: generally, the beast is the voracious Roman Empire; while specifically it is Nero, the persecuting tyrant.<sup>3</sup> In this view, it follows that the wounding and healing of one of the heads of the beast forecasts Nero's return from the dead in the personage of the antichrist, the final, eschatological opponent of God's people.<sup>4</sup> Hence, Domitian, the reigning emperor at the time the Apocalypse is believed to have been written, is the second Nero in so far as he resurrects a Neronian-like persecution against the Christians.<sup>5</sup>

In a word, in most scholarly discourses on the subject of the sea beast of the Apocalypse, the legend of Nero's return is believed to be the cardinal hermeneutical cue which unpacks the meaning of this central eschatological symbol.<sup>6</sup> This positive

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(Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 138. The contemporary historical approach is the preferred method of the academy and the one with which this study especially engages. The exegesis of the beast symbolism which follows in later chapters, in so far as the method *must* fall under one category or another, may be placed tentatively under the "historicist" umbrella.

2. The beast which is in mind here and which will remain the focus of this study is the beast with seven heads and ten horns described in Revelation 13:1 as ascending from the sea. In this study it is variously called the "sea beast," "seven-headed beast," "eschatological beast," "apocalyptic beast," or simply, "the beast."
3. R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John: With Introduction, Notes, and Indices, also the Greek Text and English Translation* (2 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920), 1:xxv, 2:58-61, 77-79. Cf. Maria Ana Travassos Valdez, *Historical Interpretations of the "Fifth Empire": The Dynamics of Periodization from Daniel to António Vieira*, SJ (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 110.
4. Henry Barclay Swete, *Commentary on Revelation: The Greek Text*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel, 1977), 163-164.
5. But see Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1984), 84-110, who suggests a scenario of "perceived crisis," rather than an actual crisis during the reign of Domitian.
6. Citing C. A. Scott, *Revelation* (New Century Bible; London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905), 57, Paul S. Minear, *I Saw a New Earth: An Introduction to the Visions of the Apocalypse* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2003), 248, writes: "It is one of the points in the interpretation of the Apocalypse on which most modern scholars are agreed, that in this legend of *Nero redivivus* we are to find the explanation of the 'wounded head of 13:3.'" Minear is a notable exception to this consensus. Dismissing the Nero legend, he sees the wounding of the beast as the

identification moors the message of the Apocalypse firmly in the events of the first century, and consequently, eliminates the need for further speculation as to who or what the beast represents. This elegant explication of the sea beast symbolism in the Apocalypse appears, so it seems, to provide a strong counter-current to the flood of sentiments in popular culture.

Scholarly consensus notwithstanding, it is worth wondering if every "grounded and responsible"<sup>7</sup> study of this eschatological symbol in the Apocalypse has to buy into this straightforward contemporary historical solution in order to be considered legitimate exegesis. Can it not still be enquired if there is more to the seer's visionary construct than is offered by the reigning interpretation?<sup>8</sup> Is it out of place to interrogate the operating assumptions which prop up the edifice of the prevailing view in order to verify the integrity of its foundation? It is precisely such a reassessment (albeit in a limited way) which this study intends to undertake, with the hope of making a small contribution toward a clearer perception of this symbol in the Apocalypse.

## 2. Stating the Problem

Paul B. Decock has stated that it is a "conviction" of modern scholarship that "canonical literature has to be seen more clearly in relationship to contemporary non-

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destruction of Satan's kingdom by the death and resurrection of Jesus (247-60). Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 689-92, shares similar views as Minear. Cf. Brevard S. Childs, *The New Testament as Canon: An Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 504, who expresses misgivings at the straightforward historical solution.

7. DeSilva, *Rhetoric*, 10, describes the contemporary historical paradigm thus.

8. The author of the Apocalypse identifies himself as "John" (Rev. 1:1-2). While there is now scholarly consensus that the work was produced by a Christian writer living in the first century by that name, scholars are still divided as to his identity. See Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993), x, who discusses the unity of the book. See DeSilva, *Rhetoric*, 31-34, who expresses the consensus view of a single, non-pseudonymous authorship. I discuss scholarly perspective on the authorship of the Apocalypse in Chapter 3, section 2. For our present purposes, establishing John's identity is not immediately relevant. Throughout this thesis, I variously refer to him as "John," "John of Patmos," "the seer," or "the author."

canonical literature."<sup>9</sup> These include Jewish, Christian, and other.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, a second conviction of modern scholarship is that canonical writings are foremost to be understood vis-à-vis the historical context which gave rise to them.<sup>11</sup> Without question, from a *theoretical* perspective there is validity to these two working assumptions. In the first instance, the reality of the ebb and flow of cultural interchange between various groups in the Ancient Near East and in the Graeco-Roman world, forces the recognition that inter-cultural dialogue was part of every life. Hence, it is clear that biblical writers lived in and interacted with this broader cultural surrounding and employed to varying degrees common literary tools and trans-cultural symbols and tropes in order to facilitate their communication and exploit their various interests. Along these lines, viewing biblical writings in relation to other contemporary literary works certainly helps to contextualize the motivations, purposes, etc., of biblical authors, and can put one's interpretation of a biblical passage in perspective. In the second instance, it is to be accepted that most biblical writings are circumstantial; that is, they were written to address specific contemporary historical situations of a particular believing community. In the New Testament, the Epistles of Paul, for example, definitely fall into such a category. Therefore, the emphasis on a historical situation out of which biblical writings emerge is a very legitimate one.

However, as for the *practical* application of each of these starting assertions, there are major obstacles. In the first place, the notion that canonical literature must be seen more clearly in connection to non-canonical literature, usually results in a kind of cross-pollinating hermeneutic in which the ideological and theological trajectories of these two

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9. Paul B. Decock, "Some Issues in Apocalyptic in the Exegetical Literature of the Last Ten Years," *Neot* 33 (1999): 1.

10. Decock, "Issues in Apocalyptic," 1.

11. Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Political Perspective of the Revelation to John," *JBL* 96 (1977): 246, notes that this methodological underpinning was the "hardest won and most dearly held" possession in the victory of critical interpretation of the Apocalypse over against traditional understanding.

categories of texts are assumed to be the same.<sup>12</sup> Literary similarities are frequently understood to mean ideological similarities, and therefore theological kinship is assumed.<sup>13</sup> But such a hermeneutic fails to realize that biblical writers lived in dialectical tension with their environment, a kind of no-man's-land between "belonging and dissenting;" and that even while employing trans-cultural conventions, their messages were often counter-cultural and polemical.<sup>14</sup> In practice, "seeing" biblical writings in relation to non-biblical texts means more than a simple comparative exercise. It means that the latter carries equal hermeneutical weight with the former, and in most cases both are placed on parity for exegetical purposes.<sup>15</sup> In short, seeing biblical texts vis-à-vis extra-biblical texts means the

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12. While the use of term "ideology" is variously defined and is often intended or perceived negatively, its use in this study is value neutral; that is, the term is employed here in reference to the set of beliefs, assumptions, values, etc., which constructs a lens through which members of a social group understand, judge and affect the world around them, and which may or may not be perceived negatively by outsiders. Put another way, ideology subsumes religious, political, and social interests, beliefs, ideas, practices, perspectives, and the like—all of which shape the epistemological outlook of a particular social group. See Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 2007), 31-45, for an overview of the various uses of the term. See also, Trevor Purvis and Alan Hunt, "Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology," *The British Journal of Sociology* 44 (1993): 473-499. At times, ideology is interchangeable with the concept of "discourse" (though there are distinct differences), which also refers to an epistemological framework through which "reality" is perceived. See George E. Demacopoulos, *The Invention of Peter: Apostolic Discourse and Papal Authority in Late Antiquity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 2. In this study, "Theology" refers simply to the "study of God. Theology endeavours to define beliefs about divine reality, and as such inquires into the nature, character, and purposes of God—aspects of himself that God is believed to have "revealed." See further, Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1994), 117-119; David F. Ford, *Theology: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999). Theology and ideology are mutually informative, and in a certain sense may also be used interchangeably. But see Rollin G. Grams, "The Shaping of Christian Convictions and the Avoidance of Ideology: Paul's Contribution to a Vexing Issue in 1 Corinthians," *Baptistic Theologies* 3 (2011): 1-4, who argues that theology, rightly practiced, avoids and even undermines ideology.
  13. George Aichele, "Canon as Intertext: Restraint or Liberation?," in *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (eds. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier and Leroy A. Huizenga; Waco, TX.: Baylor University Press, 2008), 142-44, suggests that every text embodies an ideology. Indeed for Aichele, "the idea of an ideologically neutral reading, is purely abstract and fanciful. A text without ideology is a text that is not read."
  14. Lucien Legrand, *The Bible on Culture: Belonging or Dissenting* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), 168-176. Cf. Paul C. McGlasson, "The Significance of Context in Theology: A Canonical Approach," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (eds. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 69.
  15. Martti Nissinen, "Comparing Prophetic Sources: Principles and a Test Case," in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 5, has underscored that the business of comparing biblical and extra-biblical sources, while a "worthwhile" enterprise, is also "dangerous." This comparative endeavour is worthwhile "because it serves the purpose of

"deprivileging" of a canonical context in favour of an eclectic one. But again, such an approach fails to see that the theological particularities of biblical texts are not assimilated even by the deployment of common rhetorical strategies and trans-cultural tropes.<sup>16</sup> Hence, while Paul's speech on Mars Hill was comprehensible to his largely Greek listeners by their common language and rhetorical conventions—he even quoted one of their own poets (Acts 17:28)—his monotheism, belief in the bodily resurrection of the dead and the notion of a coming judgment were theologically and ideologically incompatible with the philosophies and polytheism of his pagan counterparts.

With regard to the second conviction, namely, that biblical texts are meant to address the immediate historical situation of particular believing communities, the insistence that this is once and finally true for all biblical writings precludes the possibility of any exceptions to the rule. While it is probably the case that many, perhaps most biblical texts were meant to address, or apply to a particular historical situation, might it not also be possible that the concerns of some biblical writings are meant to look beyond, even while addressing contemporary situations?<sup>17</sup> While it has been argued that the main attribute of Old Testament prophecy is "forth-telling," does this insistence preclude the possibility (or reality) of "foretelling," for instance?<sup>18</sup> Another problem with this universalization is that

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viewing the biblical text in its cultural context," but it is dangerous "because it easily leads to sweeping generalizations or to a goal-directed exploitation of ancient Near Eastern sources to justify Bible-based and sometimes questionable claims." Nissinen further emphasizes that the presuppositions of the scholar may predetermine the results of his or her comparative exercise, and therefore it is worth asking "Why am I doing this?"

16. My assertion here does not deny that there are a variety of "theological" voices in Scripture. Nor do I assume that such voices can be easily "harmonized." But I do assert that Scripture, in its various voices and perspectives, bears witness to God's divine purposes in the world. Cf. Marianne Meye Thompson, "Reading What is Written in the Book of Life: Theological Interpretation of the Book of Revelation Today," in *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (eds. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 158-161.
17. See for example, Richard Bauckham, "For Whom Were the Gospels Written," in *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences* (ed. Richard Bauckham; Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 1998), 9-48, who argues convincingly that the Gospels in all likelihood may have been written for Christians generally, as opposed to their being composed in response to the specific historical circumstances of the intended readers.
18. See for example, John C. Trever, "The Book of Daniel and the Origin of the Qumran Community," *The Biblical*

the occasion, audience, date, provenance, etc., of many, perhaps most biblical writings are not known with any certainty.<sup>19</sup> Consequently, the quest to reconstruct putative historical situations tends to shift the emphasis away from the biblical texts themselves in favour of looking "behind the text."<sup>20</sup> In short, contemporary historical emphases tend to re-focus the exegetical lens from a theological center to a historical one.<sup>21</sup>

These two "convictions" are particularly pivotal for the Book of Revelation which, of all the writings of the Bible, is most frequently abstracted from its canonical context and interpreted in relation to a constellation of non-canonical texts and Ancient Near Eastern mythological traditions, and its symbols understood as an index of contemporary historical referents.<sup>22</sup> Following the contemporary historical logic, commentators generally insist that the Roman Empire of the author's world is the principal focus of his sea beast representation. The seer does not look beyond his historical horizon, it is assumed. While in due course this study will affirm, along with contemporary historical scholarship, a central place for the Roman Empire in the beastly portrait of Revelation, the conclusions drawn from the analysis here will be markedly different from that of present scholarship.<sup>23</sup> Instead of a contemporary historical focus, I aim to demonstrate through the analysis of the seven-

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*Archaeologist* 48 (1985): 92-95.

19. What Nissinen, "Comparing Prophetic Sources," 7, writes concerning the Hebrew Bible is easily extended to the whole biblical canon: "The Hebrew Bible, again, is a literary composition unparalleled by any ancient Near Eastern document, and therefore, presents a particular challenge to comparison, especially if it aims at historical reconstruction.... Anyone familiar with the critical study of the Bible knows how arduous a task the dating of the prophetic texts (or any text) of the Hebrew Bible can be, and how many divergent opinions, based on different methodological approaches, have been introduced into the discussion."
20. Robert W. Wall, "The Significance of a Canonical Perspective of the Church's Scripture," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 528.
21. Wall, "Canonical Perspective," 529: "For all their exegetical utility, the tools of historical criticism can be used in such a manner as to misplace Scripture's theological reference point with a historical one, freezing its normative meaning in ancient worlds that do not bear upon today's church."
22. See discussion in Ian Paul, "The Book of Revelation: Image, Symbol and Metaphor," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (ed. Steve Moyise; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 131-147.
23. Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:clxxxiii, for example, notes that Revelation should be "interpreted in reference to definite concrete kingdoms, powers, events, and expectations." Charles, however, understands contemporary Rome as the vilified beast of the Apocalypse.

headed beast, that the Book of Revelation evinces a trans-historical perspective, with a temporal view which subsumes and expands the author's own historical horizon. Which is to say that the Apocalyptic vision of Patmos, which is emphatically about the *parousia*, puts all human history in perspective in light of this event.<sup>24</sup> On the basis of the analysis to follow, I propose that there are a number of good reasons to re-examine the consensual interpretation of this "apocalyptic" symbol as it presently stands.

### *2.1. Five Points for Consideration*

One reason to reconsider the interpretation of the sea beast imagery lies in the fact that scholarly conclusions on this symbol rest, in many ways, on a hermeneutic undergirded by dubious assumptions regarding the literary genre of "apocalypse," and the social setting and function of texts now classified in the genre. And because the Book of Revelation is considered as the paradigmatic apocalypse, these presuppositions which are brought to bear on the interpretation of the sea beast imagery render the historical solution open to question. To be sure, the whole notion of what an apocalypse is and the criteria by which texts are included in the genre remain unresolved even after more than a hundred and fifty years of scholarly effort to bring precision to the definition.<sup>25</sup> But as we shall see in Chapter

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24. Cf. Rev 1:7; 2:5, 16; 3:11; 22:7, 12, 20.

25. Note for instance, Michael E. Stone, "Apocalyptic Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (ed. Michael E. Stone; CRINT 2.2; Assen: Van Gorcum/Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 393, who assesses the situation thus: "Apocalypticism" is characterized by a recent scholar in terms of the following features: the acute expectation of the fulfillment of divine promises; cosmic catastrophe; a relationship between the time of the end and preceding human and cosmic history; angelology and demonology; salvation beyond catastrophe; salvation proceeding from God; a future saviour figure with royal characteristics; a future state characterized by the catchword 'glory'. All these features bear upon eschatology.... The problem arising from this definition is that many works which belong to the genre 'apocalypse' contain much that is not covered or rendered comprehensible by the above description, while many works not formally apocalypses are imbued with this apocalypticism." Likewise, R. Barry Matlock, *Unveiling the Apocalyptic Paul: Paul's Interpreters and the Rhetoric of Criticism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 15, maintains that not only are "apocalyptic" and "apocalyptic literature" ambiguous terms, but the "picking apart of the whole notion" of "apocalyptic," he thinks, "is long overdue." Matlock believes he accomplishes this in Chapter four of his book (p. 247-316) where he states bluntly: "There is no true consensus view of 'apocalyptic' in the literature—the state of the question is one of continual disarray." He speaks of the "diversity of opinion over 'apocalyptic' and the diverse methodological issues inherent in the task" (256). For



3, much hangs on the validity of such a generic category and its corollaries.

A second reason to question the reigning view emerges from the field of genology, an area of research concerned with the study of genres. New developments in this area of study make it clear that an "essentialist" view of genres (the classic view) in which texts fit more or less into rigid categories with fixed constituents can no longer be maintained.<sup>26</sup> And since in the classic awareness genres are determinative for meaning, this new understanding poses peculiar challenges to the already embattled endeavour to bring clarity to the definition of the genre "apocalypse."<sup>27</sup>

A third reason to reassess the consensus position is occasioned from the growing number of scholars who are raising serious doubts about the adequacy of form-critical analysis—and its corollary sociology of deprivation—to account for the ideological diversity found in apocalypses.<sup>28</sup> Their questions are especially pointed for an enigmatic text such as the Book of Revelation which exhibits multi-generic features and theological affinities to the texts found in the canon of the Jewish-Christian Scriptures. Again, how these factors

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similar views, see further, Gregory L. Linton, "Reading the Apocalypse as Apocalypse: The Limits of Genre," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation* (ed. David L. Barr; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 9-42; Crispin Fletcher-Louis, "Jewish Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism," in vol. 2 of *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; eds. Tom Holmen and Stanley E. Porter; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 1569-1607, esp. 1577-1587; Carol Newsom, "Spying Out the Land: A Report From Genology," in *Seeking Out the Wisdom of the Ancients: Essays Offered to Honor Michael V. Fox on the Occasion of His Sixty-fifth Birthday* (eds. Ronald L. Troxel, Kelvin G. Friebel and Dennis R. Magary; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 2005), 437-50; Gabriele Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition: The Contribution of Italian Scholarship," in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium* (eds. John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1991), 33-50; Decock, "Issues in Apocalyptic," 1-33. See further Chapter 3, section 3-4.3 of this study.

26. See Newsom, "Report From Genology," 437-50.

27. See discussion in Chapter 3, section 5.

28. Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1-54, explains that "deprivation theory" or the "conventicle approach" supposes that apocalypses are produced under specific circumstances of deprivation, marginalization and alienation, and are thus uniformly "crisis" literature. See further, Linton, "Limits of Genre," 9-41; Paolo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History* (trans. William J. Short; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1996), 35-47; Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 33-50. Cf. Paul S. Minear, *New Testament Apocalyptic* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1981), 48-63. Cf. Leon Morris, *Apocalyptic* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 20-21. For further discussion and references see Chapter 3, sections 4.1-5.3.

bear on the interpretation of the sea beast imagery will become apparent as we proceed.

A fourth reason to question the critical accordance on the interpretation of the eschatological beast of Revelation, may be adduced from the history of interpretation of this symbol, especially the evidence from its earliest interpreters. While exhibiting a breath of interpretation (including allegorical renderings), Patristic commentators who treated the beast imagery in Revelation 13, largely perceived this symbol in a linear-historical sense as a prophetic re-rendering of the beasts of Daniel 7. Many saw the sea beast as directly related to the four-kingdom schema in Daniel 7 (and specifically the fourth beast), representing a more or less sequential unfolding of history—a history whose culmination in the divine kingdom, lay beyond their own day.<sup>29</sup> This type of interpretation is seen in the likes of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and later in Andrew of Caesarea, among others.<sup>30</sup> And while Patristic interpretations are neither unanimous nor prescriptive, the historical and social proximity of these authors to the Apocalypse make their exegetical insights instructive.<sup>31</sup>

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29. For example, Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* 49 (ANF 5:214), writes concerning the sea beast of Revelation 13: "For this is the fourth beast, whose head was wounded and healed again, in its being broken up or even dishonoured, and partitioned into four crowns; and he then (Antichrist) shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it. For this is what is meant by the prophet when he says, 'He will give life unto the image, and the image of the beast will speak.'" Similarly, Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.26.1 (ANF 1:555), interprets the seven-headed beast symbol in relation to Daniel and sees the culmination of history beyond his own day: "In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned. He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel.... It is manifest, therefore, that of these [potentates], he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be himself the eighth among them.... For that the kingdom must be divided, and thus come to ruin."
30. Gerbern S. Oegema, "The Reception of the Book of Daniel (and Danielic Literature) in the Early Church," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins: Essays from the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (eds. Gerbern S. Oegema and James H. Charlesworth; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 243-52; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25-30 (ANF 1:553-560); Hippolytus, *Antichrist* (ANF 5:204-219); Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary on the Apocalypse," in *Greek Commentaries on Revelation: Oecumenius and Andrew of Caesarea* (ed. Thomas C. Oden; trans. William C. Weinrich; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011), 161-63. See further, William C. Weinrich, ed., *Latin Commentaries on Revelation* (Ancient Christian Texts; trans. William C. Weinrich; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2011).
31. Leslie Baynes, "Revelation 5:1 and 10:2a, 8-10 in the Earliest Greek Tradition: A Response to Richard Bauckham," *JBL* 129 (2010): 802-3, notes that modern interpreters often give "short shrift" to Patristic interpretation. But quoting Cliff Durousseau, Baynes writes that "an acquaintance with the history of interpretation of problematic texts is in many instances an essential and first step towards a sane and sober

Lastly, and the most important reason to seek a better understanding of the eschatological sea beast, and the one which this study will seek most to clarify, comes from the Book of Revelation itself. The pervasive manner in which the Apocalypse makes use of the Old Testament in general, and particularly so in its rendering of the eschatological beast, strongly suggests that the locus of meaning for this symbol is to be found within this context rather than to be derived from purely literary-critical, sociological and/or contemporary historical emphases. In this study I intend to explore the notion of a "canonical theology" in the Book of Revelation, and in so doing propose an contrasting, though preliminary, interpretation of the symbolic beast with seven heads and ten horns. However, before proceeding to clarify my approach and the scope of the study, and to state the thesis more precisely, a closer examination of recent scholarship on the beast of Revelation 13 is warranted.

### 3. Review of Current Scholarship

This section examines the perspectives of three scholars whose individual and collective work on the Book of Revelation will continue to influence generations of scholars to come: David Aune, Adela Yarbro Collins and Richard Bauckham. Aune and Yarbo Collins, in particular, are key figures and collaborators in apocalyptic studies, and here again, their impact is of great importance to the field. The respective approach of each author to the Book of Revelation will be shown to fully exploit the two core convictions discussed above (namely, that biblical texts are best understood in relationship to extra-biblical sources, and that biblical writings are to be seen as products of particular historical situations which they were intended to address), while at the same time demonstrating differing views on the significance of the Old Testament context in the final book of the

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exegesis... not to mention the fact that such a history is particularly interesting and instructive in itself."

Bible.<sup>32</sup> In comparison to Aune and Yarbrow Collins, Bauckham has a high regard for the function of the Old Testament context in the Book of Revelation. Nevertheless, his hermeneutical strategy is eclectic enough and his interpretation of the beast coheres well enough with the consensus that the operating assumptions of the contemporary historical approach are also seen to undergird his conclusions to more or less a degree.<sup>33</sup> The following review will consider select works of these three authors in order to put in perspective the scholarly approach to the Book of Revelation, and the resulting hermeneutical conclusions regarding the identity of the sea beast.

### 3.1. *Revelation and Apocalyptic Tradition*

David Aune, like Bauckham and Yarbrow Collins, maintains that Revelation shares a common apocalyptic tradition with extra-canonical apocalypses due to the occurrence of formal and thematic similarities in both categories of texts.<sup>34</sup> In his essay, "The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic," Aune identifies four apocalyptic motifs which

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32. Yarbrow Collins gives minimum significance to the Old Testament context in the Book of Revelation. For example, in Adela Yarbrow Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1976), 1-2, Yarbrow Collins writes that "dogmatic" approaches which focus on "the Old Testament and Jewish Background" have "hindered" the interpretation of the Apocalypse. Instead, Yarbrow Collins emphasizes the mythological stories and symbols in Greco-Roman and Ancient Near Eastern cultures as keys to understanding the apocalyptic imageries and message of Revelation. Aune is also "conservative" in the significance he attributes to the use of the Old Testament in Revelation. His three-volume work, David E. Aune, *Revelation* (3 vols.; WBC 52a-c; Dallas: Word, 1997-98), is criticized by Jon Paulien, "Criteria and the Assessment of Allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (ed. Steve Moyise; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 122-123, for the minimum attention given to Old Testament allusions in the Book of Revelation. By contrast, Bauckham sees the Old Testament as fundamentally important to understanding the symbols and theology of the Book of Revelation. See for example, Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 18. I discuss the relevance of the Old Testament context in Chapter 2, section 3.
  33. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, x-xi: "Revelation's use of the Old Testament scriptures is an essential key to its understanding. The pattern of almost continuous allusion to the Old Testament throughout the book is not a haphazard use of the Old Testament language, as some scholars have mistakenly thought. It is a pattern of disciplined and deliberate *allusion* to specific Old Testament texts. Reference to and interpretation of these texts is an extremely important part of the meaning of the text of the Apocalypse" (emphasis original).
  34. David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and Palestinian Jewish Apocalyptic," in *The Pseudepigrapha and Christian Origins: Essays from the Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (eds. Gerbern S. Oegema and James H. Charlesworth; New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 169-92; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 38-91; Yarbrow Collins, "Political Perspective," 241-256.

occur in the Apocalypse as well as in the roughly contemporaneous apocalypses *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and the *Similitudes of Enoch*: (1) the terror of humanity before the throne of judgment (Rev. 6:15-16; *1 En.* 62:3-5); (2) the Messiah seated on the throne of God and judging the wicked (Rev. 3:21; 6:16; 22:1, 3; *1 En.* 45:3; 51:1; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2, 5; 69:26-29); (3) the cry for vengeance and the Numerus lustorum (Rev. 6:9-11; *1 En.* 47:1-4; *4 Ez.* 4:35-37; *2 Bar.* 23:4-5a); and (4) the supernatural kings from the East (Rev. 16:12-16; 19:19-21; 20:7-10; *1 En.* 56:5-7).<sup>35</sup>

Bauckham, in paving the way for Aune's analysis, compares Revelation to Jewish, Christian, Rabbinic, and Mandaean apocalyptic traditions ranging in dates from the second or first century B.C.E. up to the medieval period, again outlining four thematic similarities: (1) blood and horses (Rev 14:20b; *1 En.* 100:3; *4 Ezra* 15:35-37; etc); (2) completing the number of martyrs (Rev. 6:9-11; *1 En.* 47:1-4; *4 Ez.* 4:35-37; *2 Bar.* 23: 4-5a); (3) giving up the dead (Rev. 20:13; *1 En.* 51:1; *4 Ez.* 7:32; *2 Bar* 21: 23; 42:8, *Ap. Pet.* 4:3-4; *Ps. Philo*, LAB 3:10; etc.); and (4) silence in heaven (Rev. 8:1; rabbinic traditions).<sup>36</sup> Both scholars attribute the many "impressive" thematic similarities between Revelation and the other apocalyptic texts to John's familiarity with contemporary apocalyptic ideas rather than to direct literary dependence on these other apocalypses, and visa versa.<sup>37</sup> But at least in some cases, Aune believes that John and the author of the *Similitudes* were "dependent on a common *written* source, which each author partially reformulated in a distinctive way."<sup>38</sup>

Similarly, Yarbrow Collins finds many shared thematic similarities between Revelation and other apocalypses, including numerical symbolism, the use of gematria, the confinement of evil angels to the underworld, order in the macrocosmos, order in the activity of heavenly beings, the use of the zodiac, and Hellenistic arithmological tradition, among others.<sup>39</sup> For

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35. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 172-181.

36. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 38-91.

37. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 173, notes that "Most scholars... have not thought it likely that the Apocalypse was dependent on the texts of the *Similitudes*, *4 Ezra*, or *2 Baruch*." Cf. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 39.

38. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 174 (emphasis original).

Yarbro Collins, Revelation and other apocalypses, employ the genre "apocalypse," respond to "context-bound" social situations, and amplify "mystical experiences."<sup>40</sup> These three scholars, like most academic interpreters of the Apocalypse, underscore the generic and thematic similarities between Revelation and other apocalypses and suggest that a common apocalyptic tradition lies at the foundation of these various texts.

### 3.2. *Revelation and Ancient Near Eastern Mythological Traditions*

In addition to apocalyptic tradition, Yarbro Collins, capitalizing on the mythological approach of Herman Gunkel and Wilhelm Bousset, emphasizes John's dependence on a combination of various versions of the *combat myth* from different cultures of the Ancient Near East.<sup>41</sup> For Yarbro Collins, "the narrative patterns" and symbols of Revelation are derived from combat myth traditions in Akkadian, Hittite, Egyptian, Greco-Roman, and other cultures of the ancient world, though Revelation 12 is believed to most closely resemble the Leto myth about the birth of the god Apollo.<sup>42</sup> Yarbro Collins asserts that the Book of Revelation is to be understood within this tradition, which the author has "adapted to interpret a conflict situation," and which has a central function in the narrative framework of the book.<sup>43</sup>

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39. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology in Jewish and Christian Apocalypticism* (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 67-69, 84-85, 115-118, 105, 113, 121-122.

40. Yarbro Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 19-20.

41. Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 2. Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Book of Revelation," in *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (ed John J. Collins; vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed John J. Collins, Bernard McGinn, and Stephen J. Stein; New York: Continuum, 1998), 394. See, Hermann Gunkel, *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit: Eine Religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung über Gen 1 und Ap Joh 12* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1895). Gunkel's original work was recently translated in English. See, Hermann Gunkel and Heinrich Zimmern, *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton* (Biblical Resource Series; trans. K. William Whitney Jr.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006); Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis* (KEK 16; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1906), 351-356. For a critique of Gunkel's approach, see Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:311, 2:76.

42. Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 2, 57-83.

43. Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 3, 57-83. Revelation 12 is where both Gunkel and Yarbro Collins see the most extensive expression of the myth.

Aune likewise in his three-volume commentary, in addition to amassing a wealth of ancient Near Eastern parallels to explain the symbolisms of Revelation, also assigns combat myth traditions a central place in the interpretation of Revelation 12, where again, the seer is believed to be dependent on sources derived from a wide range of cultural backgrounds.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, the assertion that Revelation is to be interpreted most clearly in connection to a wider literary and cultural context is evident from all three scholars. The Apocalypse is an eclectic mosaic of apocalyptic and Ancient Near Eastern traditions; and as such, serves as a creative construal of the author's diatribe against the Roman Empire.

### 3.3. *Interpreting the Sea Beast*

As it relates specifically to Revelation 13, Aune maintains that John's use of the beast images in this chapter picks up on common currency in other contemporary apocalypses. Namely, that the sea and land beasts of Revelation 13 reflect the common motif of Leviathan and Behemoth present in *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, as well as in the Talmud and Midrashim.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, he argues that the motif of the sea beast in Revelation 13 is employed to encrypt contemporary expectations regarding the return of Nero Caesar.<sup>46</sup> Further, the "kings of the East" in Rev 16:12, are to be identified with the Parthians as in *1 Enoch* and the *Sibylline Oracles*, where this motif is used in connection to the *Nero redivivus* myth.<sup>47</sup> Both Bauckham and Yarbrow Collins outline similar explanations in regard to Nero, the beast and the Parthian kings.<sup>48</sup> Along the same vein, Bauckham notes the common practice of "gematria" in Jewish and pagan literature, such as the *Sibylline Oracles*, and

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44. See Aune, *Revelation*, 2:667-74.

45. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 180-181; Aune, *Revelation*, 2:728-30. Of course the names of these beasts derive from the canonical book of Job, though the elaboration found in the Palestinian apocalypses are absent from the biblical text.

46. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:738-740.

47. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:891-94. Cf. Bauckham, *Book of Revelation*, 19. In this scenario the Medes and Parthians headed by *Nero redivivus* are to attack Rome from the East.

48. Bauckham, *Book of Revelation*, 19; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 384-452; Yarbrow Collins, "Book of Revelation," in *Origins* (ed. Collins) 396-98; Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 176-84.

deduces a complex numerology illustrating how the gematria 666 of Nero Caesar *in Hebrew* reveals the identity of the beast in Revelation.<sup>49</sup> Seen in relation to the seven heads of Revelation 17:10, it is the resurrected Nero, as the antichrist, who is to be the eighth head of the beast in a succession of Roman emperors.<sup>50</sup> For Bauckham, "Nero Caesar is the name of the beast."<sup>51</sup> Yarbrow Collins, in turn, arrives at the same conclusion, noting that "the beast signifies both the Roman Empire in general and Nero in particular."<sup>52</sup> Again, all three scholars reflect the common agreement that the author of Revelation takes up the popular *Nero redivivus* myth in his description of the beast with seven heads and ten horns.

### 3.4. *The Myth of Nero's Return*

By way of explanation, a fairly coherent portrait of the *Nero redivivus* legend emerges from the histories of Suetonius, Tacitus and Cassius Dio.<sup>53</sup> The popularity of Nero had waned so significantly near the end of his reign that rebellion in Gaul was followed by rebellion in Italy and elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Finding himself bereft of support, Nero fled to a private villa owned by one of his freedmen where he hid in fear for his life. The terrified Nero quickly learned that the Senate had declared him a public enemy and ordered his immediate arrest.<sup>55</sup> With the threat of public humiliation and execution, the fugitive Nero, on June 11, 68 C.E., ended

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49. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 384-394. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:737-40; Yarbrow Collins, "Book of Revelation," in *Origins* (ed. Collins) 397-98.

50. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 396.

51. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 384. Bauckham notes the debt of modern scholarship to four nineteenth century scholars who independently deduced that the gematria of 666, with necessary tweaking, is "Nero Caesar" in Hebrew. Bauckham further underlines that, "The majority of modern scholars find a reference to Nero in Revelation 13:18, where the number of the beast is said to be 666." Interestingly, even the variant number 616 is shown by Bauckham to equate to Nero Caesar (387)!

52. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 184. Cf. Yarbrow Collins, *Cosmology and Eschatology*, 177-18.

53. Edward Champlin, *Nero* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003), 1-38, sketches a portrait of Nero based on the histories of Suetonius, *Nero*, 40-50, Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 63, and Tacitus, *Annals*, 13-16. See also, A. Momigliano, "Nero," in vol. 10 of *The Cambridge Ancient History* (eds. I. E. S. Edwards, Cyril John Gadd and N. G. L. Hammond; London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 702-42. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:738.

54. Champlin, *Nero*, 1-3.

55. Champlin, *Nero*, 5.



his life by a self-inflicted dagger wound to the neck.<sup>56</sup> However, due to his popularity in the Eastern provinces and the private nature of his burial, a rumour quickly spread that he had not in fact died but had rather escaped to Parthia in the East from whence he would return to wreak havoc on Rome. At least two impostors—both in the first century—are reported to have exploited this legend by pretending to be the returning Nero.<sup>57</sup> The idea of some (im)famous dead personage, who by popular rumour was believed to either still be alive or to someday return from the dead, is well attested in the ancient world, as Aune points out.<sup>58</sup> But the legend of Nero's return takes on disproportionate significance in comparison to these attestations, due to his cruelty (including the murder of his wife and of his mother), his persecution of Christians in Rome, and his position as the last emperor in the Julio-Claudian dynasty.<sup>59</sup>

### 3.5. *Nero redivivus Myth in Greco-Roman Writing*

In light of the foregoing, one reason for deducing the *Nero redivivus* myth in the Apocalypse is that the myth, as well as being popular in Greco-Roman writings of the period, is also taken up in other apocalyptic works.<sup>60</sup> The conglomeration of Greco-Roman and Jewish prophecies known as the *Sibylline Oracles* contain many not-so-subtle reflections on the historical Nero and the myth of his return.<sup>61</sup> In what is believed to be one version of the myth, Nero is evidently forecasted to return from the East with a great army to wreak havoc on the Roman Empire (*Sib. Or.* 4:137-139). In another version, Nero is "the great beast" (*Sib. Or.* 8:157) who is responsible for the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (*Sib. Or.*

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56. Champlin, *Nero*, 6.

57. Champlin, *Nero*, 10-12. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:737-740.

58. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:740.

59. Champlin, *Nero*, 36-37; Aune, *Revelation*, 2:738-40.

60. See discussion in Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 407-423. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:737-740; Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 176-183.

61. References to the *Sibylline Oracles* are based on John J. Collins, "The Sibylline Oracles," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 1: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009), 317-472.

5:150-151); and who, as the eschatological opponent of God's people (in language reminiscent of Daniel) will declare himself equal to God, destroy two-thirds of humanity and exhibit "unsurpassed cunning" (*Sib. Or.* 5:33-34, 102-103, 363, 366). As part of the same version, Beliar is personified as the returning Nero performing miracles and deceiving mankind (*Sib. Or.* 3:63-74).<sup>62</sup>

Another apocalypse, the second century Christian composition, *Ascension of Isaiah* (4:2-14), identifies Beliar (Nero) as a "lawless king" and "matricide" who is to persecute the church, proclaim himself God and receive worship, and reign for 1332 days; but he will be destroyed by the returning Christ.<sup>63</sup> The comparison of Nero to the antichrist figure mentioned in Daniel 7, 2 Thessalonians and Revelation 13 is clearly evident in this work.<sup>64</sup> Still another Christian work, the *Apocalypse of Peter* (14:11), is taken to indicate the death of Peter at the hands of Nero, who presumably would disappear only to return at a later period.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps most significantly Victorinus Bishop of Petovium, in his late third century commentary on Revelation, interprets the "wounding" of the beast of Revelation 13 as a reference to the resurrected Nero, who is to be the antichrist at some future period.<sup>66</sup> In light of the popularity of this legend in Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian writings of the period, it then follows that for Aune, Bauckham, Yarbrow Collins and much of modern scholarship, Revelation's portrait of the sea beast symbolism reflect upon this popular myth.

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62. Collins, "Sibylline Oracles," 317-472. See also, Champlin, *Nero*, 12-16.

63. References to the *Ascension of Isaiah* are based on M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Volume 2: Expansions of the 'Old Testament' and Legends, Wisdom and Philosophical Literature, Prayers, Psalms, and Odes, Fragments of Lost Judeo-Hellenistic Works* (ed. James H. Charlesworth; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2009), 143-176. See also, Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 420-21.

64. Cf. Champlin, *Nero*, 18; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 411, 420.

65. This reference in the *Apocalypse of Peter* is only found in the Greek text of the Rainer fragment. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 411-12.

66. Weinrich, *Latin Commentaries*, 17-18; William C. Weinrich, ed., *Revelation* (ACCS; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2005), xxii, 200. See also Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, 164.

### 3.6. *Reassessing a Nero redivivus Myth in Revelation*

The tendency then to see Revelation as taking up the *Nero redivivus* myth is understandable in light of the attested presence of the legend in contemporary apocalyptic works, especially the *Sibylline Oracles*. If several texts from the first century onwards reflect contemporary political intrigues about *Nero redivivus*, why should it be otherwise with the Apocalypse? The similarity in language between Revelation's account of the beast and the account of the Nero legend in the *Sibylline Oracles* and other apocalyptic works is too striking to be coincidental. Yet, it is noteworthy that Bauckham writes, "Revelation says nothing explicitly about the historical Nero," though the book "probably alludes to the Neronian persecution."<sup>67</sup> Consequently, one is left to "well imagine" that the author of the Apocalypse conceived of Nero as a persecuting tyrant since the events surrounding Nero's death "would have been fresh in the memory of John and his first readers."<sup>68</sup> Bauckham argues that John of Patmos employs two different traditions of the Nero legend in Chapters 13 and 17, while conceding that Revelation's portrayal of Nero's return is "quite contrary" to and "differs very significantly from" the pagan and Jewish forms of the legend.<sup>69</sup> Indeed for Bauckham, "[T]he context into which he [the author] has here incorporated it is *unique*. Nowhere else is the expectation of the return of Nero connected with a visionary interpretation of the fourth beast of Daniel 7."<sup>70</sup> Not only so, but Bauckham argues that the tradition of a "resurrected" Nero occurs for the first time in Revelation, and Augustine's mention of this version of the myth in the early fifth century is most likely an interpretation of Rev 13.<sup>71</sup>

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67. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 412, 414. Bauckham thinks that it is significant that the myth does not appear in any of the Jewish apocalypses.

68. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 412.

69. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 423, 429.

70. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 423, emphasis added.

71. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 421-23. Bauckham notes that the term "redivivus" is misleading because the common belief was that Nero had not in fact died, but had rather escaped to the East. See also Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 183, for a similar conclusion. Thus Bauckham concedes that Revelation's use of the myth is unique

Aune too notices "the vague and general reference to the myth in Revelation 13," while Yarbrow Collins states the case more clearly: "this particular form of the Nero legend is *peculiar* to the Book of Revelation."<sup>72</sup> Similarly, concerning the apocalyptic tradition of Leviathan and Behemoth, not only does Revelation refrain from assigning names (or a female gender) to the beasts, but Aune correctly observes that the expectation of the two beasts serving as food for the righteous in the eschaton is "missing from Revelation," but present in *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Similitudes*, and Rabbinic tradition.<sup>73</sup> He also thinks it possible that *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* are indebted to *1 Enoch* for their version of the tradition, whereas again, Revelation is peculiar in its rendering of it.<sup>74</sup>

My contention here is that it is more than incidental that Revelation assigns names to none of the beasts, but calls the second beast a "false prophet" elsewhere in the text (16:13; 19:20). It is more than significant that the beasts do not serve as food for the righteous as in other apocalypses and Rabbinic tradition, but find their place in the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). It is more than "striking" that Revelation is "vague" and "quite contrary" to, and "differs very significantly from" these other apocalypses in its use of the Nero "tradition." For this writer, it is significant that Revelation paints a "unique" portrait of the "Nero beast." And it is of great import that the purported use of the combat myth tradition in Revelation has to be conceived of as an "international myth" which the author consciously adapts from diverse cultures, since no single myth tradition conforms to its depiction.<sup>75</sup> The approach to Revelation which contemporary historical scholarship adopts

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in its suggestion of a resurrected Nero (Bauckham does discuss one other possible mention of a resuscitated Nero in *Sib. Or.* 5.363-367, but concludes that this reference is "deliberately ambiguous").

72. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 181. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 176, emphasis added

73. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 181. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:728-29.

74. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:728.

75. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 187, concedes that "the mythic motifs and patterns used in Revelation 12 could not have been derived from any single religious tradition." Rather, it is argued that the seer was "deliberately choosing to be international by composing his narrative with elements taken from a *variety of cultural contexts*" (emphasis added). By this strategy, Yarbrow Collins evades the criticism against Gunkel's hypothesis of a combat myth in Revelation. Gunkel's supposition of the myth in Revelation 12 was criticized by Charles, *Revelation of St.*

is one that is clearly eclectic. The seer is believed to be thoroughly familiar with not only apocalyptic tradition, but also with diverse Ancient Near Eastern traditions which he co-opts and synthesizes in his apocalyptic propaganda.

The crux of the issue is that the Book of Revelation is not seen primarily as a theological document with strong theological ties to the Hebrew scriptural tradition, like Paul or the Gospels. As a result, anything in Greco-Roman or ANE cultural background that merely resembles one of the author's imageries or themes automatically assumes exegetical importance in its interpretation. In this regard, Revelation is shown to be little different from the "hodgepodge"<sup>76</sup> of Greco-Roman, Jewish and Christian traditions found in the heterogenous *Sibylline Oracles*. Revelation is believed to have adopted the Jewish aspect of the legend from the *Sibylline Oracles*, and other traditions. In a word, there are no checks placed on what tradition(s) the author of the Apocalypse draws upon. Indeed, parallels to his apocalyptic imageries are found everywhere in his contemporary world. The seer of Patmos is a typical "apocalypticist"; an "international man" who draws upon diverse traditions to stage his apocalyptic protest against Rome.<sup>77</sup> But, as this thesis will argue, the theological bearings of the Apocalypse restrict this kind of democratic, assimilative hermeneutic.

I maintain that Revelation's exegetical tradition regarding the sea beast is different from that which is reflected in "apocalyptic" and ANE myth traditions, and therefore, that the origin and meaning of this symbol, in important ways, is other than what is concluded from this eclectic approach. As Bernard McGinn correctly states, "there is no denying that it is the most powerful apocalyptic work ever written." Indeed, the Book of Revelation "is

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*John*, 1:311, and 2:76, for its circularity in using Revelation 12 to construct an imaginary version of the Babylonian combat myth. Charles correctly showed that no such version of the myth existed but was created by Gunkel in light of Revelation 12.

76. Champlin, *Nero*, 12. Champlin's descriptive term for the *Sibylline Oracles*.

77. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 187.

the apocalyptic book *par excellence*."<sup>78</sup> Not only so, but the Book of Revelation is the most complex apocalyptic work ever produced, and its complexity is often under-appreciated, as Bauckham aptly points out.<sup>79</sup> The particularities and complexity of the Apocalypse should caution against quick assumptions regarding putative traditions that it draws on.

The most important reason for the difference between Revelation and other apocalypses, as I outline in Chapters 4 and 5, is that the context which determines meaning in the Apocalypse is primarily a canonical one.<sup>80</sup> While it goes without saying that the formal "canon" of the New Testament lay centuries beyond the composition of the Apocalypse, it is also the case, as we shall see, that the Apocalypse is rooted theologically and intertextually in the *canonical* books of the Hebrew Bible, and this relationship in turn, creates a theological and intertextual kinship with the documents of the New Testament, which themselves exhibit strong ties to the Hebrew biblical tradition.<sup>81</sup> And as I will seek to

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78. Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 14.

79. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 1.

80. Cf. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier, "Introduction," in *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (eds. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 4, whose edited volume on the interpretation of the Apocalypse has "a working hypothesis... that the book of Revelation is best understood within its canonical context in the Christian Bible." See also Michael B. Shepherd, *Daniel in the Context of the Hebrew Bible* (New York: Peter Lang, 2009), who argues for an approach to Daniel which considers its placement within the Hebrew biblical canon, as well as one which respects the author's own explanation regarding the interpretation of the visions. The preliminary assertion of a canonical context here proceeds with the understanding that the concept of a Christian "canon" (in so far as canon is understood to be a "closed" list of religiously authoritative books) is historically distant to the composition of the Apocalypse. However, where canon formation is understood as a lengthy "process" which *culminated* in the list of books known as the "New Testament," I would agree with James D. G. Dunn, "How the New Testament Canon Began," in *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald, William H. Brackney and Craig A. Evans; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007), 122-36, who argues for a canonical process which began with the impact made by Jesus himself. Likewise, where "canon" is understood in relationship to the rules governing Christian orthodoxy or "the rule of faith," it is reasonable to deduce that a canonical context existed at the outset of the Christian faith. D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 726, for example, write: "In ecclesiastical usage during the first three centuries, it [canon] referred to the normative doctrinal and ethical content of Christian faith." In Chapter 2, I explore the notion of a "canonical consciousness" in the Apocalypse as it relates to this "norm" of apostolic teachings, and in Chapter 4 I suggest that in this regard, there are significant theological points of contact between the Book of Revelation and much of the New Testament, especially the Pauline Epistles.

81. Cf. Hays and Alkier, "Introduction," 5; Steve Moyise, "Models for Intertextual Interpretation of Revelation," in

demonstrate, the theological confluence of Old and New Testament themes, symbols and language in the Book of Revelation, in significant ways, militates against the kind of eclectic hermeneutic discussed above. I am prepared to suggest, that the reason why neither Nero, Beliar, nor the Medes and Parthians find mention in reference to Revelation's sea beast (while this is the case in most other writings dealing with the subject), is because the book betrays *no consciousness* of a Nero legend.

In support of such an assertion, it is important to note that while the myth of *Nero redivivus* was common in Greco-Roman writings and even found its way in some Christian spheres, as we have seen for example in Victorinus, "It is nevertheless clear that this belief in Nero and the Antichrist was a popular one with which the Christian intellectual elite was not happy."<sup>82</sup> Edward Champlin explains that this legend "was not an original idea with the Christians," and "has nothing noticeably Christian about it."<sup>83</sup> Similarly, "there is nowhere any trace of it in the Jewish apocalypses." Its first literary expression is to be found in the *Sibylline Oracles*.<sup>84</sup> In reality, its revival in the "later third century onward... made leaders of the church uncomfortable."<sup>85</sup> Lactantius (c. 240-320 C.E.), for example, wrote that those who believed in Nero's return, as predicted in the *Sibylline Oracles*, were of "extravagant

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*Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (eds. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 31-32. While various theories of "intertextuality" have developed since the term was first used by Julia Kristeva in 1966, in general intertextuality refers to the way(s) in which texts relate to each other. That is, from an intertextual point of view, texts are not conceived of as independent self-contained units, but rather are perceived in relationship to other texts (and traditions) which they recall through quotations, allusions, and "echoes." The presence of allusions and echoes of other texts within a particular text is believed to hold important clues for its interpretation. This is the basic way the term is understood and employed in this study. See further, María Jesús Martínez Alfaro, "Intertextuality: Origins and Development of the Concept," *Atlantis* 18 (1996): 268-285. See Stefan Alkier, "Intertextuality and the Semiotics of Biblical Texts," in *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (eds. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier and Leroy Andrew Huizenga; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009), 3-21, for an overview of the development of the concept and the various views of intertextuality in biblical studies. In Chapter 2, I introduce the subject of intertextuality in more detail, and in Chapter 4, I discuss at length the ramifications of the Old Testament as *the* intertext of the Apocalypse and the hermeneutical significance of this relationship.

82. Champlin, *Nero*, 20.

83. Champlin, *Nero*, 21.

84. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 414.

85. Champlin, *Nero*, 21.

imaginations."<sup>86</sup> He urged his readers "not to believe" those who promote such a tale.<sup>87</sup> By the same token, John Chrysostum (c. 347-407 C. E.) understood Nero as an *image* of the Antichrist, but endorsed neither a Nero antichrist, nor his return.<sup>88</sup> Likewise, Jerome (ca. 331/347-420 C.E.) writes that in a similar way in which the "abominable king" Antiochus "foreshadowed the Antichrist... so there are many of our viewpoint who think that Domitius Nero... was the Antichrist because of his outstanding savagery and depravity."<sup>89</sup> Jerome expresses no personal belief in a Nero return legend, though he firmly believes the antichrist's appearance was still future with reference to his own time.<sup>90</sup>

Importantly, Augustine, writing in the early fifth century, is clear about his (and the church's) position on the issue:

And hence some suppose that he shall rise again and be Antichrist. Others, again, suppose that he is not even dead but that he was concealed that he might be supposed to have been killed, and that he now lives in concealment in the vigor of that same age which he had reached when he was believed to have perished, and will live until he is revealed in his own time and restored to his kingdom. But I wonder that men can be so audacious in their conjectures.<sup>91</sup>

It is noteworthy that this legend does not appear anywhere in either Irenaeus' or Hippolytus' lengthy treatment of the Antichrist, or in their exegetical insights on Revelation's beasts.<sup>92</sup> And its scarcity is telling in other Patristic writings and commentaries on the subject.<sup>93</sup> From the point of view of the episcopacy (overseers), the connection of a

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86. Lactantius, *Of the Manner in Which the Persecutors Died* 2 (ANF 7:302). Cf. Champlin, *Nero*, 20.

87. Lactantius, *Persecutors* 2 (ANF 7:302).

88. J. Rougé, "Néron à la fin du I<sup>er</sup> et au début du V<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Latomus* 37 (1978): 86. Cited in Champlin, *Nero*, 274, note 41.

89. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* (trans. Gleason L. Archer; Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1958), 133. Cf. Champlin, *Nero*, 20, who renders Jerome's reference to Nero in the future tense: "... Domitius Nero *will be* the Antichrist" (emphasis added).

90. See further Chapter 6, section 5.5.

91. Augustine, *The City of God* 20.19.3 (NPNF<sup>1</sup> 2:438). Cf. Champlin, *Nero*, 20.

92. See for example, Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, 5.25-30 (ANF 1:553-60) and Hippolytus, *Treatise on Christ and Antichrist* (ANF 5: 204-19 ). Cf. Oegema, "Book of Daniel," 243-52.

93. In addition to its non-appearance in Irenaeus and Hippolytus, the myth of Nero's return is also missing from



Nero legend with the future antichrist was a deviation from sound exegetical principles and one which was to be avoided. Wherefore, in light of the early church's unfavourable evaluation of this legend in Christian exegesis, it seems rather surprising that this popular myth of non-Christian origin has become the fulcrum upon which the interpretation of Revelation's beast turns in so much of modern scholarship. Is it possible that a more exegetically sound explanation exists for this symbol, and one which writers like Irenaeus and Jerome might have endorsed? It is such an explanation that this study seeks to lay out.

#### 4. Thesis

In this thesis it is argued that when the sea beast of the Apocalypse is interpreted apart from a putative eclectic "apocalyptic tradition" and speculations regarding a *Nero redivivus* myth, and read in a similar fashion to which many early Christian writers read it—in accordance with the church's "rule of faith" and in theological relationship to the Hebrew Scriptures—a clearer picture emerges as to its meaning. I argue for a "canonical context" vis-à-vis the Apocalypse in two ways: (1) by supporting a definition of "canon" which subsumes the entire "process" of canon formation, as advanced by Brevard Childs and others; and by emphasizing the intertextual relationship between the Apocalypse and the *canonical* books of the Hebrew Bible. Reading the Apocalypse from this "canonical" point of view, suggests that the sea beast symbolism is a conflation of two apocalyptic motifs from the Old Testament which set out historical schematizations, namely, Daniel 2 and 7. Following this logic, it is asserted that Revelation's beast must also be understood as a creatively crafted historical schematization which has been shaped with reference to the original contexts in Daniel.<sup>94</sup> In the following chapters, I attempt to clarify what

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Origen, Tyconius, Oecumenius, Andrew of Caesarea, Apringius of Beja, Caesarius of Arles, Bede the Venerable, among other commentators of this period. See Weinrich, *Latin Commentaries*, and Thomas C. Oden, ed., *Greek Commentaries on Revelation: Oecumenius and Andrew of Caesarea* (trans. William C. Weinrich; Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011).

94. The question of how to understand the Old Testament context in Revelation is addressed in Chapter 2 briefly and

constitutes a "canonical" reading of the Apocalypse and to show how such a construal can shed greater light on a theological understanding of the eschatological beast.

## 5. Scope of Study

In light of the stated goal of this thesis, it is of necessity that its scope be delimited in order to deal more directly with the subject at hand. What is germane to the present investigation is establishing the evidence for a canonical reading of Revelation, and applying this perspective to the investigation of specific aspects of the beast symbolism, especially the visual framework of this symbol and the issue of the "wounding" of one of its heads. Consequently, it lies beyond the scope of this study to attempt a detailed exegesis of the passages related to the sea beast, though Revelation 13:1-3 will serve as the primary textual referent. Many important subjects related to the beast symbol are of necessity overlooked (such as the "mark," the "image," and the number 666). Moreover, other relatives of the sea beast—the earth-beast, the harlot and the dragon—are only mentioned in passing. Again, such omissions are of necessity. Nevertheless, in the view of this writer, the conclusions drawn from this focused analysis strongly support the thesis that a canonical reading (as defined herein) provides a clearer hermeneutical horizon from which to view the eschatological beast and its related subjects in the Apocalypse.

## 6. Direction of Study

Chapter 2 of this study clarifies the methodology. It lays out what constitutes a "canonical" reading of the Book of Revelation through insights from canonical criticism and studies in Old-Testament/New-Testament intertextuality. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the development of the literary category designated "apocalyptic" and the associated sub-

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at length in Chapter 5. That Revelation contains historical schematization apart from the millennium is frequently denied in scholarship. See for instance, Adela Yarbro Collins, "Apocalypse Now: The State of Apocalyptic Studies Near the End of the First Decade of the Twenty-First Century," *HTR* 104 (2011): 453.

genre "apocalypse" in the modern period. The chapter suggests that while form-critical analysis of Revelation has provided important insights into its genre, the limitations of this methodology render it inadequate as a hermeneutical framework for comprehending the theological depths of the final book of the Bible.

Chapter 4 investigates the intertextual strategy of the Apocalypse noting that the pervasive use of Old Testament themes, symbols, and language in its narrative is more significant to its theology than most scholars have appreciated. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that the Apocalypse consciously construes itself as the final, authoritative and distinctly Christian voice, in a coherent prophetic story about God's activities in the world; a story rooted in the Old Testament. Chapter 5 investigates the visual concept of the sea beast imagery by illustrating how the two primary historical schematizations of Daniel 2 and 7 are synthesized into a singular concept in Revelation's eschatological beast. In Chapter 6 the hermeneutical implications of this synthesis are explored in conversation with the major Patristic interpretive tradition of Daniel's four-kingdom schema. Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a summary of the main arguments and some potential implications for further study of the canonical Apocalypse.

# Methodology: A Canonical Reading

## I. Introduction

One reason why many exegetes fail to interpret the Book of Revelation in relationship to the canonical books of the Bible is because of the apparent anachronism, or historical distance between the point of its composition and the concept of a "New Testament" canon. The formation and ecclesiastical function of canon, it is asserted, lie centuries beyond the time of John and his first readers, and therefore a "canonical context" has little or no exegetical significance in its interpretation.<sup>1</sup> Eugene Ulrich defines "canon" as: "The final, fixed, and closed list of the books of scripture that are officially and permanently accepted as supremely authoritative by a faith tradition, in conscious contradistinction from those books that are not accepted."<sup>2</sup> If canon is thus defined as "final," "fixed," and "closed" in order to function authoritatively, then there existed no "canonical context" for Christianity before the end of the fourth century, and arguably beyond that, since the peripheries of the canon were still being negotiated up to the Reformation period.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, by this definition there existed no canonical context for

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1. Childs, *New Testament*, 21. Note for example, James Barr, *Holy Scripture: Canon, Authority, Criticism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1983), 67, who dismisses the significance of "canon" for biblical interpretation based on the historical argument.
  2. Eugene Ulrich, "The Notion and Definition of Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 31.
  3. See Daniel J. Harrington, "The Old Testament Apocrypha in the Early Church and Today," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 197-200, 203-205. Harrington points out that the scope of the canon in the Christian tradition—both testaments—remain a point of negotiation even up to the Reformation period. Thus, while the core of biblical canon lists were relatively identical in the major centers of Christianity, the peripheries—such as the place and significance of the Apocrypha—remained points of contestation in some spheres. As Harrington underscores, the Eastern churches were more inclined to identify the scope of their Old Testament with that of the Jewish Scriptures, while the Western churches (except for Jerome) were more open to the use of apocryphal books (199).

Judaism before the end of the first century C.E., if it is the case, as many advance, that the "closing" of the canon of Judaism occurred at or beyond this point.<sup>4</sup> However, when the concept of "canon" is freed from the overly-restrictive definition of a "closed list of books," then new possibilities for interpreting the Apocalypse in relation to the canon of Scripture emerge. Insights from canonical criticism can chart the way toward such an analysis.

Another reason why exegetes often fail to see the final book of the Bible in relationship to canon, as noted in the previous chapter, is due of the tacit acceptance that the biblical Apocalypse is best interpreted from the perspective of the genre "apocalypse." As Gregory Linton observes, "The identification of a text's genre shapes not only the reader's overall view of the text but also interpretation of specific details of the text."<sup>5</sup> As a result of this common presupposition, very seldom has Revelation's intertextual relationship with the Old Testament understood as highly significant for shedding light on the meaning of its symbolisms and message. Even when scholars recognize the "pervasive" use of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse, this context is often dismissed out of hand as simply supplying the "language arsenal" for John's own socio-religious agenda.<sup>6</sup> Nevertheless, this highly intertextual dependence on the Old Testament context which inheres in the

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4. For those who suggest a closing date for the canon of the Hebrew Bible toward the end of the first century C.E. or thereafter (this view shared by James A. Sanders, "The Issue of Closure in the Canonical Process," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 252-263, esp. 253-54), it is important to note that this body of Scriptures functioned authoritatively for centuries without being "closed." The peripheries were still being negotiated. I personally, however, share the view of Steve Mason, P.R. Davies, Roger T. Beckwith and others, that the Hebrew Bible canon was "fixed" before the common era. For this view, see further, Steve Mason, "Josephus and His Twenty-Two Book Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 110-127; Philip R. Davies, *Scribes and Schools: The Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1998); Philip R. Davies, "The Jewish Scriptural Canon in Cultural Perspective," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 36-52, esp. 50; Roger T. Beckwith, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church: and its Background in Early Judaism* (London: SPCK, 1985).
  5. Linton, "Limits of Genre," 12. Cf. Lawson K. Younger, *Ancient Conquest Accounts: A Study in Ancient Near Eastern and Biblical History Writing* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 28.
  6. For example, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 135-36.

narrative framework of the Apocalypse deserves more serious consideration. Moreover, because other writings of the New Testament share this basic intertextual dependence on Old Testament themes, symbols, language and theology, this sets up a literary and theological relationship between Revelation and these writings even if the formal canonical shape of the "New Testament" was centuries after the composition of these documents.<sup>7</sup> In other words, there is a "theological history" which undergirds both Revelation and much of the biblical writings.<sup>8</sup> Looking more closely at this intertextual relationship suggests that the Old Testament background is vital to understanding the concept and theological implications of the beast symbolism in the Apocalypse.

## 2. Establishing A Canonical Context for the Apocalypse

### 2.1. *Insights from Canonical Criticism*

The primary aim of canonical criticism is to interpret biblical writings from the perspective of the *believing community* and in relationship to those books which constitute the Christian Bible.<sup>9</sup> While in a sense canonical criticism is a fairly recent methodology, from the definition given here, it can be argued that canonical readings have the longest history of all methodologies because Christian communities have been interpreting biblical writings in

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7. Cf. Hays and Alkier, "Introduction," 3, 5. It should be noted here that even before the stabilization of the "New Testament," writers such as Justin Martyr, Irenaeus and Hippolytus interpreted Revelation in relationship to such books as Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaiah, 2 Thessalonians, Matthew, 2 Peter, 1 Corinthians, and other books that would later be included in the "canon." See for example, Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 81 (ANF 1:239-40); Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.35.1-2 (ANF 1:565-66); Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 65 (ANF 5:218-19). The hermeneutical relationship between Revelation and these other writings was predicated on what Irenaeus called the "Rule of Faith."
  8. James A. Sanders, "Paul and Theological History," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 54, observes that a shared "theological history" exists in canonical writings.
  9. Kent D. Clarke, "Canonical Criticism: An Integrated Reading of Biblical Texts for the Community of Faith," in *Approaches to New Testament Study* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and David Tombs; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 171, defines canonical criticism as: "a method of study that seeks, as its primary goal, to interpret the biblical text in its canonical context and in relationship to the believing community of faith."

relationship to other books of the Bible from the earliest times even to the present.<sup>10</sup>

However, in the academy, canonical criticism is not only fairly recent, but this methodology incorporates to varying degrees the results of historical critical scholarship, depending on the practitioner. While many scholars are now advocates of canonical criticism, among the most prominent are James A. Sanders, Brevard Childs and Robert Wall.<sup>11</sup>

Because of their shared interest in a holistic view of the biblical canon seen from the perspective of the faith community, their respective approaches are foundationally similar. Nevertheless, their differing methodological emphases mean that at times there are distinct differences in their assumptions and exegetical conclusions. For example, Sanders' approach fully appropriates historical critical scholarship, and consequently his exegetical method is predicated on a diachronic historical development of text and canon.<sup>12</sup> For Childs, historical critical considerations are firmly subordinated—though not discarded—to the exegetical

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10. Cf. George A. Lindbeck, "Postcritical Canonical Interpretation: Three Modes of Retrieval," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (eds. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 28-31. Cf. Moyise, "Intertextual Interpretation," 31. The application of canonical criticism as it is understood today first emerged in the 1970's in a more definitive way in the works of Brevard S. Childs and James A. Sanders. See Clarke, "Canonical Criticism," 179-195.

11. See the following publications for a comprehensive view of their respect approaches: James A. Sanders, *Torah and Canon* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972); James A. Sanders, *Canon and Community: A Guide to Canonical Criticism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); James A. Sanders, *From Sacred Story to Sacred Text: Canon as Paradigm* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Brevard S. Childs, *Exodus: A Commentary* (London: SCM, 1974); Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (London: SCM, 1979); Childs, *New Testament*; Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993); Brevard S. Childs, *The Church's Guide for Reading Paul: The Canonical Shaping of the Pauline Corpus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008); Robert W. Wall and Eugene E. Lemcio, *The New Testament as Canon: A Reader in Canonical Criticism* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1992); Robert W. Wall, "Reading the Bible From Within Our Traditions: The 'Rule of Faith' in Theological Hermeneutics," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 88-107; Robert W. Wall, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The New Interpreter's Bible* (ed. Leander E. Keck; X; Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 1-368; Wall, "Canonical Perspective," 529-540; Robert W. Wall, "Canonical Context and Canonical Conversations," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 165-182; Robert W. Wall, "Reading the New Testament in Canonical Context," in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (ed. Joel B. Green; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 370-93; Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 82, prefers the term "approach" over against "criticism" to indicate that the method he advances is not just another "critical" methodology.

12. Sanders, *Canon and Community*, 19. Cf. Wall, *A Reader*, 50.

task, since the canonical (or final) form of the text is held to be the starting and ending point of sound exegesis.<sup>13</sup> Robert Wall, while seeking to exploit the value in the approaches of Sanders and Childs by combing their insights, maintains a “negative appraisal” and critical stance toward historical critical methodologies.<sup>14</sup>

My purpose here is not to delineate their different methodologies, neither to outline a fully developed canonical approach to Revelation, but rather to incorporate specific elements from canonical criticism in general (though Childs and Wall are emphasized), in order to secure a stance from which to read the sea beast imagery of the Apocalypse within the context of "canon." These include: (1) expanding the definition of "canon" to comprehend the entire process of canon formation, as well as the ecclesiastical significance of that process; (2) clarifying the primary goal of biblical exegesis, which is "theological" understanding; (3) recognizing that a canonical context allows a text's meaning to transcend its point of origin; and (4) establishing hermeneutical boundaries based on the theological relationship of biblical texts.

## *2.2. Defining "Canon" in Terms of "Process" and "Ecclesiastical Function"*

When dealing with notions of "canon" and canon formation one immediately gets the sense that they are entering into a quagmire of scholarly debate which is usually left to the ablest, experts in the field.<sup>15</sup> While I do not wish to broach any new territory in this discussion,

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13. Childs, *New Testament*, 45-48, for example, believes that "historical criticism is an indispensable teacher." Nevertheless, the church cannot yield to historical criticism's demand for "first priority" in exegetical matters for such a capitulation "shatters the genuinely theological dimension of the text." Cf. Paul C. Glasson, "The Significance of Context in Theology: A Canonical Approach," in *Theological Exegesis: Essays in Honor of Brevard S. Childs* (eds. Christopher Seitz and Kathryn Greene-McCreight; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 67.

14. Wall, "Canonical Perspective," 528; Wall, "Canonical Conversations," 166; Wall, "New Testament," 370-1.

15. For various perspectives and evaluations of canon formation, see the following: William R. Farmer, *The Formation of the New Testament Canon: An Ecumenical Approach* (New York: Paulist, 1983); F. F. Bruce, *The Canon of Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988); Bruce M. Metzger, *The Canon of the New Testament: Its Origins, Development, and Significance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988); Lee Martin McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1988); Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders, eds., *The Canon Debate* (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002); Lee Martin McDonald, William H. Brackney and Craig A. Evans, *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin*



what Childs argues regarding the definition of canon is significant, and informs my own understanding of the term.<sup>16</sup> Childs argues for a usage of the term "canon" (as it relates to the New Testament) in a broader sense than merely the formal fixing of the boundaries of authoritative Christian writings in the fourth century, or as an established list of sacred books.<sup>17</sup> Instead, Childs emphasizes the intrinsic relationship between the historical development of canon and the stabilization of its scope in the fourth century. In this view, the entire canonical process is significant to the authoritative function of sacred writings, both before and after the final form of the canon.

In other words, the ecclesiastical forces that shaped the final form of the canon were at work from the beginning of the process. Because the stabilization of the New Testament canon in the fourth century grew "organically" out of the historical process, the integral relationship between *process* and *product* causes Childs to disparage the artificial separation between these two phenomena in canon discussions.<sup>18</sup> For Childs, this embryonic development renders the notions of a "canonical context" and "ecclesiastical function" of canon viable even before the fixing of the boundaries of "canon" proper.<sup>19</sup> "Canon consciousness," Childs maintains, "thus arose at the inception of the Christian church and lies deep within the New Testament literature itself."<sup>20</sup>

Stephen Dempster supports Child's contention when he writes: "Reserving the terminology 'canon' for only the final collection of books obscures the continuity that exists

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McDonald (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007); Craig A. Evans and Emanuel Tov, eds., *Exploring the Origins of the Bible: Canon Formation in Historical, Literary, and Theological Perspective* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2008); Arthur G. Patzia, *The Making of the New Testament: Origin, Collection, Text and Canon* (2nd ed.; Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity, 2011).

16. For a discussion of the various uses of the term "canon," see Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 726-27; H.W. Beyer, "κανών," TDNT 3:596-602; Ulrich, "Definition of Canon," 21-35.

17. Childs, *New Testament*, 21-33.

18. Childs, *New Testament*, 24-27.

19. Childs, *New Testament*, 21.

20. Childs, *New Testament*, 21.

at earlier times. To accept such a limiting definition might suggest that the canon did not have a history, only to be created *ex nihilo*, the result of a [church] council."<sup>21</sup> James Dunn, advances such a continuity when he asserts that, "*The canonical process began with the impact made by Jesus himself!*"<sup>22</sup> For Dunn, "The *de facto* canon of Jesus and Paul, gospel and epistle, was already functioning with effect within the first thirty years of Christianity's existence."<sup>23</sup> Similarly, William Farmer hypothesizes that, "the canon of the New Testament originated with Jesus, i.e., with the way in which his ministry was formed (or *normed*) by his reading and reflecting upon the Law and the Prophets."<sup>24</sup> And D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, likewise, argue that the delimiting of the boundaries of the canon in the fourth century was not an act of "authorization," but of "recognition."<sup>25</sup> In a word then, the formalized "canon" *continued* to function authoritatively as the church's guide for faith and practice, in salute to a process which was long underway. This way of construing canon creates an important perspective from which to see the Book of Revelation within a canonical context. The Apocalypse was seen as authoritative Christian scripture long before its inclusion in the formal canon.<sup>26</sup>

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21. Stephen G. Dempster, "Canons on the Right and Canons on the Left: Finding a Resolution in the Canon Debate," *JETS* 52 (2009): 51.

22. Dunn, "New Testament Canon," 128, emphasis original.

23. Dunn, "New Testament Canon," 136.

24. William R. Farmer, "Reflections on Jesus and the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 339, emphasis original.

25. Cf. Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 741. For a cogent argument in favour of a definition of canon which moves beyond a "closed list," see Michael J. Kruger, *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 27-46.

26. This does not deny the fact that in certain spheres of early Christianity, especially in the East, the apostolicity (and therefore the "genuineness") of the Apocalypse was contested. According to Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History* 7.25.1-27 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 1:309-311), Dionysus of Alexandria in the mid-third century questioned the long-standing tradition that John the apostle wrote the book based on stylistic differences between the Apocalypse and the other writings ascribed to the apostle (Gospel and epistles); and Gaius of Rome, in the late-second century claimed that Revelation was a pseudonymous composition of one Cerinthus, a protognostic. See Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.28.1-2 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 1:160). In large measure, the influence of such negative appraisal of the Apocalypse, accounts for its limited acceptance in the East and its eventual exclusion from the Syriac canon, the Peshita. Cf. DeSilva, *Rhetoric*, 31-32. Nevertheless, the Apocalypse was early accepted in the West and functioned authoritatively for Christian formation.

Another significant way for understanding Revelation in relation to canon, obtains from the usage of the term in both the New Testament (Gal 6:16) and in the primitive church to designate the "rule of faith" (κανὼν τῆς πίστεως), or the "norm of true Christianity."<sup>27</sup> "In ecclesiastical usage during the first three centuries," Carson and Moo explains, "it [canon] referred to the normative doctrinal and ethical content of Christian faith."<sup>28</sup> As I see it, this last usage of canon is implicitly analogous to the substance of the Gospel and therefore coterminous with its proclamation. In other words, for as long as there has been a Gospel, there have been theological boundaries which define what it is and what it means.<sup>29</sup>

Accordingly, Childs' "canon consciousness" equally applies to this understanding of canon in the early church in as much as it denotes the recognition of the authority of a particular tradition to function as the arbiter of Christian faith and practice.<sup>30</sup> Hence, when I speak of "canon consciousness" in relation to the theological orientation of the Apocalypse, I have in mind a recognized system of teachings, beliefs and practices—known variously as the "rule of faith," the "received tradition," or the "apostolic tradition"—which is represented by oral tradition *and* sacred writings, both of which function authoritatively as the basis for deciding what is "true" or "false," right or wrong.<sup>31</sup> As Everett Ferguson

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27. Beyer, TDNT 3:598-600. Beyer argues that what Paul has in mind with his usage of canon in Galatians describes "the whole doctrine of Christian behaviour." It is the "standard" by which "Paul may know whether a man is a Christian, whether he belongs to the Israel of God."

28. Carson and Moo, *Introduction*, 726. See further, Samuel J. Mikolaski, "Canon as the Air We Breathe," in *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald, William H. Brackney and Craig A. Evans; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007), 157, 159.

29. I take issue with views that suggest that the Gospel as we know it is the product of blind evolutionary forces. This view asserts that a range of disparate Christian communities proclaimed competing gospels following the death of Jesus, till at last the "orthodox" gospel emerged as the fittest of the lot—a consequence of (random) historical processes which tended to favour its survival. This scenario is typical of the view known as the "Bauer Hypothesis." See Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: The Battles for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), for a more recent defense of this position. See especially "Part Two: Heresies and Orthodoxies." But also see M. J. Edwards, *Catholicity and Heresy in the Early Church* (Farnham, Eng.: Ashgate, 2009), for a refutation.

30. Childs, *New Testament*, 21.

remarks concerning the authoritative function of scripture during the second century, "The acknowledgement of the scripture principle, although not yet a 'canon,' implicitly contained the idea of canon."<sup>32</sup> It is this "idea" of canon, or the practice of reading Christian scriptures within the context of a "received tradition" (or creed) of interpretation, which is primarily in mind when I speak of the Apocalypse in relation to "canon."

### 2.3. *Exegesis as a Theological Enterprise*

Childs has posited that a canonical reading of a biblical text has a particular goal in mind, which is reading the text in a way that coheres with the kerygmatic witness of God's saving grace through Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup> For this reason, a canonical reading accords a privileged role to biblical texts.<sup>34</sup> Childs reminds us that the various types of writings in the New Testament are foremost theological in nature, and therefore the primary goal of canonical exegesis is necessarily a theological one.<sup>35</sup> Wall is emphatic in this regard: "[T]he ultimate aim of biblical

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31. Cf. 2 Thess 2:15. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 3.39.4 (NPNF<sup>2</sup> 1:171), quotes Papias (c.70-140/60) as saying, "If, then, any one came, who had been a follower of the elders, I questioned him in regard to the words of the elders,—what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord... *For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voice*" [emphasis added]. Papias is most likely referring to oral apostolic tradition by this statement. Cf. Patzia, *Text and Canon*, 91. See Dunn, "New Testament Canon," 127-128, who argues that the oral tradition that began with the first followers of Jesus functioned authoritatively even before it was committed to writing. While I leave the historical contingencies of canon formation to the experts, I am inclined to affirm with Dunn and Farmer that the canonical process began with Jesus himself, was guided by what Irenaeus calls "The Rule of Faith," and stabilized in the fourth century largely as a consequence of congregational rather than conciliar actions. See Mikolaski, "Air We Breathe," 157, 159.
  32. Everett Fergusson, "Factors Leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon," in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 297.
  33. Childs, *New Testament*, 48. Cf. Childs, *Old Testament as Scripture*, 82: "[T]he issue at stake in relation to the canon turns on establishing a stance from which the Bible can be read as sacred scripture." This is admittedly a confessional stance, and one for which Childs has been criticized. See for example John J. Collins, *Encounters with Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 15, who notes that Child's approach "fails to provide a context for dialogue with anyone who does not accept it as a matter of faith."
  34. Cf. Childs, *Reading Paul*, 255: "[T]he function of the canon is to privilege a particular reading of the biblical text, which the traditions of the evangelical tradition designated as the apostolic witness."
  35. Childs, *New Testament*, 14. Cf. Joel B. Green, "Rethinking History (and Theology)," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 241.

*interpretation is theological understanding and not historical reconstruction.*"<sup>36</sup> While it can be argued that Wall overstates the case—theological interpretation does not preclude historical considerations but can and should fruitfully (though discriminately) employ its results in the service of theology<sup>37</sup>—in my view, Wall is correct in emphasizing theological concerns as the first and primary purpose of biblical interpretation. When historical considerations take first priority, it is often the case, as Marianne Meye Thompson points out, that the the biblical text "remains an artifact of the past."<sup>38</sup> By contrast, theological interpretation is guided by the convictions that the Bible is sacred Scripture—that is, despite its indisputable human character, it is a *special* revelation of God and his purposes in the world—and that it remains indispensable for faith and Christian formation.<sup>39</sup> Such is the position of the present study.

#### 2.4. *Transcending Point of Origin*

Moreover, Wall has asserted that the modern scholarly study of the Book of Revelation has wholly neglected a canonical perspective because from this angle "the primary locus of meaning shifts from its point of origin to its position within the biblical canon and within the history of its interpretation by ancestors of faith."<sup>40</sup> Joel B. Green, likewise, has noted that the modern enterprise of biblical interpretation is undergirded by

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36. Wall, "Canonical Conversations," 168, emphasis original. Cf. Wall and Lemcio, *A Reader*, 30. Many scholars are uneasy with historical reconstructions because so many variables remain unknown. For instance, Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading the Latter Prophets: Toward a New Canonical Criticism* (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 3, writes in relation to the prophetic books, "I contend that these books cannot be used as data in the positivistic sense in which they have so often been used in biblical studies for reconstructing the world as it actually was. The view that we can somehow get behind these texts to reconstruct the world of the prophets is highly problematic."

37. See for example, Thompson, "Theological Interpretation," 156-58, who supports theological interpretations which take historical considerations seriously.

38. Thompson, "Theological Interpretation," 157.

39. Thompson, "Theological Interpretation," 157-58. For Thompson, conceiving of the Bible as "sacred" Scripture means conceiving of it as having its "origin, subject matter, and purpose in God" (Thompson quotes Richard N. Soulen and R. Kendall Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (3rd ed.; Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 193.

40. Wall and Lemcio, *A Reader*, 275.

the unwarranted assumption that the meaning of a text rests at its point of origin.<sup>41</sup> Yet like Childs, both Wall and Green share the equal conviction that one of the main functions of the canonical process was to "loosen the text from any one given historical setting, and to transcend the original addressee."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, biblical reading within a community of faith affirms that the canon has an ongoing and indispensable significance to Christian faith and practice and is not to be seen primarily as a body of texts to be dissected in critical discourses.<sup>43</sup> It affirms that the Bible has a continuing relevance as the sphere in which Christian theological understanding is to be negotiated.<sup>44</sup> For this reason, "Numerous scholars feel," as Kent Clarke underlines, "that the Bible must be interpreted with methods that focus on the whole of Scripture, and that its final form and canonical composition must be the primary governing task of the exegete."<sup>45</sup>

By adopting the position in this thesis that the context of canon legitimizes the task of seeking meaning beyond the point of its origin, interest in the immediate historical context of the Book of Revelation is explored in limited ways, and only as is relevant to this primary purpose. On account of this, I make no systematic reflection on the historical world of the first century in order to establish the "situation" of the churches to which John writes. Rather, my main goal is to situate the Book of Revelation in its wider theological and canonical contexts and in so far as historical concerns assists this task, they are explored. As Wall suggests, the Book of Revelation represents a comprehensive theological

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41. Joel B. Green, "Scripture and Theology: Uniting the Two So Long Divided," in *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (eds. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 29.

42. Childs, *New Testament*, 23.

43. Wall, "Theological Hermeneutics," 166. Cf. Mikolaski, "Air We Breathe," 146.

44. Green, "Scripture and Theology," 30, comments in this regard are enlightening: "The interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel by Jesus and Paul, and the inclusion of those Scriptures in the Christian Bible, is profound testimony to our claim that the meaning of Scripture cannot be relegated or reduced to its historical moment." Cf. Wall, "Theological Hermeneutics," 88.

45. Clarke, "Canonical Criticism," 176.

*inclusio* with the book of Genesis, and in this way serves as the conclusion of the Bible.<sup>46</sup> It is therefore Revelation's theological relationship with the rest of the canon of Scripture which will be the leading exegetical guideline in the subsequent chapters.

### 2.5. *Establishing Parameters*

From this perspective then, the context of canon puts a bridle on what texts or traditions are brought to the *immediate* hermeneutical task, without altogether excluding engagement and even comparisons with extra-canonical literature.<sup>47</sup> Again, while such comparisons are useful, the primacy is given to the canonical context as the sphere in which theological understanding is negotiated.<sup>48</sup> As it relates to the Book of Revelation, what R. Glen Wooden asserts regarding the canonical reading of Daniel equally applies: "the intertextual reading of a book of the Bible within the parameters of a canon both limits how one reads it, but also expands the potentialities of the book in a community of faith, compared to reading it as a free-standing work."<sup>49</sup> In other words, the parameters of the canon create the boundaries in which Revelation's theological message may be more clearly discerned for the Christian who is intent on hearing God speaking through *his* word.<sup>50</sup> Only when the

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46. Wall and Lemcio, *A Reader*, 280.

47. By "immediate" I mean that no intertextual cross-referencing is conducted between Revelation and other non-canonical works in order to arrive at theological conclusions. Comparison should be made only after the canonical context is exhausted, and even then theological inferences from other sources should be most carefully weighed. Canonical theology is not non-discriminatory. That the *Nero redivivus* myth is present in the *Sibylline Oracles* does not automatically make the beast imagery in Revelation about Nero. Rather, one looks at the theological and intertextual context of Revelation first in comparison to the canon for the meaning of such symbols. In short, the canon takes precedence for comparative purposes above other non-canonical traditions.

48. Wall, "Canonical Perspective," 539, calls this "canonical conversations." I deliberately use the word "negotiated" to acknowledge that theological "harmonization" is not the objective of a canonical theological enterprise. That diversity exists within the canon is not being denied by this approach. Nor does it mean that every canonical approach will arrive at the same conclusion regarding interpretation. Rather, like what Wall proposes, the theological "dialogue" is constrained to the canon on the basis of the church's recognition of the inspiration and common theological orientation of these documents.

49. R. Glenn Wooden, "Changing Perceptions of Daniel: Reading Daniel 4 and 5 in Context," in *From Biblical Criticism to Biblical Faith: Essays in Honor of Lee Martin McDonald* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald, William H. Brackney and Craig A. Evans; Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 2007), 9.

50. Childs, *Reading Paul*, 259.

Apocalypse is seen chiefly in relation to biblical apocalyptic tradition does the modern exegete adhere to "The Rule of Faith" which profoundly impacted the final form of the biblical canon.<sup>51</sup> The canonical stance taken in this thesis hinges on Samuel J. Mikolaski's assertion that, "The biblical canon is the winnowing and controlling element in the formation of authentic Christian understanding."<sup>52</sup> Put another way, a canonical understanding of a biblical text recognizes "Scripture's privileged role in Christian formation."<sup>53</sup> The canonical approach thus constrains meaning to those texts recognized by the church through the guidance of the Spirit to speak for Christian "orthodoxy."<sup>54</sup>

Again, while I do not lay out a fully developed canonical approach in this study, key principles from canonical criticism can create a stance from which to read the Book of Revelation canonically. These include, defining "canon" in terms of "process" and the "Rule of Faith," upholding the theological priority of biblical exegesis, recognizing that the meaning of a biblical text transcends its point of origin, and establishing the canon as the parameters within which theological dialogue takes place. In addition to these, the intertextual orientation of the Book of Revelation provides the most important reason why the final book of the Bible needs to be seen in relationship to the canon of Scripture. It is this aspect of canon which will occupy our attention for the remainder of this study.

### 3. Intertextuality and Biblical Exegesis

As pointed out in the previous chapter, intertextuality refers to the ways in which texts relate to other texts and traditions.<sup>55</sup> That is, how one text quotes, alludes to, or echoes previous texts (and/or traditions) and how this literary strategy relates to the

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51. See Mikolaski, "Air We Breathe," 157-161. Cf. Wall, "Theological Hermeneutics," 88-107.

52. Mikolaski, "Air We Breathe," 160.

53. Wall, "Canonical Conversations," 165.

54. Cf. Wall, "Canonical Perspective," 529-30.

55. Alfaro, "Intertextuality," 268-285; Moyise, "Intertextual Interpretation," 31-32.



derivation of meaning from a given text. Advocates of canonical criticism see the intertextual strategy of the biblical writer as a strong indication of his theological orientation, and maintain that this strategy provides a hermeneutical cue for understanding the meaning being communicated. Wall suggests, for instance, that "these allusions to or citations of the author's biblical canon construct a hermeneutical environment within which the theological rendering of his composition can be more effectively executed."<sup>56</sup> And Childs, likewise, seeks to find out how "the canon was fashioned through a particular intertextuality to render its special message."<sup>57</sup> Hence for these scholars, New Testament intertextuality obligates a canonical hermeneutic; that is, one whose theological background lies in the Old Testament.<sup>58</sup>

While inquiry into the presence of the Old Testament in the New Testament has had a long history in New Testament studies, the concept of "intertextuality" was formally introduced in the field in 1989 with the watershed publication of Richards Hays', *Echoes of Scripture in the Writings of Paul*. In his monograph, Hays advanced his method of interpreting Paul, "not by reconstructing the historical situation in the churches to which Paul wrote, not by framing hypothetical accounts of the opponents against whom Paul was arguing, but by reading the letters as literary texts framed by complex intertextual relations with Scripture."<sup>59</sup> Arguing against the frequent characterizations of Paul's writings as "midrashic" and/or typological, Hays contends instead that Paul employs the rhetorical strategy of "metalepsis" which "requires the reader to interpret a citation or allusion by recalling aspects of the original context that are not explicitly quoted."<sup>60</sup> For Hays, Paul's

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56. Wall and Lemcio, *A Reader*, 17-18.

57. Childs, *New Testament*, 48-53.

58. Wall, "Canonical Perspective," 537. Childs, *New Testament*, 49, goes even further in discerning a connection between intertextuality and authorial intentionality.

59. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), xi.

60. Richard B. Hays, "Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul: Abstract," in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), 43. Cf. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 20-21.

letter to the Romans is an intertextual conversation with Israel's Scriptures, a move which sidelines all historical considerations.<sup>61</sup> Hays' approach to Pauline hermeneutics has spawned a wide range of interesting debates about the broader function of intertextuality within the Pauline corpus and the New Testament in general, but these need not detain us here.<sup>62</sup> Though we will have occasion to return to Hays, what is most relevant for our present purposes is to determine what is the intertextual relationship between the Apocalypse and the Old Testament and to understand the hermeneutical significance (if any) of this relationship. How does Revelation cite Israel's theological history? What does this mean for meaning-making in the final book of the Bible?

### 3.1. *The Old Testament in Revelation*

One of the most notable literary features of the Book of Revelation is its use of the Old Testament Scriptures. This high prevalence of Old Testament allusions in Revelation has been long noted.<sup>63</sup> Swete, for example, in his early commentary on Revelation emphasizes that "No book of the New Testament is so thoroughly steeped in the thought and imagery of the Hebrew Scriptures."<sup>64</sup> Yet, in comparison to the rest of the New Testament, a dearth of attention was paid to the use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation for much of the twentieth century.<sup>65</sup> A needed corrective to this began in

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61. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 71-73.

62. Hays' contribution to Pauline hermeneutics has been widely applauded. But see the essays by Craig A. Evans, James A. Sanders, William Scott Green, and J. Christiaan Beker in Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, eds., *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1993), for important critiques. For a more recent exposition and defense of his approach, see Richard B. Hays, *The Conversion of the Imagination: Paul as Interpreter of Israel's Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005). See further, Richard B. Hays et al., eds., *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008); Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier and Leroy Andrew Huizenga, eds., *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2009); Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier, eds., *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012); Christopher D. Stanley, ed., *Paul and Scripture: Extending the Conversation* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012); Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

63. Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:lxv-lxxxii; Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, cxl-clvi.

64. Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, liii.

65. G. K. Beale and Sean M. McDonough, "Revelation," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old*

earnest in the 1980's with the publication of G.K. Beale's seminal monograph, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*.<sup>66</sup> While several other works on the subject have appeared since, Beale has perhaps written most in this area of study.<sup>67</sup> Along with others, his insights will provide much guidance in the analysis of the intertextual strategies of the Apocalypse.

It is now taken for granted that Revelation's use of the Old Testament far exceeds that of any other single book of the New Testament.<sup>68</sup> Its presence is so conspicuous that commentators usually describe it with words such as "permeated," "saturated," "pervasive," "ubiquitous," and the like.<sup>69</sup> While the criteria for assessing allusions differ, all studies on the Old Testament's use in Revelation indicate that John demonstrates significant dependence on its themes, symbols, and theology.<sup>70</sup> Steve Moyise, for example, notes that, "Revelation contains more Old Testament allusions than any other New Testament book, but it does not record a single quotation."<sup>71</sup> And Beale affirms that Revelation "leaves

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*Testament* (eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007) 1081.

66. 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).

67. See for example Beale, *Use of Daniel*; Beale, *Book of Revelation*; G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998); G. K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012); G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011); Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1081-1161. See also, Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretations of Revelation 8:7-12* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews UP, 1988); Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development* (Sheffield, England: JSOT, 1994); Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995); Marko Jauhiainen, *The Use of Zechariah in Revelation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

68. Cf. Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1081.

69. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 13; Childs, *New Testament*, 509; Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, x-xi; Eugene E. Lemcio, *Navigating Revelation: Charts for the Voyage, A Pedagogical Aid* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2011), viii.

70. Slightly different criteria are employed by Beale, Paulien, Fekkes, and others. Paulien, for example, speaks of "certain," "probable" (with the association category "echo"), "uncertain," and "non-allusion" (Paulien, "Assessment of Allusions," 117-120); Beale's three criteria are "clear allusion," "probable allusion," and "possible allusion" (Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 78). For allusion statistics from the UBS<sup>3</sup>, NA<sup>26</sup> and the British and Foreign Bible Society Greek text, see discussion in Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1082. Cf. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 59-63.

71. Moyise, *Revelation*, 77. While it has been generally perceived that Revelation does not quote the Old Testament directly, more recently, commentators speak of "seldom" quotations. Cf. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 65-69.

almost no Old Testament stone unturned,”<sup>72</sup> weaving “allusions and echoes... in *almost every verse*.”<sup>73</sup> As an illustration, Jan Fekkes notices that 12 of the 15 Christological designations in Revelation “come directly from the Old Testament.”<sup>74</sup> In light of such evidence, there can be no contestation that Revelation shows extraordinary dependence on the *canonical* books of the Hebrew Bible from the opening verse to the end of the book.

### 3.2. *Use of Noncanonical Apocalyptic Tradition*

By contrast, the use of noncanonical apocalyptic tradition is far less certain. In opposition to Charles who suggested that John employed Jewish apocalypses as sources, Swete affirmed otherwise: “Whether the writer is indebted to non-canonical apocalypses is less certain... There is no evidence that any one of them has served him as a ‘source’. Under the circumstances it is more than precarious to postulate sources of which nothing is known.”<sup>75</sup> Similarly, David Aune in quoting Swete agrees that “they [Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses] afford little or no clear evidence of his [John’s] dependence on Jewish sources other than the books of the OT.”<sup>76</sup> Bauckham also makes the same observation in noting that “it seems to me impossible to prove his [John’s] specific literary dependence on any such work.” “[W]e cannot be sure,” Bauckham continues, “that John knew any particular apocalypse or expected his readers to do so.”<sup>77</sup>

Whereas for the Old Testament, “John expects his readers to know [it] and explicitly to recall [it] in detail while reading his own work.”<sup>78</sup> Wherefore, in the absence of any clear evidence, Bauckham posits independent oral apocalyptic tradition as the avenue by which

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72. Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1082.

73. Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1081, emphasis added.

74. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 155.

75. Swete, *Commentary on Revelation*, liii.

76. Aune, “Jewish Apocalyptic,” 173. Aune quotes Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indices* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1908), clviii.

77. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xi.

78. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xi.

John would have had access to common apocalyptic ideas.<sup>79</sup> And as we have already seen, Aune believes that John is dependent on the same literary source as the other Jewish apocalypses (*The Similitudes*, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*) which each apocalyptist fashioned in his own distinctive way.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, it is important to note that the postulation of such a source is highly precarious, as Swete observed, since no such source is known to us. Therefore, in light of the overwhelming use of the Old Testament in Revelation, the question becomes, does this context have any role in determining meaning in its narrative, and if so, to what extent?

### 3.3. *The Old Testament Context in Revelation*

As we have already seen in Chapter 1, Yarbrow Collins posits that the central orienting concept in the Book of Revelation is the combat myth of the Ancient Near East. Since in her view John is “eclectic” and “international” in his selection of literary tradition, he has adapted, she believes, an admixture of the mythic tradition from diverse cultural backgrounds.<sup>81</sup> In order to arrive at this conclusion, Yarbrow Collins maintains that approaches which look to the background of “the Old Testament and Jewish religion” for the meaning of John's symbolisms, have “hindered” the interpretation of the Apocalypse.<sup>82</sup> For Yarbrow Collins, there is little hermeneutical value in the Old Testament for the Book of Revelation. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza expresses similar views: “[John] does not interpret the OT but uses its words, images, phrases, and patterns as a language arsenal in order to make his own theological statement.... The author of Rev. is not bent on the exposition and explication of the OT as authoritative Scripture.”<sup>83</sup> J.-P. Ruiz, likewise, posits that John's

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79. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xii, 39.

80. Aune, “Jewish Apocalyptic,” 174.

81. See discussion in Chapter 1, 2.2-2.6.

82. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 1-2.

83. Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 135-36. Fiorenza further argues that “It is not the OT prophets, but his own historical-theological situation, which is the locus of revelation.” John's use of the Old Testament is “anthological” and therefore the Old Testament context is insignificant. See discussion in Fekkes, *Prophetic*

use of the Old Testament is not context-dependent. In fact for Ruiz, new meaning is created every time Revelation is read and reread.<sup>84</sup> In any event, it is evident that many scholars minimize or altogether dismiss the significance of the intertextual relationship between Revelation and the Old Testament.

By contrast, Beale, Paulien, Fekkes, Bauckham, and Hays, among others, are of the opposite opinion. For these scholars, Revelation's use of the Old Testament is paramount for understanding its theology. Fekkes insists that studies which dismiss or minimize the relevance of the Old Testament context in the Apocalypse "stand in stark contrast" with his own analysis of the use of prophetic tradition, particularly Isaiah, in the book.<sup>85</sup> Rather, "[A]s far as this study is concerned," he writes, "there have been very few instances where John has strayed from the 'obvious' meaning of Isaiah, whatever that may be."<sup>86</sup> For Fekkes, John's use of the Old Testament is "consciously systematic and purposeful," showing his respect for the contexts he recalls.<sup>87</sup> Beale, in particular, has long contended that the Old Testament context is vital for understanding Revelation.<sup>88</sup> He maintains that, "John's interpretation of the Old Testament shows respect for Old Testament contexts, and his interpretation shows formative influence from the Old Testament itself."<sup>89</sup> Beale further notes that John's use of Old Testament imagery grows "organically" from this original

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*Traditions*, 286. For discussion on the context of the Old Testament in the New Testament in general, see further, Stanley, *Conversation*; Stanley E. Porter, ed., *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2006); Moyise, "Intertextual Interpretation," 31-45.

84. Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16.17-19.10* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), 219-28; 517-39. Ruiz advances a reader-response approach for the Apocalypse. See discussion in Beale, *John's Use*, 29-40.

85. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 286.

86. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 287.

87. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 70.

88. This is a major point of contention in most of Beale's work on Revelation. Cf. G. K. Beale, *We Become What We Worship: A Biblical Theology of Idolatry* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 22-34; G. K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2011), 3-4.

89. Beale, *John's Use*, 45.

context.<sup>90</sup> “The OT in general plays such a major role,” he concludes, “that a proper understanding of its use is necessary for an adequate view of the Apocalypse as a whole.”<sup>91</sup> Similarly, Paulien expresses that the sheer magnitude of allusions to the Old Testament “indicates that it is the major key to unlock the meaning of the book’s symbols.”<sup>92</sup> And recently, Hays, who has long maintained that the Old Testament context is vital for understanding how Paul appropriates and interprets the Scriptures of Israel,<sup>93</sup> writes “in order to understand the Apocalypse well, we need to understand the complex ways in which the author is reading these books [the Old Testament prophetic corpus] and employing their ideas and images.”<sup>94</sup>

In light of the fact that his monograph on Revelation evinces an eclectic approach, Bauckham’s understanding of the role of the Old Testament in Revelation is even more telling:

"It is a book designed to be read in constant intertextual relationship with the Old Testament. John was writing what he understood to be a work of prophetic scripture, the climax of prophetic revelation, which gathered up the prophetic meaning of the Old Testament scriptures and disclosed the way in which it was being and was to be fulfilled in the last days. His work therefore, presupposes and conveys an extensive interpretation of large parts of the Old Testament prophecy. Allusions are meant to recall the Old Testament context, which thereby becomes part of the meaning the Apocalypse conveys, and to build up, sometimes by a network of allusion to the same Old Testament passage in various parts of the Apocalypse, an interpretation of whole passages of Old Testament prophecy."<sup>95</sup>

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90. Beale, *John’s Use*, 45.

91. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 77.

92. Jon Paulien, “Interpreting Revelation’s Symbolisms,” in *Symposium on Revelation—Book 1* (Daniel and Revelation Committee Series 6; Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 80.

93. See Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 20-21.

94. Hays and Alkier, “Introduction,” 5.

95. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xi. With such a poignant summary of Revelation’s relationship to the Old Testament, it is all the more surprising that when it comes to his interpretation of the beast, Bauckham departs from this fundamental observation, as we will see in Chapter 6.

For Bauckham, the intertextual relationship with the Old Testament is of primary importance in deriving meaning in the Apocalypse. Yet as we will see, when it comes to the meaning of the beast imagery in Revelation 13, for Bauckham, the historical context takes precedence over intertextual considerations. In any event, the exegetes noted above are certain that Revelation is to be understood in consideration of its intertextual relationship with the Old Testament.

This is also the logical conclusion of the canonical approach of Childs and Wall, as we have noted above, and it is the premise upon which the conceptual analysis of the beast imagery is predicated in this study. That the Old Testament context is the primary locus of Revelation's language, imagery and theology is a very reasonable conclusion. If it could be demonstrated that the seer made thorough use of Greco-Roman tradition—if say, he quoted extensively from Homer, Plato, or Euripides—very few commentators would be at odds to deduce that John is interpreting these authors; and still fewer would minimize the intertextual relationship between John and his source texts. Yet, in the case of the Jewish canonical tradition, which John, being a Jew and a Christian, appropriates, it is astounding that the opposite conclusion is even countenanced. That the Old Testament permeates the book is reasonably indicative of where John is drawing his message and implied meaning.

I suggest that the Apocalypse is profoundly concerned with the Old Testament context. These Scriptures do not simply provide metaphorical content which John freely employs for his own purposes, but rather, the high-frequency of allusions in the Book of Revelation betrays a conscious and deliberate hermeneutical strategy which rightly appreciated, provides guidance for its interpretation. Put differently, the highly intertextual nature of Revelation does not simply serve rhetorical purposes but rather identifies its message with a particular tradition-historical discourse. However, before turning to these and other issues more directly, a final section of this chapter will clarify other important



working assumptions which underlie this study.

#### 4. Accommodating Revelation's Narrative Assumptions

A foundational position of the canonical stance adopted in this thesis is the recognition that the biblical "mythological" worldview—to borrow a concept from Bultmann—is different from the present paradigm of Enlightenment rationalism. A deeply religious spirit imbibed the ancient mindset and for the biblical writers the supernatural was a living reality. Conceptions of visions, dreams, spirits, angels, demons, God, miracles and the like, were part and parcel of the way in which they and their readers thought and experienced the world. Consequently, metaphysical themes pervade their writings. Yet, when modern exegetes approach biblical texts, more often than not there is an *a priori* dismissal of this "mythical" worldview as imaginary figments. Instead, these writings are frequently filtered through a Bultmannian "demythologized" glasses, with the expectation that a "scientific" reading will somehow yield a more fruitful harvest.<sup>96</sup>

Yet as V. Philips Long argues, in order to be a "good (competent) listener to the text," the exegete must be willing to "accommodate" the "truth claims" of the biblical writer without passing immediate judgement on its "truth value."<sup>97</sup> That is, to cooperate with the text by hearing it "on its own terms."<sup>98</sup> One important example of hearing the Book of Revelation on its own terms is in the way in which it appropriates the Old Testament. The final book of the Bible betrays no interest whatsoever in a diachronic treatment of Scripture. It simply appropriates its themes and symbols as givens. Therefore, in order to assume John's point of view of dealing with Scripture, I also maintain this synchronic

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96. See for instance, Rudolf K. Bultmann, Hans W. Bartsch and Reginald F. Horace, *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate* (ed. Hans W. Bartsch; London: SPCK, 1964).

97. V. Philips Long, "Reading the Old Testament as Literature," in *Interpreting the Old Testament: A Guide for Exegesis* (ed. Craig C. Broyles; Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 88-89.

98. Long, "Old Testament as Literature," 89.

perspective vis-à-vis the Old Testament in Revelation.

#### 4.1. *Jesus or John?*

While many early modern interpreters of Revelation considered the array of terrific imagery in its pages an indication of the disunity of the book, or as a sign of the neurotic proclivities of its author, the present tendency is to praise John's intellectual ability and vivid imagination.<sup>99</sup> The exquisite coordination of the structural units of the book is not only acknowledged by most present interpreters, but its literary unity has demonstrated that Revelation is indeed a deeply thoughtful and penetrating work of literary art—all to John's credit. Bauckham, for example, speaks of John's "literary genius," and "creative individuality."<sup>100</sup> Indeed, John is frequently believed to have undertaken the conscious task of writing an "apocalypse" according to its standard literary conventions; hence, the frequent assumption that the book is chiefly the rumination of John's imagination.<sup>101</sup>

When Yarbrow Collins writes that "it was the tension between John's vision of the kingdom of God and his environment that moved him to write his Apocalypse,"<sup>102</sup> this flies in the face of what is clearly stated in the book:<sup>103</sup>

1:1 The revelation of Jesus Christ which *God gave to him* to show to his bondservants that which is to happen shortly. *This he sent* to his servant John, signifying it by his angel (emphasis mine).

And again,

22:6 *The Lord, the God of the spirit of the prophets has sent his angel* to show to his bondservants that which is to happen shortly (emphasis mine).

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99. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 111, discusses the fact that many early exegetes recoiled from the bizarre imagery of the Apocalypse.

100. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xii.

101. Cf. Yarbrow Collins, "Apocalypse Now," 457.

102. Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 106.

103. Except where noted as from the NRSV or the ESV, all textual citations are my own.

22:16 *I, Jesus have sent mine angel* to bear witness to you in the churches concerning these things (emphasis mine).

As I endeavour to show in Chapter 4, the author of Revelation repeatedly alleges that the initiative to bear testimony did not derive of his own volition, but claimed, like Paul, that he experienced an authentic revelation from the heavenly Jesus—the contents of which he repeatedly calls “truthful,” and “the Word of God.” Yet, like many scholars, Yarbrow Collins believes that apocalyptic writings derive from imaginary reaction to crisis, therefore the apocalyptists’ imagination and literary abilities become the focus.<sup>104</sup> The tendency to ascribe literary genius to John discounts the religious experience of the seer. Michael Stone observes this when he writes, “This aspect of biblical prophecy causes discomfort.”<sup>105</sup> I suggest that the Book of Revelation emphasizes God's activities in the world and the role of Spirit as the agency mediating the visions, while John's role, while indispensable, is secondary to this emphasis.

#### 4.2. “*In the Spirit*”

Though the revelation is said to have been mediated by an angel, many commentators have noted the unusually minimal role he actually plays. Instead, Revelation emphasizes the role of the Spirit at key intervals throughout the book. John repeatedly acknowledges the role of the Spirit in transporting him both spatially and temporally during key moments of the visionary experience:<sup>106</sup>

1:10 *I was in the spirit* on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great sound like

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104. Cf. Yarbrow Collins, “Apocalypse Now,” 457.

105. Michael E. Stone, “A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 96 (2003): 169. Stone writes further concerning biblical claims of visionary experiences: “The biblical prophets clearly wrote about undergoing varied sorts of visionary and dream experiences, auditions and possessions. The authors of Psalms yearn for the deity's presence in language that goes far beyond the metaphorical; stories in Samuel are unambiguous. However, when faced with the book of Ezekiel's reports of visionary phenomena, for example, scholars are uncomfortable at the idea that the prophet is reporting something he believed had happened to him while in an alternate state of consciousness” (168).

106. Cf. Ezek 2:2; 3:12, 14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5; Acts 8:39. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 3-6, in particular sees these four references to the Spirit as possible structural indicators in the Book.

a trumpet.

4:2 Immediately *I was in the spirit*, and in heaven a throne was set in place, and a certain one seated on the throne.

17:3 And *he carried me away in the spirit* into a wilderness, and I saw a woman sitting on a scarlet beast which was full of blasphemous names, having seven heads and ten horns.

21:10 And *he carried me away in the spirit* to a mountain great and high, and he showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.

John is intent on having his readers believe that what he relates was received on account of his being "in the Spirit."<sup>107</sup> This expressed authorial intention is not taken seriously in most commentaries, but the canonical stance in this study adduces the primacy of the "Spirit" in both mediating as well as interpreting prophetic utterances.

Along these lines, Minear emphasizes the relationship between biblical prophets and the Spirit: "They spoke only when moved by the Spirit, and that impulse was often unanticipated and surprising to both speaker and audience."<sup>108</sup> This is precisely what John claims: he is being moved by a Spirit apart from himself. Minear further underlines "the elusive distance separating a prophetic speaker from a nonprophetic interpreter," and correctly states the problem for present exegetical methodologies:

Today the work of interpreting early Christian prophets has been assigned to battalions of professionally trained exegetes (interpreters of texts), to whose work the gift of the Spirit is no longer considered intrinsic. Ancient prophets relied on Spirit-guided interpreters to overcome the distance between God's will and the church's behavior; modern exegetes rely on acceptable academic methods of analysis, which become steadily more elaborate and more esoteric.... I do not deny that this method of study has value, but I want to warn that no such method can by itself overcome the

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107. Cf. Ezekiel 2:2. The role of the Spirit is much more emphasized in Revelation than that of the mediating angel. It is the Spirit who exhorts the churches repeatedly (Rev 2:7, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22); the Spirit implores and speaks (22:17), and even Jesus is said to possess the "seven Spirits of God" (3:1; 5:6).

108. Minear, *Apocalyptic*, 21.

obstacles inherent in the gift of prophecy.<sup>109</sup>

#### 4.3. *Writing in situ*

Equally importantly, is the fact that John indicates that he is writing *in situ*; that is, during the visionary experience:

1:11 "What you see write in a book..."

1:19 "Write things which you have seen, the things which are and the things which will happen after this."

2:1 "To the angel of the church in Ephesus write..."

2:8 "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write..."

2:12 "And to the angel of the church in Pergamum write..."

2:18 "And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write..."

3:1 "And to the angel of the church in Sardis write..."

3:7 "And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write..."

3:14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write..."

10:4 And when the seven thunders had spoken, *I was about to write*, but I heard a voice from heaven which said, "Seal up the things which the seven thunders have spoken, and *do not write them* down."

14:13 And I heard a voice from heaven which said, "Write, 'blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from here on.'"

19:9 And he said to me, "Write, 'Blessed are the ones who have been called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

21:5 And the one sitting on the throne said, "Look, I am making everything new." And he said to me, "Write, for these words are trustworthy and true."

Repeatedly John is told to write; but in one instance, as he is about to write, he is also told *not to write* (10:4). That John is using this repetition as a rhetorical device is possible. However, the idea that John is writing *in situ*—during the visionary experience—is the most

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109. Minear, *Apocalyptic*, 23.

obvious conclusion, however counter-intuitive.<sup>110</sup> Whether or not he later edited what he wrote is uncertain, but it is clear from the text that John is writing because he is instructed to write what he sees and hears (1:11, 19). Yet at key intervals, as points of emphasis, he is especially instructed to write (14:13, 19:9, 21:5), and in one instance, not to write. The focus therefore is not on John's intellectual genius, but rather on *divine imperative*. It is what God is doing, rather than John, which takes precedence in Revelation. Moreover, John falls in line with many Old Testament prophets who are also instructed to write during visionary episodes.<sup>111</sup>

With reference to the emphasis on John's abilities, Paul Minear has correctly observed that the attribution "Revelation of John" is a misnomer, since the revelation comes *to* John and therefore belongs to Jesus.<sup>112</sup> From a canonical perspective, the notion of authentic visionary experiences is neither strange nor at variance with Christian teaching. Many prophets, including Paul, attested to visionary experiences. That John had such an experience is too lightly dismissed. Stephen Miller sums this up pointedly: "Biblical apocalyptic should be understood as an actual account of what the writer saw and heard

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110. Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Words of Prophecy: Reading the Apocalypse Theologically," in *Studies in the Book of Revelation* (ed. Steve Moyise; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 8, also recognizes the *prima facie* implication of John's *in situ* revelatory experience when she writes: "John's insistence on the divine authorship of the Apocalypse has decisively influenced theological understandings of canonical authority. If one accepts his portrayal of the revelatory process, one comes to an understanding of Scripture as the 'dictated word of G\*d' rather than as the inspired rhetorical responses of biblical writers to specific theo-ethical problems arising in particular socio-rhetorical locations." Clearly, when taken at face value, John is indeed claiming to be writing *in situ*. But this flies in the face of accepted theories of inspiration, since it seems to suggest, as Fiorenza points out, verbal plenary inspiration. While this study does not advance any form of verbal plenary inspiration, it should be noted that only a single book of the Bible claims to be *in its totality*, a revelation from God. It is the only one in which John is *repeatedly* told to write as he is in dialogue with the Spirit. Thus Revelation is unique in the whole Bible in this regard. Further, many theories have been suggested as to John's solecisms and hebraisms. However, the idea that John in writing during the visionary experience is hardly ever countenanced as a possible explanation. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 80-81, believes it likely that John had an authentic visionary experience which he would have recorded later from memory. In my view, the direct textual evidence suggests that John is writing while in vision.

111. Cf. Is. 8:1; 30:8; Jer 30:2; 36:2, 28; Ezek 24:2; 37:16; Hab 2:2.

112. Minear, *New Earth*, 3-5.

rather than contrived literature employed by a writer merely as a communicative tool."<sup>113</sup>

#### 4.4. *Summary: An Empathetic Reading*

Along with Minear, I suggest that unless one empathizes with John's metaphysical claims, the message he is communicating will not be fully grasped. As Stephen Cook further underscores, "Rather than viewing apocalyptic literature through a rational or historical lens, interpreters are more likely to access its literal sense by reading it in the context of the Bible's own inner world: its narrative assumptions, values, and aspirations."<sup>114</sup> The empathetic approach in this thesis accommodates John's truth claims regarding his religious experience. This is because John's appeal to the spirit would not be strange to his original readers since the role of the Spirit is integrally related to the work of the church from its very inception. The role of the Spirit as the agency of both revelation and interpretation is fully affirmed in the early church.<sup>115</sup> Thus, having laid out these working assumptions, we are now prepared to look at the substantiating arguments of the thesis in the following chapters. But first, some brief concluding remarks.

### 5. Conclusion

To summarize the main arguments of this chapter, the proposition for a canonical reading of the biblical Apocalypse and its symbolic sea beast, arises from three main convictions. First, that the contemporary historical analysis of this symbolism in the Book of Revelation, has provided an important, but restricted view of its significance by adopting an indiscriminately eclectic hermeneutical strategy and by unnecessarily restraining its

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113. Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel* (The New American Commentary 18; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1994), 193.

114. Stephen L. Cook, *The Apocalyptic Literature* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 64.

115. As Christopher Pelling, "Epilogue," in *The Limits of Historiography: Genre and Narrative in Ancient Historical Texts* (ed. Christina Shuttleworth Kraus; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 326, has shown, the audience's worldview and expectations also play an important role in determining the meaning of a text.

meaning to the putative historical situation of the first century. Second, that the reading strategy of the early church in which the "rule of faith" guided sound interpretation of Christian Scriptures, remains an indispensable guide for the interpretation of the the final book of the Bible. In practice, this means seeing the Apocalypse as a Christian document which shares a deep theological history with other biblical writings, and therefore that its interpretation within a canonical context is both legitimate and relevant. The final reason for maintaining a canonical stance in interpreting the Apocalypse derives from the attested prominence of the Old Testament background in its narrative. This study accepts the argument that the intertextual strategy of the Apocalypse is most evident in relationship to the Hebrew Bible and that this context significantly informs meaning in the book. For this reason, this study seeks to demonstrate that the conceptual rendering of the eschatological beast of the Apocalypse has been shaped by the canonical context of the Hebrew Scriptures, and that this canonical shaping has ongoing theological implications for the contemporary church.

The canonical reading stance assumed herein will be seen to be different from a form-critical, generic hermeneutic in which the primary locus of meaning shifts from a canonical context to the location of the Apocalypse among a constellation of extra-canonical writings exhibiting similar form and content. Or one in which the ancient Near Eastern mythological environment becomes the seedbed for the symbolic world of the Apocalypse. In a word, the canonical stance advanced in this study diverges sharply from interpretations which avow that the canonical context—especially the Old Testament—to which John overwhelmingly alludes is of little significance in constructing meaning in the Apocalypse, as John is presumed to employ its themes and symbols freely and for his own purposes. But I maintain, in the words of Hays, that "the book of Revelation is best



understood within its canonical context in the Christian Bible."<sup>116</sup>

The following chapter which investigates the development of the genre "apocalypse" and the shortfalls of a generic approach to the biblical Apocalypse, sets the stage for the canonical reading of the final book of the Bible and the analysis of its symbolic sea beast.

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116. Hays and Alkier, "Introduction," 4.

# "Apocalypse": The Making of a Genre

## I. Introduction

As noted in the introduction, modern scholarship is certain that canonical texts are best interpreted in relation to the wider external literature which is more or less historically contiguous. While this conviction has produced many fruitful studies and has broadened our understanding of the variety and literary conventions of ancient texts, it is the aim of this chapter to challenge this axiom. First, I intend to trace in broad strokes the contours of the modern study of the literary phenomenon known as "apocalyptic" and its corollary or subgroup "apocalypse". The purpose here is to identify how the goal to define a group of ancient texts chiefly by means of their literary similarities has led to the disinclination to employ the canonical or theological method in the interpretation of the Apocalypse within academic circles.

It will be shown how literary-critical considerations, working in tandem with sociological and historical assumptions, are understood as instrumental hermeneutical strategies for the study of the Book of Revelation by virtue of its inclusion in the literary category "apocalypse." As will be seen, however, growing dissatisfaction with this overall approach among some scholars, as well as new developments in the field of genology, pose significant challenges to the reigning hermeneutical methodology. The final section of the chapter highlights an important ideological approach to the study of Jewish apocalyptic tradition which will serve as the point of departure for the intertextual analysis in the subsequent chapters.

## 2. The Contemporary Historical Approach to Revelation

### 2.1. *A Brief History*

The modern critical study of the Book of Revelation reveals a definite methodological break from the pre-modern study.<sup>1</sup> Before the eighteenth century, students of the Apocalypse generally approached the book from a theological perspective, viewing it in comparison with the rest of the Bible. Working with the assumption of the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the major tradition of interpretation discerned in the pages of the Apocalypse a roadmap of the future, delineating church history up to the Second Coming of Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, historical critical scholars, guided by the conviction that biblical books like the Apocalypse are best interpreted in view of the immediate historical and sociological realities which produced them, approached the Book of Revelation with these concerns firmly in view. That is, they aimed to discern the events, fears, expectations, and the like, within the world of the first Christians who would have read the Apocalypse to John.<sup>3</sup> Dutch scholar Johann Wettstein early in the eighteenth century was among the first to state this conviction in relation to the study of Book of Revelation. Being certain that "the Apocalypse was written specifically for the benefit of certain people who were living at that time, and for the purpose of being understood by them," he dismissed the notion of future prediction in the book and urged his students to search out the historical context of the Apocalypse in order to discern the original and intended meaning.<sup>4</sup>

Subsequent to Wettstein, various types of historical critical approaches interrogated

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1. I deliberately chose not to use the term "pre-critical," since John Barton, *The Nature of Biblical Criticism* (Louisville, KY.: Westminster/John Knox, 2007), 117-136, has demonstrated that "criticism" of the Bible has important premodern precedents.
  2. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 125. Wainwright, whose work I depend on heavily in this section, provides a comprehensive and well-informed study of the history of interpretation of the Apocalypse. The allegorical interpretation also played a significant role in the history of interpretation.
  3. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 125. Cf Aune, *Revelation*, 1:xlvi.
  4. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 133. Wainwright cites Joannes J. Wettstein, *Novum Testamentum*, 2:893.

the background of the Apocalypse giving due attention to historical considerations. Interpreters employed various combinations of historical, form, redaction and source criticisms to ascertain, among other things, the date, authorship, sources, and provenance of the Book of Revelation.<sup>5</sup> Various redactional stages and sources were deduced from the putative compositional history of the text, often with highly divergent results.<sup>6</sup> For example, in contrast to the long-standing tradition that John the Apostle wrote the book, modern exegetes proposed John the Elder, John the Seer, an early Christian prophet named John, John Mark, and John the Baptist, among others, as its author.<sup>7</sup> While many of the earlier assumptions about sources and redaction have been largely abandoned, critical study of the book is still mostly concerned with reconstructing the historical world of the Apocalypse and viewing its symbolic constructs as contemporary historical referents.<sup>8</sup> Still, the most enduring, and yet problematic approach to the modern study of the Book of Revelation has been the form-critical goal to classify and interpret the book as a generic “apocalypse”.

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5. See Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St John: The Greek Text* (3rd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1909), xlv-liv, for references and reasoned refutations of “source” and “redaction” theories.
  6. For example, Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:xviii, xxxviii-xlv, believed that John the Seer was responsible for the composition of the book, though a later “profoundly stupid and ignorant” editor introduced egregious errors and interpolations. Today most commentators are aware of the literary integrity of the Apocalypse. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, x, for example, notes the “crass failure” of earlier source-critics, “to appreciate the specific literary integrity of the work as it stands.” Cf also Aune, *Revelation*, 1:cv-cxvii, for a comprehensive review of earlier form-critical scholarship on the Apocalypse. Significantly, Aune still adduces a three-stage compositional and redactional history, and maintains that there are written sources behind the Apocalypse (cxviii-cxxxiv).
  7. Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:xxii, xli-xliii, saw John the Seer as distinct from John the Elder. The latter, Charles believed wrote the Gospel and Epistles and might have even been a pupil of John the Seer. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 1:xlvi-lvii; Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 116-118. Many exegetes still maintain a Johannine authorship. For example, Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 15.
  8. Cf. Norman Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 30-32, 59-60, who sees apocalyptic symbols functioning as allegorical codes (or steno-symbols) for persons and events in the author's world. See also Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 3, whose avowed interest as a critical scholar is the historical world behind the text: “My interest in the Book of Revelation is limited to the situation in which it was first read and written—the situation of the author and the situation of those to whom the Book of Revelation was originally addressed.”

## 2.2. Defining "Apocalypse": The Deprivileging of a "Canonical" Context

### 2.2.1. Friedrich Lücke

Friedrich Lücke (1791-1854) was the first to undertake a systematic study of ancient apocalyptic tradition in the modern period. Borrowing the term "apocalyptic" coined by his contemporary, German scholar K.I. Nitzsch in 1822, Lücke applied the term to a group of texts bearing similarities in form and content.<sup>9</sup> Lücke's main objectives were to "define the concept and character of apocalyptic literature" and to "describe the history behind the literature."<sup>10</sup> Lücke's analysis involved cataloguing several literary characteristics and themes of Daniel (pseudonymity, a universal perspective on history, artistic presentation, angelic interpreter, etc.), observing that many of these characteristics were also present in other non-canonical works.<sup>11</sup> Using Daniel and Revelation as his model apocalypses, Lücke compared these to lesser known works such as the *Book of Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Sibylline Oracles*, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and the *Assumption of Moses*, among others, discerning similarities in form and content. Based on his analysis of their thematic similarities, Lücke offered the first definition of the genre: *apokalypsis* was "the eschatological dogma, the Jewish and Christian faith in the future consummation of the kingdom of God."<sup>12</sup> Lücke's investigation served as the foundation for subsequent studies

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9. Early scholarship on apocalyptic and Lücke's original work, Friedrich Lücke, *Versuch einer vollständigen Einleitung in die Offenbarung des Johannes: oder, Allgemeine Untersuchungen über die apokalyptische Literatur überhaupt und die Apokalypse des Johannes insbesondere* (Bonn: E. Weber, 1852), is helpfully summarized by a number of authors. I depend mostly on Richard E. Sturm, "Defining the Word 'Apocalyptic': A Problem in Biblical Criticism," in *Apocalyptic and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of J. Louis Martyn* (eds. Joel Marcus, Marion L. Soards and J. Louis Martyn; Sheffield: JSOT, 1989), in this section. But for other helpful discussions of early apocalyptic studies see also Paul D. Hanson, "Prolegomena to the Study of Jewish Apocalyptic," in *Magnalia Dei, the Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (eds. G. Ernest Wright et al.; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976), 389-401; Paul D. Hanson, "Introduction," in *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses* (ed. Paul D. Hanson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 4-6; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to the Jewish Matrix of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 1-5.
10. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 18.
11. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 17.
12. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 19.

on the apocalyptic genre in many and important ways. Here I focus on two significant methodological impulses emerging from Lücke's investigation which can be seen in virtually all apocalyptic studies since.

First, because Lücke believed the incipit Αποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ of the first verse of the Apocalypse essentially described the content of a distinct, ancient literary genre, he felt free to include works which exhibited similarity in form and content in this literary category. This methodology of comparing canonical and non-canonical texts, mining them for similarity in form and content, has defined the study of the genre apocalypse up to the present. While for Lücke, Daniel and Revelation were the only "true" apocalypses, later interpreters placed equal value on the two categories of apocalyptic literature (canonical and non-canonical) alike and saw their resemblances as reflecting the same literary genre and worldview.<sup>13</sup>

A second way in which Lücke's pioneering investigation of apocalyptic has influenced subsequent studies relates to the *Sitz im Leben* of apocalypses. Lücke postulated a social context of "disillusionment with the course of history and infighting within the community," during the post-exilic period as the generative circumstances for the apocalyptic genre.<sup>14</sup> Lücke's connection of social setting and literary genre has left an abiding legacy: from his investigation onward, the literary category "apocalyptic" would be inextricably linked to a social situation of crisis and deprivation.

#### 2.2.2. Adolf Hilgenfeld

Lücke's contemporary, Adolf Hilgenfeld, exemplified this synthesis. In his work *Die Jüdische Apokalyptik in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung: Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des*

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13. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 19-20.

14. Hanson, "Introduction," 4. Cf. Hanson, "Prolegomena," 389-390.

*Christentums*, published in 1854, Hilgenfeld defined apocalyptic in strictly generic terms with a decided emphasis on studying this phenomenon from the point of view of shared literary characteristics.<sup>15</sup> Criticizing Lücke for privileging the canonical apocalypses, he endeavored to treat the genre as an autonomous entity without reference to a canonical context.<sup>16</sup> In Hilgenfeld's rubric, Daniel is placed under the category "Jewish Apocalyptic" with other "related Jewish scriptures," indicating their equal status and common exegetical approach.<sup>17</sup> And like Lücke, he concluded that the beginning and social setting of apocalyptic phenomena was to be found in the inter-testamental period as a response to Seleucid political oppression.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.2.3. *SBL Genres Project*

Following in this general direction, twentieth century students of apocalyptic literature continued to identify and tabulate what they saw as the main characteristics and motifs of this body of texts, which are believed to be generated under circumstances of crisis and alienation. Klaus Koch, D.S. Russell, Paul Hanson, Philip Vielhauer, are among the many who have identified varied characteristic features of apocalypses and have suggested their respective definitions of this literary category.<sup>19</sup> But the definition of "apocalypse" which

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15. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 20-21, once again provides a very helpful evaluation of Hilgenfeld's work. See Adolf Hilgenfeld, *Die Jüdische Apokalyptik in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung: Ein Beitrag zur Vorgeschichte des Christentums* (Jena: 1854). Cf. Hanson, "Prolegomena," 390.

16. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 20. Hilgenfeld, like many who embraced the Baur hypothesis, believed that many pseudepigraphical works are included in the New Testament. So E. Earle Ellis, "Pseudonymity and Canonicity of New Testament Documents," in *Worship, Theology and Ministry in the Early Church: Essays in Honor of Ralph P. Martin* (eds. Ralph P. Martin, Michael J. Wilkins and Terence Paige; Sheffield: JSOT, 1992), 213.

17. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 20.

18. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 20.

19. See Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic* (London: S.C.M., 1972), 24-33. Koch, who is credited with starting a renaissance in apocalyptic studies in the mid-twentieth century, identifies a host of literary characteristics of apocalyptic literature including: discourses cycles, dialogues between seer and *angelus interpres*, spiritual turmoils, paraenetic discourses, pseudonymity, mythical images rich in symbolism, and the composite character of the texts. Behind these texts lie an apocalyptic movement characterized by the following moods and ideas: (i) an urgent expectation of the overthrow of all earthly conditions in the immediate future; (ii) the end as a vast cosmic catastrophe; (iii) the end as closely connected with the previous history of mankind and

has won the day was the collaborative effort of a group of scholars headed by John J. Collins and commissioned by the Society of Biblical Literature. The Genres Project Group on apocalyptic published their definition in an important 1979 *Semeia* study:

"Apocalypse" is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial, insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.<sup>20</sup>

In a second 1986 *Semeia* study which focused on apocalypticism in early Christianity, another group of scholars under the direction of Yarbrow Collins suggested an addition to the above definition to account for the function of apocalypses.

"[S]uch a work is intended to interpret present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority."<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3. *Primary Methodological Impulse*

Regardless of the definition put forward for "apocalyptic" or "apocalypse" (in the case of the SBL Group), and despite the differing lists of defining characteristics of the

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of the cosmos with the division of history into fixed segments; (iv) involvement of angels and demons mustered in hierarchy of orders; (v) the dawn of a new salvation of paradisaical character; (vi) redemption as an act from the throne of God; (vii) the introduction of a mediator with royal functions to accomplish and guarantee the final redemption; and (viii) emphasis on the glory of the age to come. Klaus Koch, "What is Apocalyptic? An Attempt At a Preliminary Definition," in *Visionaries and Their Apocalypses* (ed. Paul D. Hanson; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 29, defines apocalyptic as "speculation which—often in allegorical form... aims to interpret the course of history and to reveal the end of the world." See further D. S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 200 BC-AD 100* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 104-139; Paul D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 10-12; Philip Vielhauer, "Apocalypses and Related Subjects," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (rev. ed.; ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; trans. Wilson, R. McL.; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 542-55.

20. John J. Collins, "Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9. Collins' list of defining apocalyptic features includes: (1) a narrative describing the manner of revelation; (2) an "otherworldly" journey of a human being mediated by an "otherworldly" guide; (3) inclusion of an eschatological salvation; (4) explicit reference to personal afterlife; and (5) the existence of another world otherwise inaccessible to humans, often with clear details.

21. Adela Yarbrow Collins, "Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 7.



genre, the central methodological impulse since Lücke may be stated this way: "apocalypse" is a literary category that include both biblical and non-biblical texts which share certain well-defined characteristics that set them apart as a recognizable, autonomous literary corpus. The SBL Group's field of vision included the following apocalypses: *1 Enoch*, Daniel, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *3 Baruch*, *2 Enoch*, the *Testament of Levi* 2-5, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, *Jubilees* (with qualifications), the *Testament of Abraham*, certain Greco-Roman texts, and many Gnostic and Christian works.<sup>22</sup> All of these writings, in their essence, are believed to resemble the Book of Revelation, which is seen as the paradigm of the genre.<sup>23</sup>

The wide spectrum of works defined as apocalypses has important bearing on the way the canonical apocalypses are interpreted. As noted previously, the approach is a purely synthetic one: the biblical apocalypses share a common apocalyptic tradition with other works of the genre, and therefore meaning can be inferred through a type of cross-referencing hermeneutic. In this view, apocalyptic is taken to be a generally unified tradition. The theological concerns and trajectory of these various texts are assumed to be much the same, warranting no separate hermeneutical procedure. D.S. Russell has pronounced this dictum in the following manner: "[A]pocalyptic is made up of dreams. Sometimes they are visions; sometimes hallucinations. The one must be taken with the other, the good with the bad, the gold with the dross."<sup>24</sup> When Russell asks, "What are we to make of its [apocalyptic] message?"<sup>25</sup> he presupposes that there is agreement in the apocalyptic message, that all apocalypses are singing in chorus. The assertion of the intrinsic equality of all apocalyptic texts has lead to the "decanonization" of Daniel and

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22. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 5.

23. Collins, "Morphology," 2. For Collins, "apocalypses" are "'literary compositions which resemble the Book of Revelation, i.e., secret divine disclosures about the end of the world and the heavenly state.'" Collins quotes Koch, *Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 18.

24. D. S. Russell, *Apocalyptic, Ancient and Modern* (London: SCM, 1978), 2.

25. Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 2.

Revelation, in which they are abstracted from their canonical contexts and interpreted vis-à-vis a wide range of known apocalyptic writings.

#### 2.4. *Secondary Methodological Impulse*

By the same token, a second and related methodological impulse since Lücke is observed in the assumed generative circumstances of apocalyptic works. Students of apocalyptic literature have held on tenaciously to what Stephen L. Cook calls a "conventicle sociology" to account for the historical and sociological matrix of apocalyptic texts.<sup>26</sup> The view that apocalyptic literature represents the perspective of the marginal and socially deprived who have undergone some kind of crisis is held by most interpreters of apocalyptic literature. Various sociological models have seemed to confirm this hypothesis.<sup>27</sup>

For example, Robert R. Wilson's sociological study affirms that apocalyptic groups arise when "necessary sociological conditions... of political, social and [or] religious upheavals" are present.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Paul D. Hanson believes apocalyptic eschatology is the viewpoint of alienated groups whose outlook is inherently pessimistic, and as a consequence, the visionaries are no longer conversant with "plain history, real politics, and human instrumentality."<sup>29</sup> For Hanson, "this bleak world view has come to expression primarily in periods of crisis."<sup>30</sup> David Hellholm, likewise, suggests that apocalypses are "intended for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority."<sup>31</sup> Further, Collins maintains that Jewish apocalypses are "typically

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26. See Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 1-54, for a thorough discussion of this approach. Cook explains that the "conventicle approach" or "deprivation theory" asserts that apocalypses are produced under specific circumstances of deprivation, marginalization and alienation, and are thus "crisis" literature.

27. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 12-17.

28. Robert R. Wilson, "From Prophecy to Apocalyptic: Reflections on the Shape of Israelite Religion," *Semeia* 21 (1981): 86.

29. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 11-12. Cf. Scott M. Lewis, *What are They Saying About New Testament Apocalyptic?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2004), 14.

30. Hanson, "Introduction," 1.

31. David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre and the Apocalypse of John," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 27.

written under foreign dominion or in some cases produced in circles that were marginal within Jewish society."<sup>32</sup> And Yarbrow Collins sees the community of John the seer alienated "from the contemporary ruling power."<sup>33</sup> In a word, apocalyptic groups (groups in crisis) produce apocalypses. As a consequence of this inveterate view, apocalyptic texts are most often interpreted as crisis literature intended to comfort the oppressed and protest the dominant political establishment. Its adherents are oppressed and marginalized; its views speculative, escapist and highly pessimistic.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.5. Summary

To summarize what has been outlined above, the study of apocalyptic literature is predicated on certain inter-related presuppositions: works within the genre "apocalypse" express identifiable similarities in form and content; they share a congruous worldview or eschatological outlook deriving from a common generative situation of crisis (or perceived crisis); and their typical use of apocalyptic tradition warrants a democratic, value-neutral hermeneutic. These assertions result in a well-developed connection, however implicit, between genre, social context and the function of apocalypses. William Adler has observed that "This supposition of a coherent ideology and movement defined by its radically dualistic eschatology has decisively shaped the study of apocalyptic literature, both Jewish and Christian."<sup>35</sup>

Put another way, one could say that there is a movement from genre to sociology, genre to worldview, and genre to hermeneutic. The hermeneutical strategy operates with the assumption that the use of a particular imagery or theme in one apocalypse has, more or

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32. John J. Collins, "Temporality and Politics in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Apocalyptic History and Tradition* (eds. Christopher Rowland and John Barton; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 33.

33. Yarbrow Collins, "Political Perspective," 246.

34. Kenelm O. L. Burridge, "Reflections on Prophecy and Prophetic Groups," *Semeia* 21 (1981): 100.

35. William Adler, "Introduction," in *The Jewish Apocalyptic Heritage in Early Christianity* (eds. James C. VanderKam and William Adler; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 2.

less, the same meaning in other apocalypses. In this view, works designated apocalypses serve to inform each other due to their common usage of 'apocalyptic tradition'.<sup>36</sup> The outcome of such a hermeneutic is that genre classification becomes the axial criterion which determines the socio-historical setting of apocalypses and the worldview of apocalyptic groups which produce them. But as we shall see later in this chapter, this all-encompassing definition and hermeneutical function of genre can no longer be maintained.

### 3. Interpreting the Apocalypse

The foregoing summary has weighty implications for the interpretative task of the Book of Revelation in general, and for the sea beast symbolism in particular. First, as previously noted, the Apocalypse is used as the paradigm of what is considered an apocalypse. Consequently, the book is usually approached with all the underlying assumptions of apocalyptic literature: its author, like other apocalyptic tradents, made use of a common apocalyptic repertoire while tacitly conforming to the conventions of the genre; the work exhibits similar literary and thematic characteristics as other apocalypses; its worldview is identical to that of related Jewish and Christian apocalyptic works; and it is crisis literature, thoroughly concerned with the immediate historical situation of politics and protest. This type of interpretive strategy is demonstrated, as we've seen, in the wide acceptance of the idea that the legend of Nero's return is reflected in important aspects of the portrayal of the seven-headed beast. The wide acceptance of the SBL Group's definition of the genre apocalypse, notwithstanding, many important recent works have challenged the methodological underpinnings of Lücke and his successors.<sup>37</sup> A discussion of

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36. Christopher R. Smith, "The Structure of the Book of Revelation in Light of Apocalyptic Literary Conventions," *NovT* 36 (1994): 376-77, even discerns the structure of the Book of Revelation based on its inclusion in the genre apocalypse.

37. For important critiques of the SBL Group's methodology and definition, see the following: Linton, "Limits of Genre," 9-42; Fletcher-Louis, "Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism," 1569-1607, see esp. 1577-1587; Newsom, "Report From Genology," 437-50; Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 33-50. The overview of apocalyptic studies in Decock, "Issues in Apocalyptic," 1-33, is also helpful.

some of the more important points follows.

## 4. Challenging the Consensus

### 4.1. *The Problem of Definition*

As noted above, the genre “apocalyptic” has been an area of contention since its first comprehensive study by Lücke in 1833. D.S. Russell notes that it is “notoriously difficult to define.”<sup>38</sup> Sturm bemoans what he calls a “troublesome ambiguity” in the way “apocalyptic” is defined and applied in biblical criticism.<sup>39</sup> He inquires whether apocalyptic is best defined as literary genre or a theological concept.<sup>40</sup> Ten years after the classical definition was published in *Semeia*, Sturm is still “uncertain how one can most adequately approach the problem of defining ‘apocalyptic’.”<sup>41</sup> This uncertainty underscores the fact that there remains a deep discomfort with the way in which genre has come to be seen as the all-encompassing criterion for understanding the apocalyptic phenomenon.<sup>42</sup> To be sure, since Hanson’s 1976 article,<sup>43</sup> scholars now distinguish between the literary genre “apocalypse,” the worldview “apocalyptic eschatology,” and the social movement “apocalypticism.”<sup>44</sup> And

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38. Russell, *Apocalyptic*, 21.

39. Sturm, “Defining ‘Apocalyptic’,” 19-20.

40. Sturm, “Defining ‘Apocalyptic’,” 19-37.

41. Sturm, “Defining ‘Apocalyptic’,” 37.

42. Robert L. Webb, “‘Apocalyptic’: Observations on a Slippery Term,” *JNES* 49 (1990): 117, is uncomfortable with a literary category serving to define a sociological setting: “Therefore, the relationship between the literary phenomena and the social phenomena becomes *rather tenuous*, and thus the description of a social phenomenon by means of what is first of all a literary category is *questionable*” (emphases added). David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 25, argues for a disconnection between the apocalyptic genre, apocalyptic eschatology and apocalypticism, since in his view “some of the clearest expressions of apocalyptic eschatology (and therefore of apocalypticism) are found in texts which do not belong to the apocalyptic genre.” See further, Matlock, *Apocalyptic Paul*, 247-316; Stone, “Apocalyptic Literature,” 393.

43. Paul D. Hanson, “Apocalypticism,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* (ed. Keith Crim; Supplementary Volume; Nashville, Tenn: Abingdon, 1976), 28-34.

44. “Apocalyptic eschatology” is understood as a worldview embodying a certain set of motifs and ideas regarding the divine eschatological plans for the world, and “apocalypticism” is seen as a social movement motivated by apocalyptic ideologies. See further, Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2-9, 11-14. Cf. Lewis, *New Testament Apocalyptic?*, 14.

while this distinction has been widely accepted, the term "apocalyptic" still continues to be used in an all-encompassing fashion to designate literary, sociological and theological phenomena.<sup>45</sup>

Another factor adding to the ambiguity is that almost everyone has identified what he/she believes is the "essential" or definitive characteristic of apocalyptic.<sup>46</sup> For early commentators like Hilgenfeld, pseudonymity and a universal historical perspective best defined what was apocalyptic.<sup>47</sup> For Käsemann, Hanson and a host of others, apocalyptic is synonymous with eschatology.<sup>48</sup> Collins sees the essential character as "transcendence."<sup>49</sup> E.P. Sanders considers the essence to be "the combination of revelation with the promise of restoration and reversal."<sup>50</sup> And Christopher Rowland understands this to be "the disclosure of heavenly secrets through revelation."<sup>51</sup> The diversity of the definition and application of "apocalyptic" has caused some commentators to call for the abandonment of the term.<sup>52</sup> And others deny the possibility of determining a generic understanding of apocalyptic.<sup>53</sup> Already in his 1975 volume, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, Hanson complained that

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45. Adler, "Introduction," 5. See also Webb, "Observations," 115-117.

46. Cf. McGinn, *Vision of the End*, 4-10, for discussion of the various views and pitfalls.

47. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 21.

48. Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (London: SCM, 1969), 108-37. Cf. Lewis, *New Testament Apocalyptic?*, 10; Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 7.

49. Collins, "Morphology," 10-12. See also John J. Collins, "The Symbolism of Transcendence in Jewish Apocalyptic," *BR* 19 (1974): 5-22.

50. E. P. Sanders, "The Genre of Palestinian Jewish Apocalypses," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (ed. David Hellholm; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1983), 458.

51. Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 20.

52. T. F. Glasson, "What is Apocalyptic?," *NTS* 27 (1980): 105, believes it to be "a useless word which no one can define and which produces nothing but confusion and acres of verbiage." Bruce Malina, *On the Genre and Message of Revelation: Star Visions and Sky Journeys* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 12, shares the same sentiments: "While the terms 'apocalypse' or 'eschatological apocalyptic' sound duly esoteric and learned, the terms shed little light on the sort of book this last document of the New Testament really is... [I]t seems rather that 'apocalypse' and 'eschatology' are simply part and parcel of the theological jargon of the past century that fossilize perception and misdirect interpretation."

53. Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des alten Testament* (4th ed.; Munich: Kaiser, 1965), 330, for example. Cf. McGinn, *Vision of the End*, 5.

the inadequacy of the definition of the genre apocalypse has stemmed from, "descriptions consisting of long lists of random features gleaned from various apocalyptic works. The picture with which one is left is not only confusing, it is also misleading, for no given apocalyptic work comes close to incorporating all the listed features."<sup>54</sup> Notwithstanding this observation, Collins has made it clear that the only way to procure a "firm" definition is by cataloguing and describing specific literary characteristics that are found in apocalypses.<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.2. *The Problem of Anachronism*

Even so, another problem arising from this methodology is the anachronistic application of a modern conceptualization of genre onto ancient texts. In chiding Collins for admittedly starting with a modern definition of apocalypse which does not correspond to the ancient authors' own sense of genre,<sup>56</sup> Crispin Fletcher-Louis points out that,

[T]he method falls short of historiographic objectivity and it is unhelpfully circular. The starting point for a robustly historical search for an ancient genre should be the conventions, expectations and intentions of ancient authors, not the twentieth-century judgements of modern scholars who may, in fact, inhabit an entirely different worldview and be guilty of their own back-projections onto the ancient texts.<sup>57</sup>

Gregory Linton likewise notes the circularity, anachronism and predetermination of the SBL Group's generic starting point.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, Klaus Koch, in his struggle to get a firmer grip on the definition of the genre observed a significant methodological problem in the modern form-critical starting

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54. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 6.

55. Collins, "Morphology," 2. Collins states, "The only firm basis which can be found is the identification of recurring elements which are explicitly present in the texts."

56. Collins, "Morphology," 4-5, writes, "the strategy employed in this volume has been to begin by examining all the writings which are either called apocalypses or are referred to as apocalyptic by modern authors."

57. Fletcher-Louis, "Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism," 1582.

58. Linton, "Limits of Genre," 34-36.

point: "Even where the ancient church assigned the title apocalypse to a particular writing, this classification is only useful for a literary and historical assessment up to a point.... The ancient church used the term from a different point of view from that of the modern literary historian."<sup>59</sup> Along this same vein, William Adler pointedly observes that,

"Studies of apocalyptic literature commonly designate certain Jewish texts as apocalypses on the basis of some modern conception of the genre. Although useful for purposes of categorization and analysis, these classification schemes are strictly scholarly exercises. None of the various Jewish works now known as apocalypses referred to itself by this or by any other single title. The first work actually to describe itself as an apocalypse was a Christian writing, the Book of Revelation.... One may thus reasonably assume that when ancient writers referred to documents as 'apocalypses', they understood something rather different from the modern technical understanding of the word."<sup>60</sup>

Morton Smith draws similar conclusions on the use of the term "apocalypse" before the the Book of Revelation:

"Remarkable is the rarity of the words in works now commonly called 'apocalypses.' I do not know any such text prior to the New Testament Apocalypse which either describes itself or the proceedings in it as *apokalypseis* or even uses the verb *apokalypso* for the whole of the revelation."<sup>61</sup>

In light of these salient observations, the issue here is not whether a generic categorization is helpful in interpreting the Apocalypse to John; the issue is whether it is *determinative* of

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59. Koch, *Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, 22. Cf. Aune, "Jewish Apocalyptic," 169-70.

60. Adler, "Introduction," 8-9. Following the same line of reasoning, 20, warns of "the danger of anachronism when using modern theories to interpret ancient texts. Ancient people did not think as we think, and what may appear obvious to us may not have been obvious to them." Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 20-21, also writes: "We should make it clear that 'apocalyptic' is our term. It is not one which the ancients used, at least in this way. It is not even certain that they regarded the book we speak of as apocalyptic as constituting a definite class.... It may well not have occurred to the men of antiquity, accordingly, to group their writings together. They may have been more impressed by the differences than the resemblances. In antiquity then there is neither the name (i.e. as applied to a class of books; the term occurs but is used otherwise), nor the classification."

61. Morton Smith, "On the History of Apokalypso and Apokalypsis," in *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East: Proceedings of the International Colloquium on Apocalypticism, Uppsala, August 12-17, 1979* (ed. David Hellholm; Tübingen: J.C. Mohr, 1983), 14. Cf. Linton, "Limits of Genre," 27.



its meaning. If a modern conception of a particular genre becomes definitive in the business of making meaning of ancient texts, whose authors showed minimal concern with literary-critical issues, then surely there is a methodological misfit. For the ancient mindset, "apocalypse" did not evoke "an eschatological literary tradition, but rather a... fascination with otherworldly gnosis, secret teachings, and the sacred book of revealed wisdom."<sup>62</sup> What was important to the ancients were the secrets or ideas contained in revelatory writings (which were by no means restricted to "apocalypses"), not their literary conventions.<sup>63</sup> So, while the modern generic classification is certainly helpful in some respects, one must also keep in mind that it is anachronistic to see "apocalyptic" or "apocalypse" (as presently defined) as an ancient generic classification.<sup>64</sup> As Christopher Tyerman reminds us, "To observe the past through the lens of the present invites delusion; so too does ignoring the existence of that lens."<sup>65</sup> For the present writer, the 150 year quest to secure a "firm" definition of apocalyptic literature remains a highly tentative one. And as we shall see, in the view of many scholars, the supposed unitary social context and function of apocalypses, as it follows, also rests on tenuous foundations.

#### 4.3. *The Problem of Social Setting and Function*

While most commentators have concluded that apocalyptic works and the groups which produced them represent the perspective of the deprived and powerless,<sup>66</sup> this view has been increasingly challenged in more recent studies. Fletcher-Louis has not only dispensed with this idea, but like his former teacher Christopher Rowland, he proposes alternatively,

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62. David Frankfurter, "Early Christian Apocalypticism: Literature and Social World," in *The Origins of Apocalypticism in Judaism and Christianity* (ed John J. Collins; vol. 1 of *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, ed John J. Collins, Bernard McGinn, and Stephen J. Stein; New York: Continuum, 1998), 415-16.

63. Cf. Adler, "Introduction," 8-13.

64. For a very recent discussion of this issue, see John J. Collins, "What is Apocalyptic Literature," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature* (ed. John J. Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2-5.

65. Christopher Tyerman, *The Crusades: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 10.

66. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic*, 232. See also Walter Schmithals, *The Apocalyptic Movement: Introduction and Interpretation* (trans. J. Steeley; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 46.

that apocalyptic works are chiefly concerned with Israelite temple cosmology and from this angle represent the perspective of the priestly class—the power brokers.<sup>67</sup> Stephen L. Cook concurs with this view when he writes that apocalyptic groups came from all levels of society and their proponents lived under various social conditions. He too advocates a power-elite sociology for the production of many biblical apocalyptic passages.<sup>68</sup> He further notes concerning the contents of biblical apocalyptic texts: "Their vibrant images and compelling visions do not encode the banal, mundane world of politics and protest."<sup>69</sup> P.R. Davies likewise argues against the unjustified claim that all apocalypses, as resistance literature, reflect the position of a marginal group in crisis. He sees apocalypses deriving from a variety of social contexts.<sup>70</sup>

Kenelm Burridge as well, in response to Wilson's assertion that specific social circumstances must be present in order for apocalyptic groups (and apocalypses) to emerge, insists that "apocalyptic events also occur in quite different conditions."<sup>71</sup> Leon Morris too, noting the wide range of apocalyptic opinion, indicates that the writers of apocalyptic texts "came from all parties and from none."<sup>72</sup> And once again, William Adler, in studying the transmission of Jewish apocalypses in their Christian contexts, is emphatic about a reassessment of the reigning sociological model: "Above all, the sociological description of the apocalypses as sectarian literature created by groups under persecution and crisis needs

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67. Fletcher-Louis, "Apocalyptic and Apocalypticism," 1590-1592 and 1600-1603. See also Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 194-203.

68. Cook, *Apocalyptic Literature*, 83: "The apocalyptic transformation of traditional ideals and mythic images can occur in a wide variety of groups under multiple sets of circumstances. Even groups in power, who do not feel resentment like those in a setting of deprivation, are live candidates."

69. Cook, *Prophecy and Apocalypticism*, 63.

70. Philip R. Davies, "The Social World of the Apocalyptic Writings," in *The World of Ancient Israel: Sociological, Anthropological and Political Perspectives* (ed. R. E. Clements; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 258-269.

71. Burridge, "Prophetic Groups," 100. He further comments, "The notion that apocalyptic messages may be natural to human groups, culturally prescribed, or an intrinsic part of the evolutionary process, is not, at the moment, generally accepted. But it bears thinking about."

72. Morris, *Apocalyptic*, 20.

to be reexamined."<sup>73</sup> And as it pertains to the Book of Revelation, Michael Gilbertson cautions that "it may be misleading to seek to tie the genesis of the text down to one particular social setting," since it is easy to assume from this conclusion that "the text is only relevant to a closely defined set of socio-political circumstances."<sup>74</sup> What is clear from this growing group of dissenting voices is that it is methodologically unsound to see apocalypses as united in their meaning and message, let alone in their generative social situation.<sup>75</sup>

Furthermore, and of chief importance, Collins has made it clear that when it comes to ancient texts, "our knowledge of function and setting is often extremely hypothetical and cannot provide a firm basis for generic classification."<sup>76</sup> Accordingly, Aune has stated that "the groups who produced apocalypses (if indeed apocalypses are not the products of individual scribes) are not known to us... that is, the *Sitze im Leben* of apocalypses are unknown."<sup>77</sup> Klaus Koch, likewise, has shed light on the obscurity of the sociological world of apocalypses when he writes: "Our survey indicates how completely obscure the sociological basis of the apocalyptic writings still is"; and further, when it comes to non-canonical apocalyptic texts, "scholars are *completely in the dark*."<sup>78</sup> Leonard Thompson also observes that "little is known about when, where, by whom, and for whom most apocalypses were written."<sup>79</sup> As a result of the many unknowns of the *Sitze im Leben* of apocalyptic texts, William Adler has also made it clear that it is "often a matter of speculation" to talk about the function of these documents.<sup>80</sup> And on this basis, Adler pertinently observes that "Theorizing about the social setting and function of the Jewish

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73. Adler, "Introduction," 6.

74. Michael Gilbertson, *God and History in the Book of Revelation: New Testament Studies in Dialogue with Pannenberg and Moltmann* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 60, 61.

75. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 40: "The great mistake of the scholars of apocalyptic consists in holding that it is a unified whole with 'a common sociological basis,' 'an analogous life context'."

76. Collins, "Morphology," 1-2.

77. Aune, *Revelation*, 1:lxix.

78. Koch, "Introduction," 19, emphasis added.

79. Thompson, *Apocalypse and Empire*, 25.

80. Adler, "Introduction," 1.

apocalypses must at some point acknowledge the fact that the context in which these apocalypses survive is a Christian one."<sup>81</sup>

With such important factors as social setting and function of apocalypses remaining almost entirely unknown, it is highly problematic that so many have remained adamant that apocalypses are protest literature, postulating scenarios of conventicles and marginalization for apocalyptic groups. Aune expresses doubt that apocalypses are produced by groups as opposed to individual scribes, as noted above. And Adler is clear that Christians are the ones who copied and transmitted these texts. It would appear that scholars have derived a kind of dogmatic certainty out of a highly hypothetical reconstruction of the social context of apocalypses. And that such assertions are brought to the task of interpreting the biblical apocalypses is good reason to reassess their conclusions.

## 5. New Perspectives in Genre Studies

As noted earlier, a major methodological assertion which undergirds the generic study of apocalypse is the idea that the genre apocalypse is an autonomous corpus with clearly distinguished features.<sup>82</sup> The assertion that there is a distinct literary category into which works fit more or less neatly based on similarity in formal characteristics and content is now being called into question.

In a relatively recent volume entitled, *Apologetics in the Roman Empire*, the editors make this salient remark:

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81. Adler, "Introduction," 1.

82. Russell, *Method and Message*, 36, for instance, believed that apocalyptic literature, since the inter-testamental period, possessed "certain fairly *well-defined* characteristics which mark it off from other literary productions of the same period" (emphasis added); and David E. Aune, "The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre," *Semeia* 36 (1986): 66, affirms this working definition when he writes: "A literary genre consists of a group of texts which exhibit a *coherent and recurring pattern* of features constituted by the interrelated elements of form, content and function" (emphasis added).

"A common-sense view of genres like 'epic' or 'tragedy' is indeed that they exist unchanging over time and across cultures, and that individual works of literature instantiate the relevant genre more or less successfully. That is, the task of the critic is to classify, to pigeon-hole works in genres. This type of approach has been popular in, for example, studies of the New Testament, which have thought up new taxonomies for texts that once appeared to be unique.... However, this view of genres, that they serve as a means of classification, has come to seem deeply unsatisfactory to literary critics. Genre should not be seen as a mechanical recipe-book for the production of texts, but rather as a discursive form capable of constructing a coherent model of the world in its own image."<sup>83</sup>

Several contributors in the volume note that the *prima facie* assertion that a coherent literary genre called "apologetics" existed in the Roman Empire is inaccurate.<sup>84</sup> Frances Young, for example, in her essay, "Greek Apologists of the Second Century," questions the notion of an "apologetic" genre into which the writings of early Christian apologists can easily fit. She informs us that, "Literary genre is not the best way of characterizing what the second-century Greek apologists have in common. They write in various genres.... Their common intent is justification of an anomalous social position."<sup>85</sup> In other words, they were motivated to defend their ideological position which had rendered them social outcasts. They showed little concern for identification with any particular genre. Their purposes were rhetorical and ideological, and as a result they employed different literary genres to fulfill their particular objectives. For these writers, the diversity in "apologetic" literature in the ancient world means the abandonment of viewing the phenomena chiefly by means of a

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83. M. J. Edwards et al., "Introduction," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (eds. M. J. Edwards et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

84. Edwards et al., "Introduction," 1.

85. Frances Young, "Greek Apologists of the Second Century," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (eds. Mark Edwards et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 103-104. Cf. Martin Goodman, "Josephus' Treatise Against Apion," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (eds. Mark Edwards et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 46, who also notes the "unfortunate circularity" of presupposing "fixed conventions" for a supposed "genre of Jewish apologetic." See further, Alexander Loveday, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *Apologetics in the Roman Empire: Pagans, Jews and Christians* (eds. Mark Edwards et al.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 16-44.

literary category in favour of considering apologetics as "a mode of thinking."<sup>86</sup> I believe the conclusion of these writers is instructive for those who continue to pigeon-hole the Apocalypse into a literary straight-jacket.

Similarly, what Lawson Younger writes about the application of an essentialist view of genre to the hermeneutical challenge of biblical historiography seems equally applicable to that of apocalyptic:

"Biblical scholars have often maintained that a rigid, essentialist genre analysis alone is sufficient to identify (and hence define) history writing. They believe the matter of genre to be all-important because they think that genre is a determinate category with fixed constituents. These scholars seem to conclude that if one can simply understand correctly which genre is being employed, then the correct interpretation will necessarily follow. In this way genre functions as a type of magic wand for interpretation. This essentialist or classificationist view of genre (the classical view of genre) has been thoroughly debunked."<sup>87</sup>

Younger further explains that, "Genres are open systems; they are groupings of texts by critics to fulfill certain ends," and as a result, "there cannot be a neutral, objective classification of texts along the lines advocated by the essentialist approach. And certainly such classifications cannot function as 'interpretive keys'."<sup>88</sup> And like many advocates of a new approach to generic understanding, Younger maintains that genres are fluid categories which change over time and therefore cannot be determinative for understanding biblical historiography.<sup>89</sup> Both Young and Younger highlight the fact that the classical definition of

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86. Anders K. Petersen, "The Diversity of Apologetics: From Genre to a Mode of Thinking," in *Critique and Apologetics: Jews, Christians and Pagans in Antiquity* (eds. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich and David Brakke; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), 15-41. Peterson himself notes that the majority of scholarship on apologetics agree that generic categorization does not reflect the historical circumstances and as such have abandoned this way of construing the evidence (20). Against the consensus, he still argues for a generic understanding, though one much more broad and flexible than the classic definition.

87. Younger, *Conquest Accounts*, 28.

88. Younger, *Conquest Accounts*, 29.

89. Younger, *Conquest Accounts*, 30-31. See also Stuart Weeks, "Predictive and Prophetic Literature: Can *Neferti* Help Us Read the Bible?," in *Prophecy and Prophets in Ancient Israel: Proceedings of the Oxford Old Testament Seminar* (ed. John Day; New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 27, who notes concerning Old Testament prophecy: "[I]t

genre as it is applied to their respective fields is patently unsound. Again, their conclusions illustrate that unitary ideas (ideologies) are expressed in all kinds of literary genres. But the notion that apocalyptic ideas traverse all kinds of genres does not bode well with adherents of the essentialist view.

It is precisely the desire to classify or "pigeon-hole" the Apocalypse into the genre "apocalypse" which inhibits Aune, for example, from considering the possibility of multiple genres for this canonical book: "[T]he conception of 'mixed genres' is theoretically infelicitous and should be used only as a court of last resort, for if the notion of a *mixtum compositum* is too quickly applied to a problematic text, the possibility of achieving a generic understanding of the structure of the entire text is given up without a struggle."<sup>90</sup> One can clearly see then, that the priority is to achieve a "generic understanding," which for a text like the Book of Revelation, which exhibits multiple generic features, is "infelicitous" to the modern classification scheme to conceive of it any other way other than as an apocalypse.<sup>91</sup> But even literary critics have moved decidedly away from a classificationist view of genre.

### *5.1. A Report From Genology*

In a recent reflection on the three decades since the Genres Project was initiated, Yarbro Collins makes some important comments on the work of the SBL Group.<sup>92</sup> Much of her reflection falls very much in line with new developments in genre criticism. Yarbro Collins notes for example that while the SBL Genres Group lacked a "systematic reflection on genre," was synchronic in emphasis, and limited in its analysis due its preliminary nature, it

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seems unlikely that the creators of these works felt themselves to be under any strong generic constraint in terms of overall form.... It is hard to speak of a prophetic style, especially when the style varies so greatly even within some of the books."

90. Aune, "Problem of Genre," 67.

91. Linton, "Limits of Genre," 9-42, noting Aune's comments above, mounts some of the strongest arguments regarding the limitations of genre for the study of the Book of Revelation.

92. Yarbro Collins, "Apocalypse Now," 447-57.

does pave the way for a diachronic analysis of apocalyptic texts.<sup>93</sup> She highlights the work of Carol A. Newsom and other literary critics as helpful in future studies of the apocalyptic genre. Carol Newsom's constructive critique of the SBL Group project is noteworthy.

For her part, Newsom explains that the SBL Group's understanding of genre was typical of genre studies at the time, where classification was the primary goal. But now that "the framework of genre studies has changed significantly," a different approach is warranted.<sup>94</sup> Noting the increasing dissatisfaction of genre theorists with definitions of genres by way of lists of characteristics, she emphasizes that literary critics can no longer speak of genres in terms of "boundaries," or texts as "belonging" to particular genres, or conceive of genre as coherent categories, or in terms of tabulating constituent characteristics.<sup>95</sup> She explains that, "'Mere' classification obscures the way in which every text—however it relates to similar texts—whether 'by conformity, variation, innovation, or antagonism' will change the nature of the genre and indeed give rise to new genres."<sup>96</sup> For Newsom, new developments in genre theory require "thinking of a genre in relation to a text's rhetorical orientation so that rather than referring to texts as belonging to genres one might think of texts as participating in them, invoking them, gesturing to them, playing in and out of them, and in so doing, continually changing them."<sup>97</sup> This kind of approach will operate with different assumptions and pose new questions to the task of generic understanding.<sup>98</sup> For Newsom, genres are conceived of as existing along a continuum, with works simultaneously participating in multiple genres.<sup>99</sup> This kind of conception, Newsom believes, will help in the analysis of the many multi-generic apocalyptic works, while paying

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93. Yarbro Collins, "Apocalypse Now," 451-2.

94. Newsom, "Report From Genology," 438.

95. Newsom, "Report From Genology," 438-9.

96. Newsom, "Report From Genology," 439.

97. Newsom, "Report From Genology," 439.

98. Newsom, "Report From Genology," 438.

99. This conclusion invalidates for example, the long debate over whether Revelation best qualifies as "apocalypse" or "prophecy."



attention to their "irreducible particularity," as well as to their relationship to "the penumbra of related kinds of texts."<sup>100</sup>

The importance of Newsom's point of view cannot be understated for the current conceptualization of the genre apocalypse. From Newsom's point of view, the locus of interpretation moves away from the generic linchpin to a "rhetorical orientation." Rhetorical analysis is concerned with arguments, goals and purposes of a composition or performance. And arguments are vehicles for the conveyance of ideas. Rhetorical analysis, therefore, comes much closer to getting to the meaning authors are seeking to convey to their audiences. The work of a group of Italian scholars takes this approach even further by focusing on the ideology expressed in Jewish apocalyptic literature over against the concentration on literary genre. Their approach seems promising in discerning the theological intricacies of apocalyptic literature and holds important ramifications for the study of the Book of Revelation. The final section of this chapter will provide a brief review of their analysis.

### *5.2. Jewish Apocalyptic as a Theological Concept*

A major issue in apocalyptic studies has been whether to characterize "apocalyptic" as mainly a literary genre or a theological concept.<sup>101</sup> While the the main stream of research in apocalyptic studies has favoured the former, many scholars find the latter more promising in discerning the particularities of apocalyptic thought. The research of Paola Sacchi of the University of Turin and his collaborators Liliana Rosso Ubigli and Gabrielle Boccaccini,

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100. Newsom, "Report From Genology," 439.

101. Sturm, "Defining 'Apocalyptic'," 19, 25-37, underscores that when 'apocalyptic' is considered primarily as a literary genre, this categorization excludes from consideration apocalyptic ideas and images found in other genres (such as the Gospels or Paul's Epistles). However, he favours the view that apocalyptic must be seen first as a theological concept, since this perspective would bring into the discussion apocalyptic ideas expressed in writings not normally considered "apocalyptic." Cf. discussion in Decock, "Issues in Apocalyptic," 2-5 and Collins, "Apocalyptic," 1-5.

supports this view. Their findings are summarized in a recent article by Boccaccini.<sup>102</sup> Based on his work on *1 Enoch*, Sacchi and his team affirm, with Collins, the notion of a literary genre "apocalypse" and its related "worldview."<sup>103</sup> However, they emphasize that a shared genre and/or worldview does not automatically equate to a shared ideology or "tradition of thought." According to Boccaccini's summary:

[T]he presence of certain recurring themes, even the same recurring themes, is not enough for the identification of a tradition of thought. Not only can an identical form be used by different traditions, but identical ideas (even the same 'world-view') can assume a different meaning (a role, a specific weight) in different contexts.... Two documents do not necessarily belong to the same tradition of thought because they share the same literary genre and the same worldview. An ideological affinity exists only if they have consciously organized and developed their thought out of the same generative idea.<sup>104</sup>

This conclusion calls into question the kind of hermeneutic in which literary criteria automatically presupposes an ideological or theological affinity. Boccaccini, in reflecting Sacchi's conclusions, notes that no other forms of Judaism—Pharisaism, Essenism, or Christianity—is "defined according to literary criteria,"<sup>105</sup> and therefore it should not be assumed to be the case for apocalyptic.<sup>106</sup> Far from being a uniform or homogenous phenomenon, the "apocalyptic tradition" is a diverse and dynamic thought process spanning many centuries and consequently "cannot be fitted entirely into a unitary scheme or a univocal definition."<sup>107</sup>

For this reason, Sacchi's definition of apocalyptic tradition, according to Boccaccini,

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102. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 33-50. Cf. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*.

103. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 35.

104. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 35. Cf. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 35-42.

105. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 36.

106. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 36.

107. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 36. It is clear that Sacchi's "ideology" and "tradition of thought" is synonymous with "theology." Sacchi's approach supports the view that apocalyptic phenomena is to be understood largely as a theological concept. However, Sacchi shows more concern for the particularities of apocalyptic ideologies (or theologies) rather than with sweeping characterization of apocalyptic thought.

has an entirely different focus than that of Collins. Whereas for Collins "transcendence of death" is the defining feature of the genre "apocalypse," for Sacchi, the generative idea for the thought tradition of apocalyptic is its "peculiar conception of evil, understood as an autonomous reality, antecedent even to humankind's ability to choose."<sup>108</sup> This ideological undercurrent cuts across multiple genres in much the same way that other forms of Judaism are expressed in different literary forms.<sup>109</sup> In other words, documents are related primarily by way of their shared ideology (which in turn reflect their shared theology) as opposed to their shared genre. Therefore the apocalyptic tradition is not limited to documents categorized as apocalypses.<sup>110</sup> Sacchi and his team identify the apocalyptic tradition as another autonomous form of Judaism which was held in tension against other traditions for centuries. This tradition was an alternative and rival ideological position to other tradition of thought, (such as the wisdom tradition) in part because it offered an alternative explanation to questions that mattered to Jews in the 2nd temple period (the origin of evil, the place of the law, human free will, etc).<sup>111</sup>

For our present purposes, the most important conclusion which Sacchi has drawn and which directly impacts our approach to the Apocalypse, is his *exclusion* of the canonical apocalypses (Daniel and Revelation ) from the "apocalyptic tradition." Based on purely ideological criteria, Boccaccini, reflecting Sacchi's sentiments, pertinently asks, "How is it possible to think of Revelation and the *Book of Parables* as belonging to the same tradition,

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108. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 36-37.

109. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 38. Thus while Sacchi's apocalyptic tradition includes works like *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *2 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* and the *Assumption of Moses*, the ideological definition demands that the entire Jewish literary corpus during the 2nd temple period be included in his investigation.

110. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 48. Cf. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 25; Schmithals, *Apocalyptic Movement*, 188, who sees the apocalyptic "form" as largely independent of the apocalyptic "thought world" and therefore works designated apocalypses are only incidental to this system of thought.

111. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 37. This may even account for the exclusion of the Enochic literature from the canon of the Hebrew Bible—its ideology might have seemed at odds with the orthodox position of the temple elites.

when for the former the 'Son of Man' is Jesus of Nazareth (Rev.1.12-18) and for the latter that eschatological figure is Enoch (*1 Enoch* 71:14)?<sup>112</sup> This exclusion of the canonical apocalypses is evidence to this group of scholars of the "deep shift" that may exist between texts bearing the same form, content and even worldview.<sup>113</sup> For Sacchi and his team, the canonical apocalypses "belong to different (if not opposite) traditions of thought."<sup>114</sup> And this group of scholars are not alone in their assessment that Revelation especially does not belong to the genre "apocalypse."<sup>115</sup>

Hence, while Sacchi and his fellow scholars affirm an apocalyptic genre and even a related worldview, the ideological (and theological) trajectories of these documents are neither confined to the literary apocalypses nor defined by literary criteria.<sup>116</sup> For these scholars, "apocalypse," "apocalyptic worldview," and "apocalyptic tradition" are distinct, "non-overlapping" categories that refuse to be subsumed under any overarching rubric called

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112. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 37-38. The example cited here affirms that Sacchi's use of "ideology" is synonymous with "theology." The terms are closely related and are often mutually informative. As such they are used interchangeably in certain contexts. In the context of ancient Jewish thought, ideology and theology are more or less synonymous.

113. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 38.

114. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 48.

115. Many scholars are in line with Sacchi and his team in questioning the categorization of the Book of Revelation as an apocalypse. For instance, James Kallas, "The Apocalypse: An Apocalyptic Book?," *JBL* 86 (1967): 69-80, questions its inclusion based on the absence of a pessimistic outlook towards suffering—the essence of 'apocalyptic' for Kallas. Bruce W. Jones, "More About the Apocalypse as Apocalyptic," *JBL* 87 (1968): 325-27, argues that the absence of pseudonymity—the defining characteristic for Jones—mitigates against its classification as an apocalypse. More recently, Adler, "Introduction," 16, underscores that Revelation has important unique features which makes it different from other apocalypses (non-pseudonymity, circular letter, for example), and in line with Sacchi argues that Revelation's "eschatological perspective [is] fundamentally different from that of its Jewish counterparts." Frederick D. Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1989), 184, 258, has also contended that Revelation is a continuation of Old Testament prophecy and in this respect is entirely different from Jewish apocalyptic. He notes Revelation's Christology, modified dualism, and optimism, in addition to the missing essential of pseudepigraphy, as reasons why Revelation "completely fails to qualify as a genuine apocalypse." In addition to these, Leon Morris, *The Book of Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary* (2nd ed.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 25-27, emphasizes that Revelation repeatedly refers to its contents as prophecy and conveys ethical teachings and warnings of repentance, and thus exhibits "marked differences from typical apocalyptic."

116. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 48.

"apocalyptic." Indeed, such a conception is "radically misleading."<sup>117</sup>

### 5.3. Summary

One of the main weaknesses of the hermeneutical focus on genre is that no discriminating criteria exists to account for ideological/theological differences in apocalyptic literature. The categorical assumption that apocalypses share a common apocalyptic tradition in their protest against the dominant societal institutions and ethos, reduces and assimilates their theological particularities. As a consequence, a generic hermeneutic which is indiscriminate by its very nature, cannot account for intra-group ideological rivalries or polemical counter-histories which may have generated some apocalypses.<sup>118</sup>

Moreover, Yarbrow Collins has conceded that one of the main reasons why the SBL Genres Group chose to define "apocalypse" from the modern, over against the ancient perception, is because "ancient Jewish and Christian authors of apocalyptic works did not reflect systematically on the genre 'apocalypse' or indeed on any other genre."<sup>119</sup> This concession begs the question, why did the ancient authors not reflect systematically upon genre? Over the three or four centuries of the history of the composition of classic apocalyptic texts, why did they not seek to compare and classify their works according to literary criteria? Could it be because they did not think in literary terms for the most part?

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117. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 49. Cf. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic*, 36, who notes the "uncertainty about the very meaning of 'apocalyptic'... which one risks composing the history of something that never existed."

118. Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 36, describes counter-histories thus: "Counterhistories form a specific genre of history written since antiquity... Their function is polemical. Their method consists of the systematic exploitation of the adversary's most trusted sources against their grain... Their aim is the distortion of the adversary's self-image, of his identity, through the deconstruction of his memory." Building on the work of Funkenstein, David Biale, "Counter-History and Jewish Polemics Against Christianity: The 'Sefer toldot yeshu' and the 'Sefer zerubavel'," *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (1999): 132, suggests that "Apocalyptic literature may turn out to be one of the best examples of counter-historical polemic." Biale analyses the seventh century apocalyptic work the *Sefer zerubavel* of Palestinian origin. Though this work is several centuries later than the biblical Apocalypse, Biale's observation may verily apply to works contemporary with the Apocalypse.

119. Yarbrow Collins, "Apocalypse Now," 451.

Could it be that their interests went far beyond literary conventions? Might it be because they thought in largely rhetorical and ideological terms? These possibilities are worth thinking about.

Pertinently, Collins has made it clear that, "The noncanonical apocalypses can no longer be dismissed as 'second-rate imitators' of Daniel."<sup>120</sup> Yet by the same token, one should not assume a singular social context for these writings, nor presuppose a one-to-one correspondence between apocalyptic worldview and ideological stance, as Sacchi aptly points out. One should not discount the possibility that *some* Jewish and Christian apocalypses may indeed have been imitations, forgeries, parodies and polemical works, variously motivated, including being directed against another group within the broader religious tradition.<sup>121</sup> Neither should one fail to consider that the more popular Christian Apocalypse could have served as a model for later works. It is highly significant that no work before the Apocalypse introduces itself as an apocalypse, but there are myriads thereafter. While the scope of this thesis does not permit further discussion of these issues, it is certainly worth thinking about the possibility that genre classification may not provide the whole picture with regards to the ways in which the ancient religious complex viewed "apocalyptic" writings.

## 6. Conclusion

Most modern exegetes are of the conviction that to clearly perceive the message of Revelation one must see it in the complex of ancient religious literature bearing similar form and content. It is equally the position of this writer that Revelation's theology is to be more clearly discerned from a closer attention to the canonical context which has provided guidance in its interpretation for literally millennia. A major justification for this assertion

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120. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 25.

121. The Gnostic apocalypses are prime examples. See Adler, "Introduction," 18.

derives from the failure of form-critical hermeneutic on several points. For one, the genre "apocalypse" is defined according to modern literary criteria and therefore lacks any real correspondence with the ancient conception. Secondly, despite over a century and a half of talking about "apocalyptic" and "apocalypses" these terms are still muddled in ambiguity and no clear consensus exists as to what constitutes the essential characteristics of the genre "apocalypse." Thirdly, the multi-generic features of many apocalypses, especially the Book of Revelation, indicates that the ill-defined apocalyptic genre is limited in its ability to plumb their complexities. Fourth, literary criteria cannot even begin to account for the ideological diversity of apocalyptic literature, let alone serve as a unifying apparatus for its supposed worldview and function. Fifth, because the *Sitz im Leben* of apocalypses are almost entirely unknown, it remains pure speculation to talk of them as uniformly crisis literature. And finally, new understandings in genre theory emphasize the fluidity of generic identities, and decidedly shifts the focus towards rhetorical analysis. This new perspective invalidates the classificationist view of genres; genres are not hermeneutical keys.

While this chapter cannot claim to have done justice to the scope and complexity of genre theory, and particularly as it is applied to apocalyptic studies, one thing should be clear, however: the points outlined above suggest that interpreting the Book of Revelation according to a strictly "apocalyptic" generic categorization at best gives only a myopic view of its theological message. And in this thesis, it is Revelation's theology which concerns us. I am not suggesting that there is no need for literary analysis in the hermeneutical enterprise; far from it. An understanding of literary conceptualization, like that of historical analysis, can provide useful guidance in the task of interpreting the Book of Revelation, as long as literary conventions (again, like historical reconstructions) remain aids rather than determinants of a texts meaning and function. In the following chapter, we begin to probe the theological background of the Book of Revelation by looking more closely at its intertextual strategy.

# Apocalypse and Canon: An Intertextual Dialogue

## I. Introduction:

In the previous chapter I made the case that genre classification, as a modern scholarly analytical enterprise, cannot sufficiently account for the theological particularities of the Book of Revelation. This is mainly because such exercises dissolves the theological boundaries and individuality of the biblical Apocalypse by comparing it to a host of apocalyptic texts in Jewish, Christian, Gnostic, Persian, and Greco-Roman traditions.<sup>1</sup> Such a comparison presupposes that these texts more or less embody the same theological trajectories and outlook (dualism, pessimism, determinism, etc.), which means they are more or less saying the same things and serving similar social function—some form of protest against the social and political order. By contrast to this approach, in this chapter, I follow up on the methodological underpinnings laid out in Chapter 2, wherein I assumed a "canonical context" as the "intertextual context" of the Apocalypse, and the perspective from which I intend to examine the eschatological beast.

## 2. Intertextuality, Ideology and Theology

As we have already noted, intertextuality describes how a given text is related to earlier ones through quotations, allusions and/or echoes of these earlier texts.<sup>2</sup> But how does intertextuality actually inform the interpretation of a particular text? We have already seen where Beale and others argue that allusions to an earlier text within a given text set up

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1. Cf. Collins, "Apocalyptic," 2.

2. See again, Alkier, "Semiotics," 3-21, for a discussion of the variety of ways in which intertextuality is understood and employed in the literature.



a dialogue wherein the earlier context informs meaning in the latter. George Aichele goes further, however, to argue that "intertextuality is an important form of ideology," and "in relation to texts, *ideology is intertext*."<sup>3</sup> For Aichele, any text that is said to be devoid of ideology "is a text that is not read."<sup>4</sup> What Aichele means is that every text in one form or another, to one degree or another, "embodies" ideology because readers are not ideologically neutral.<sup>5</sup> There is no ideologically neutral text because there is no ideologically neutral reader.

Aichele goes on to suggest that a text's ideology, which is revealed through its intertext or "intertextual network" (of which the reader is a part), creates a framework for understanding the meaning of that text: "Understanding of any particular text happens only within an intertextual and therefore ideological context. This intertextual network determines the meaning of every text that the reader reads."<sup>6</sup> For this reason, Aichele explains, "[T]he canon is profoundly ideological," for it is the means by which "the church claims theological ownership of the Bible."<sup>7</sup> It is evident that Aichele discerns a close connection between intertextuality, ideology, and theology.

If Aichele is correct that a text's meaning is restricted to and determined by its intertextual network, such an assessment is important for understanding Revelation's theology from the perspective of the community of faith. That Revelation overwhelmingly alludes to the Old Testament and shares this theological background with much of the New

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3. Aichele, "Canon as Intertext," 142. Aichele recognizes that "ideology" is variously understood and employed, and even defines it elsewhere as "a faith or system of beliefs" (147). He also notes that "text" is variously understood, but uses the term to mean "the material aspect of the signifier," which is to say "the ink and paper that form letters on a written page" (140).

4. Aichele, "Canon as Intertext," 142.

5. Aichele, "Canon as Intertext," 142.

6. Aichele, "Canon as Intertext," 143. Aichele suggests that the reader is also part of that intertextual network, in the sense that he or she interprets a given text in relationship to other texts read, life experiences and commitments. Yet, for Aichele, the reader does not determine the meaning of the text, but rather "meaning lies somewhere between the reader and the text" (141).

7. Aichele, "Canon as Intertext," 145.

Testament writings, suggests, in line with Beale's contention, that meaning in the final book of the Bible must be discerned in connection to the Old Testament context it recalls and also in relationship to those documents that shares its theological history. It is Revelation's relationship to the Old Testament which is of primary interest in this chapter, though engagement with other canonical writings which assist this analysis is also pursued.

In examining three intertextual strategies of the Apocalypse, I reach the following conclusions: (1) by drawing mainly upon the prophetic books of the Old Testament, Revelation is self-consciously asserting a theological and genealogical connection with "the message" of the prophets; (2) by concentrating on the vision of Daniel 7 in particular, the Apocalypse signals that the substructure of its own narrative, is built upon this Old Testament context, above all else; and (3) by drawing implicit parallels between Daniel (and Ezekiel) and John, the Book of Revelation portrays John as a prophet of the Old Testament prophetic rank, who, like his predecessors, acts completely at the behest of God. Putting all three points together, I conclude that Revelation's intertextual bent towards the Old Testament shows that far from being eclectic or haphazard in its use of sources, a deliberate strategy is being employed to demonstrate that what John has been commissioned to write is a summation of Old Testament prophecy; that is, the conclusion of a prophetic metanarrative about God's ultimate purposes in the world.<sup>8</sup> Before proceeding to these arguments, however, I first explore the literary strategy of "intratextual parallelism" which is employed throughout the narrative of Revelation, and which has major implications for our subsequent discussion.

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8. See section 3 of this chapter for a definition and qualification for the use of the term "metanarrative" in this study.

### *Excursus: "Intratextual Parallelism" as a Literary Strategy*

*Intratextuality* is to be differentiated from *intertextuality* only in its scope. As the latter describes allusions to sources outside of the Book of Revelation (in this case, primarily the Old Testament), the former is confined to the immediate book. Intratextual parallelism is a literary strategy in the Apocalypse whereby the same symbol, phenomena, personage, etc., is presented from different angles scattered throughout the book, but tied together by (often subtle) literary, descriptive and/or functional similarities. This strategy is observed in the different words, phrases, names, etc., being used to describe the same persona, phenomena, sequence, etc. With reference to the work of narratologist Gérard Genette, Richard Bauckham emphasizes that narratives often "recount some events a number of times — from different points of view... from different temporal junctures within the story, conveying different information, highlighting different aspects of significance."<sup>9</sup> Such is the literary technique which is very prevalent in Revelation's narrative.

For example, the time period "time, times, and half a time" (12:14) is also represented as "forty two months" (11:2; 13:5), and "one thousand two hundred and sixty days" (11:3; 12:6). Similarly, the "temple" scenario (11:1-2), the episode of the "two witnesses" (11:3-13), and the "woman clothed with the sun" (12:1-17), are all representations of God's people, the saints (11:18; 13:7, 10; 14:12; 17:6), from different angles, since they are all to experience suffering during the aforementioned time period.<sup>10</sup> There are other intratextual designations for God's people as well: the seven branch lampstand (1:20), the seven churches (1:11), the 144,000 (7:4), the "great multitude" (7:9), "those who had conquered the beast and its image" (15:2), the "Bride" (19:7; 21:2, 9), among others. As another example, the phrases, "the

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9. Richard Bauckham, "Reading Scripture as a Coherent Story," in *The Art of Reading Scripture* (eds. Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2003), 43. Cf. Gérard Genette, *Narrative Discourse* (trans. J. E. Lewin; Oxford: Blackwell, 1980).

10. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 569, 570-73, 624-27.

beast who comes up from the abyss" (11:7), "the beast who is about to come up out of the abyss" (17:8), and "a beast coming up from the sea"(13:1), are to be understood as different ways of presenting the same symbolism and setting, and intimates that these descriptions are mutually informative."<sup>11</sup>

Another example is the series of seven trumpets (Rev 8-11) which is re-presented as seven plagues (Rev 15-16) with striking similarities between the sequences.<sup>12</sup> Still another example is the various descriptives of Satan: he is the devil, the great red dragon, the ancient serpent, a star fallen from heaven, the angel of the abyss, Abaddon, Apollyon, among others. A final example are the numerous descriptives of Jesus. The most prominent title for Jesus is "the Lamb." But in addition to this, he is also presented as "One like the Son of man," "Son of God," "Word of God," "Root of David," "Bright and morning star," "Lion of the tribe of Judah," "Faithful Witness," "Faithful and True Witness," "Alpha and Omega," "First and the Last," "He that liveth and was dead," "First begotten of the dead," "the beginning of God's creation," "Prince of the kings of the earth," and "King of kings and Lord of lords," among other ascriptions. All of these titles and descriptives amplify different aspects, characteristics and/or functions of the one personage, the third member of the Godhead. This type of intratextual parallelism also applies to the notion of "prophecy" in Revelation, as we will see below.

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11. This particular example relates to the discussion of the beast of Revelation 13 and is discussed in detail in the following two chapters.

12. Most commentators see these as repeated patterns rather than linear chronological developments. See for example, Gilbertson, *God and History*, 111; Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 38-40; Mounce, *Revelation*, 282.

### 3. Intertextual Strategy #1: Concentration on the Prophets

#### 3.1. *The Prophetic Books at Centre Stage*

While the Old Testament as a whole is front and center in the Book of Revelation, the prevalence of specific books and genres is revealing of John's intertextual strategy and theological trajectories.<sup>13</sup> Beale observes,

Roughly more than half the references are from the Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel, and in proportion to its length Daniel yields the most.... Ezekiel ranks as the second most used OT book, although in terms of actual number of allusions Isaiah is first, followed by Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalms, though statistics differ.<sup>14</sup>

Charles, Moyise and others, likewise, have noted that the Book of Revelation deliberately draws on Old Testament prophetic tradition much more so than it does other sections of the Old Testament.<sup>15</sup> It is the prophets of the Old Testament which occupy centre stage in the Apocalypse, and it is chiefly their imageries, concerns, and theological trajectories that the Apocalypse reflect.<sup>16</sup> I concur with Fekkes against Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza that John is identifying with the Old Testament prophets far more so than he is with a "school" of early Christian prophets, because it is the latter's writings and imagery which saturate the Apocalypse.<sup>17</sup> Further, the use of the prophetic material more so than other writings of the Old Testament, should not be taken to be incidental. Rather, as we will explore further below, the deliberate concentration on Old Testament prophetic material means that the Book of Revelation is calling the attention of the reader to this specific genre of Old

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13. See discussion in Chapter 2 regarding the prevalence of the Old Testament in Revelation.

14. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 77.

15. Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:lxv, writes, "Our author makes most use of the prophetic books. He constantly uses Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel." Moyise, *Old Testament*, 14-16, shows graphically that the allusions and citations of the Old Testament in the New Testament listed in the UBSGNT<sup>3</sup> shows Revelation's dependence on the Old Testament prophetic books far more than one finds in Romans, Matthew and Hebrews. The same is true for all other individual books of the New Testament in comparison to Revelation.

16. One need remember that in the New Testament, the entire Old Testament corpus, including the Psalms was considered prophetic (Luke 24: 27, 44).

17. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 38, 51-53, 56-57. Cf. Beale, *John's Use*, 26.

Testament Scripture.

### 3.2. Intratextual Parallelism and the Concept of the “Spirit of Prophecy”

While the Book of Revelation is most often regarded as an apocalypse, it should be noted that John’s composition describes itself as “words of prophecy” several times; repeatedly “prophecy” and “book” are associated. This is to be contrasted with the singular occurrence of “apocalypse” (1:1).

|           |  |   |
|-----------|--|---|
| 1:3       | Blessed is the one who reads, and those who hear <b>the words of the prophecy</b> , and keep the things which are written in it. | τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας                    |
| 22:7      | Blessed is the one who keeps the <b>words of the prophecy of this book</b> .   | τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου |
| 22:1<br>ο | Seal not the <b>words of the prophecy of this book</b> , for the time draws near.  | τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου |
| 22:18     | For I forewarn everyone who hears <b>the words of the prophecy of this book</b> ...  | τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου |
| 22:19     | And if any one subtracts from the <b>words of the book of this prophecy</b>  | τῶν λόγων τοῦ βιβλίου τῆς προφητείας ταύτης   |

John’s composition is also called “the word of God” and “the testimony of Jesus,” and elsewhere the two concepts are juxtaposed.

|      |   |                     |                             |
|------|---|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1:2  | Who bore witness to <b>the word of God</b> , and of <b>the testimony of Jesus Christ</b> .  | τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ  | τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ |
| 1:9  | I John...was on the island which is called Patmos, on account <b>the word of God</b> , and <b>the testimony of Jesus Christ</b> . | τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ  | τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ         |
| 20:4 | And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for <b>the testimony of Jesus</b> , and for <b>the word of God</b> .           | τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ | διὰ τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ      |

Not only so, but there are other equivalents to “the word of God” and “the testimony of

Jesus” appearing side by side:

|       |  |   |
|-------|--|---|
| 6:9   | I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain on account of <b><i>the word of God</i></b> , and for <b><i>the testimony which they had</i></b> . | τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ διὰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν εἶχον |
| 12:17 | ...those who keep <b><i>the commandments of God</i></b> , and have <b><i>the testimony of Jesus Christ</i></b> .   | τὰς ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ  |
| 14:12 | ...here are the ones who keep <b><i>the commandments of God</i></b> , and <b><i>the faith of Jesus</i></b> .   | ἐντολὰς τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν πίστιν Ἰησοῦ                 |

Additionally, the merging of “word” and “testimony” in the following chart indicates the equivalence of the "word of God" and the "testimony of Jesus." Also, that one of the titles of Jesus is “the Word of God,” further shows the convergence of these two concepts.

|       |   |  |
|-------|---|--|
| 12:11 | And they conquered him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the <b><i>word of their testimony</i></b> . | τὸν λόγον τῆς μαρτυρίας αὐτῶν            |
| 19:13 | He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called <b><i>The Word of God</i></b> .     | κέκληται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ |

Significantly, John is told that “the testimony of Jesus” and the “spirit of prophecy” are also equivalent:

|       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| 19:10 | ...for <b><i>the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy</i></b> . | ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ Ἰησοῦ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς προφητείας |
|-------|---|---|

Further, the angel tells John that the prophets, who are his brothers, also keep the testimony of Jesus which is “the words of this book.” The angel himself also keeps the words of the book and thus belongs to the number of John’s brethren, the prophets:

|         |   |                              |  |
|---------|---|------------------------------|--|
| 19:10   | I am your fellowservant, and of <b>your brothers</b>  |                              |  |
|         | that <b>have the testimony of Jesus</b> : worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.                            | τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου              | τῶν ἐχόντων τὴν μαρτυρίαν Ἰησοῦ              |
| 22:9-10 | I am your fellowservant, and of <b>your brothers the prophets</b> , and of them <b>which keep the words of this book</b> : worship God. | τῶν ἀδελφῶν σου τῶν προφητῶν | τῶν τηρούντων τοὺς λόγους τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου |

Reasonably, to “have the testimony of Jesus” and “to keep the words of this book”, which is a “book of prophecy” are all to be equated with possessing the “spirit of prophecy.” Further, the content of the book is also the “Word of God,” and “the words of God.” All of these concepts are to be understood as different expression/aspects of describing the tradition with which John identifies and of which he bears witness and for which he suffers. One final connection: the “words of God” and the “mystery of God” are also equated as both must be fulfilled. Moreover, since the mystery of God was announced to the prophets, then clearly the mystery of God is also the equivalent to all of the above.

|       |   |                       |               |
|-------|---|-----------------------|---------------|
| 10:7  | ... <b>the mystery of God will be fulfilled</b> , as he announced to his servants the prophets. | τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ Θεοῦ | ἐτελέσθη      |
| 17:17 | ...until <b>the words of God shall be fulfilled</b> .   | οἱ λόγοι τοῦ Θεοῦ     | τελεσθήσονται |

The foregoing comparisons illustrate the multiple means of characterizing the contents of John’s book, as well as the tradition in which he stands. It is variously described as the “word of God and the testimony of Jesus,” “the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus,” “the words of prophecy,” “the spirit of prophecy,” “the words of the book of this prophecy,” “the mystery of God,” “the words of God,” and “the word of their testimony.” These various expressions are not primarily concerned with the literary content of the book, but rather the “words” of the book, or the theology or prophetic tradition to which the



book bears witness. For example, “the testimony of Jesus” is not only juxtaposed with “the word of God,” but the two are also conflated in the expression “the word of their testimony” (12:11), as well as in Jesus’ appellation as “the Word of God” (19:13). These subtle theological expressions illustrate the intimate connection between God’s word and the witness and personage of Jesus. Thus, in some profound sense, Jesus is the culmination of the word of God and therefore the subject of John’s revelation.

That “the testimony of Jesus” *is* “the spirit of prophecy” is added emphasis that prophecy, as described in Revelation, is all about bearing witness to Jesus. This prophetic testimony is borne by John (1:2, 9), by the (Old Testament) prophets (19:10; 22:9; 18:24; 6:9), the “two witnesses” (11:7), and the “remnant” of the woman’s offspring who are the saints (12:11, 17; 14:12, 20:4; cf. 2:13). All of them therefore possess this spirit of prophecy on account of having the testimony of Jesus (19:10), which is itself the “Word of God,” and the words of John’s book. Therefore, in light of these multiple and varied expressions of the concept of prophecy, it is not reasonable to dwarf this emphasis by construing the Book of Revelation mainly as an “apocalypse.” To the contrary, the Book of Revelation betrays an unusual occupation with prophets, prophecy, and prophesying, as we will see further below.

### *3.3. The Spirit of Prophecy as God's Initiative*

There are a number of personalities in Revelation who are identified as either false prophets or false professors, all of whom are controlled by Satan.<sup>18</sup> By contrast, there are also true

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18. The Book of Revelation betrays a strong antipathy for lies, deception and falsehood. In the churches there are those “who say they are Jews” (3:9); those “who claim they are apostles” (2:2); and Jezebel “calls herself a prophetess” (2:20). That these individuals are claiming these titles to themselves indicates that they are not thus designated by God, and therefore are false claimants. Indeed, those who say they are Jews, *are not* (3:9); those who claim to be apostles, *are not* (2:2); and it is clear by her fornication and idolatry that Jezebel is not a true prophetess. Not only so, but the false apostles have been “tested” (επειρασας) and found out to be liars (ψευδεις; 2:2); the fake Jews are also lying (ψευδονται; 3:9). Elsewhere in Revelation there is a false prophet in disguise—a dragon in sheep’s clothing (13:11; 16:13; 19:20; 20:10; cf. Matt. 7:15). There are also many false doctrines in the churches: God hates the works (εργα) of the Nicolaitans (2:6); he also hates their teaching (διδαχην, 2:15). The teaching (διδαχην) of Balaam includes fornication and idolatry (2:14); and Jezebel is also teaching (διδασκει)

prophets and saints who are faithful to God and to the Lamb.<sup>19</sup> Unlike the false professors who act on Satan's behalf, the true prophets act on God's behalf. The initiative to prophesy comes as a direct command from God. For example, authority must first be given to the two prophetic witnesses before they can “prophesy” or bear their “testimony” (11:3, 7). And even John is told that he must “prophesy again against many peoples and nations and languages and kings” *after* he receives (by ingestion) the little book at God’s command (10:8-11). Wherefore, John, like Ezekiel before him who must also ingest God’s word in order to prophesy (Ezek 2:9-3:3), is motivated to speak at God’s initiation. The prophets are therefore, according to Revelation, speaking God’s words and acting on God’s behalf. This is to be contrasted with Jezebel who calls herself a prophetess (2:20), or the false prophet who acts on behalf of the dragon (13:11). True prophets act at the impulse of God’s Spirit. Moreover, that God identifies himself as “the God of the spirit of the prophets” in commissioning John, is further demonstration that God is acting once again to fulfill his stated purpose: to show his servants the things which must happen shortly (22:6). In this regard, the Book of Revelation affirms a principle regarding divine operation as expressed in the Old Testament prophetic book of Amos: “Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, without revealing his secret to his servants the prophets” (3:7, NRSV).

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false, seductive doctrines (2:20). The purpose of all these “insiders” is to deceive the churches by pretending to be what they are not while spreading false, blasphemous doctrines (2:9). Such false professors are pointed out in contradistinction to the “true” prophets in Revelation. The false Jews belong to the “synagogue of satan” (2:9, 3:9); those in complicity with Jezebel engage in the deep things of satan (βαθεα του σατανα, 2:24); and the false apostles are evil doers (κακους, 2:2)

19. Those who follow the Lamb and gain victory over Satan and his evil confederacy exhibit the same characteristics as the one they follow: they are also “called, chosen and faithful” (17:14); they follow the the Lamb wherever he leads (14:4); they are blameless (ἄμωμοι, "lamb-like") before God because there is no trace of falsehood in their mouths (εν τω στοματι αυτων ουχ ευρεθη ψευδος, 14:5). They stand firmly in the truth in opposition to the false Jews, false apostles, and false prophets. And it is to this company of faithful which John himself belongs. Twice the angel tells John that the company of holy prophets are his brothers (19:10, 22:9). In all of this John is drawing a sharp contrast between truth and error. These principle are polar opposites in every conceivable way, and mutually antipathetic.

### 3.4. *The Spirit of Prophecy as the Gospel*

In fact, according Revelation 10:7, God's singular "mystery" (τὸ μυστήριον) was announced (εὐηγγέλισε) to the collective "prophets" (τοῖς προφήταις). This mystery, which involves the establishment of God's kingdom, rewarding the saints and judging the wicked (11:15-18), would be completed (ἐτελέσθη) at the sounding of the seventh trumpet (10:7). In other words, the prophets bore collective witness to the "mystery of God." Furthermore, the choice of εὐηγγέλισω in connection to μυστήριον should not be missed in this verse, for Paul also speaks about being an ambassador of the "mystery of the Gospel" (τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ εὐαγγελίου; Eph 6:19-20), and elsewhere that this mystery is *revealed* (ἀποκάλυψιν) in the writings of the prophets.<sup>20</sup> Appropriately, Revelation corroborates the Pauline conception that the Gospel was announced to the prophets by God himself, as well as the Synoptic notion of a "Gospel" (τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ) about "time" (ὁ καιρὸς) being "fulfilled" (πεπλήρωται) in relation to the "kingdom of God" (ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ; Mark 1:15; cf. Matt 4:17; Luke 21:24).<sup>21</sup> From this it can be inferred that Revelation embodies the idea of a prophetic "timeline" along which specific events are being "fulfilled."<sup>22</sup>

Furthermore, there is an implied equivalence between εὐαγγελίζω in 10:7 and προφητεύω in 10:11.<sup>23</sup> To preach the Gospel is to bear witness to the testimony of Jesus, and to bear witness is to prophesy (cf. 11:3, 7). Wherefore, the Gospel (of which the earthly

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20. Rom. 16:25–26 (NRSV): "Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my *gospel* and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation (ἀποκάλυψιν) of the *mystery* that was kept secret for long ages but is now disclosed, and through the *prophetic writings* is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith" (emphasis added; cf. Eph 1:9-11; 3:9; Col 1:26-27; Col 2:2; 4:3; 1 Cor 2:6-8; 4:1; 1 Tim 3:9). Mark 4:11-12 is telling because Jesus speaks of the "mystery of the kingdom" and then immediately quotes the prophet Isaiah.

21. Mark 1:15. Cf. Matt 4:17; Luke 21:24.

22. Cf. Mark 1:15; Acts 1:7.

23. I follow Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 243-66, in discerning that the little book (10:2, 8, 9, 10) here is to be understood as the same as that in Rev 5:1. John's commissioning to prophesy must be understood in connection to preaching the Good news. The allusion to Ezekiel's commissioning here in eating the little Book is deliberate.

life and ministry of Jesus is but a part) and prophecy are to be equated in Revelation. In the same way that John, the prophets and the saints are all bearers of the testimony of Jesus, so too the prophets of old are also bearers of the εὐαγγέλιον. And as we have noted, the “preaching” (εὐαγγελίσαι) of the “everlasting Gospel” (εὐαγγέλιον αἰώνιον) is a central concern in Revelation, whose proclamation to “all nation, tribe, languages and people” is followed by God’s judgment upon the earth (14:6). The Gospel in Revelation is therefore the *totality* of the plan of salvation which culminates in the consummation of the kingdom of God.

### *3.5. Continuing the Prophetic Tradition*

Again, God’s identification with “the spirit of the prophets” in commissioning John intimates a continuity between Old Testament prophetic witness and John (22:6). The same Spirit which moved the prophets is the same which moves John to speak and to write.<sup>24</sup> According to Revelation, then, the prophets act collectively at God’s behest; their message comes directly from him and therefore he is the one speaking through them. For this reason, all true prophets are understood to be mouthpieces of the one, divine Spirit. What Matthew Bates writes regarding Paul’s perception of the Spirit in relation to the prophet equally applies in Revelation: “The specific, unique human agent who serves as the vehicle for the divine oracle is largely irrelevant for Paul. It is the Spirit moving the prophet that is of paramount significance.”<sup>25</sup> Indeed, according to the portrait in Revelation, the prophets belong to a single tradition of righteous men who have been speaking God’s singular message down through the ages.<sup>26</sup>

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24. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 38, also underscores that too much emphasis has been placed on John's use of "apocalyptic tradition" instead of John's prophetic self-understanding.

25. Matthew W. Bates, *The Hermeneutics of the Apostolic Proclamation: The Center of Paul's Method of Scriptural Interpretation* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2012), 252.

26. Cf. Luke 11:50-51.

To this end, John is told to “write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which are about to happen after this” (1:19). Much ink has been spilt over the implication of this verse for interpreting the visions of the book.<sup>27</sup> Suffice it to say that in regards to this verse, I agree with Gilbertson that Revelation is “profoundly concerned with history,” both past present and future.<sup>28</sup> History is seen as a singular entity, a linear continuum along which divine intention is moving inexorably towards a specific *telos*: the establishment of God’s eternal reign. In light of this then, the mystery of God which was proclaimed as good news to the prophets, constitutes the entire plan of salvation—past present and future—which God has been making known incrementally through the ages.

### 3.6. *The Prophets in Revelation and the New Testament*

In Chapter 1:1, John claims that the revelation came to him from God by way of a chain of command.<sup>29</sup> Paul too is convinced that he had a "revelation of Jesus Christ" (ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) which originated with God.<sup>30</sup> As noted above, from the picture given in Revelation, God is the agent acting through each successive prophet to accomplish his purposes. Their collective message is called “the spirit of prophecy,” “the testimony of Jesus,” “the words of this book,” and “the faith of Jesus”—or, in short, the everlasting Gospel. For the Book of Revelation then, all of these holy men therefore, in accordance with the rest of the New Testament, are bearing collective witness about God’s purpose for the world through Jesus. Outside of Revelation, the entire Scriptural witness is understood to be prophetic:

Luke 24:27 (NRSV) Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he

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27. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 152-70.

28. Gilbertson, *God and History*, 56-57, 72, 111-115. Gilbertson does not believe Revelation is a chronological clock, but he discerns a tension between temporality and chronology in the book.

29. God to Jesus, Jesus to his angel, his angel to John.

30. See Gal 1:12-16. Cf. John 17:8.

interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.

Luke 24:44 (NRSV) Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

2 Pet 1:20–21 (NRSV) First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God ).

The Book of Revelation, therefore, clearly shares the New Testament perspective that the entire corpus of Scripture—even the Psalms—bear prophetic witness about Jesus.<sup>31</sup> For the New Testament writers, as for John, all of the prophets point unequivocally to Jesus as the One ordained to fulfill God’s purposes for the world. In light of the fact that Revelation sees the prophets pointing univocally to the plan of salvation in Jesus, the prevalence of the prophetic writings in its pages cannot be conceived of as arbitrary. Rather, Revelation is deliberately emphasizing its continuation in the Old Testament prophetic tradition—a construal already found in the New Testament.<sup>32</sup>

### 3.7. *Suffering for the Testimony of Jesus*

It is to be noted how repetitive the idea of “keeping” and “having” the words of prophecy (and its many equivalents) are in the Book of Revelation.

|     |   |                                    |
|-----|---|------------------------------------|
| 1:3 | Blessed is the one who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and <b>keep the things which are written in it</b> ; for the time is near. | τηρουντες τα εν αυτη<br>γεγραμμενα |
|-----|---|------------------------------------|

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31. Though for John the prophetic witnesses are personified. See Rev 6:9; 11:3; 10:7. Cf. Mark 12:27.

32. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 81, who writes, “John’s apparent self-identification with the line of OT visionaries implies that he was conscious of developing the ideas of the earlier prophets and, therefore, that the clearer OT references in his work are the result of intentional activity.”

|       |  |   |
|-------|--|---|
|       | And the one who conquers and <b><i>keeps my works</i></b>  |   |
| 2:26  | <b><i>unto the end</i></b> , to him I will give authority over the nations...  | τηρων...τα εργα μου   |
| 3:8   | You have but a little strength, and has still <b><i>kept my word...</i></b>  | ετηρησας μου τον λογον  |
| 3:10  | Because you have <b><i>kept the word of my patience</i></b> , I will keep you from the hour of testing.  | ετηρησας τον λογον της υπομονης μου                                 |
| 12:17 | Then the dragon was enraged at the woman, and went away to make war on the rest of her offspring, the ones who <b><i>keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus.</i></b> | των τηρουντων τας εντολας του θεου και εχοντων την μαρτυριαν Ιησου. |
| 14:12 | Here is the endurance of the saints, and those who <b><i>keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.</i></b>  | οι τηρουντες τας εντολας του θεου και την πιστιν Ιησου.             |
| 19:10 | I am your fellowservant, and of your brothers that <b><i>have the testimony of Jesus:</i></b>  | των εχοντων την μαρτυριαν Ιησου                                     |
| 22:7  | “Behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is the one who <b><i>keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.</i></b> ”   | ο τηρων τους λογους της προφητειας του βιβλιου τουτου               |
| 22:9  | I am your fellowservant and of your brothers the prophets, and of those who <b><i>keep the words of this book.</i></b>   | των τηρουντων τους λογους του βιβλιου τουτου                        |

Repeatedly, there is either commendation to those keeping the words of the prophecy, or in some cases castigation for those who have failed to keep it. It is clear that eternal reward awaits the saints who remain steadfast to the faith of Jesus. Nevertheless, as per the Book of Revelation, being agents of the testimony of Jesus comes at a cost: the ire of the dragon. The faithful bearers of this prophetic testimony become targeted by the dragon and his accomplices. John is suffering on account of it, as are those to whom he is writing (1:9); the prophets, saints and apostles are killed because of it (6:9; 16:16; 18:20, 24); the two witnesses are killed for bearing it (11:7); and the beast and the dragon make war against the seed of the

woman (saints) who bear it (12:11, 17; 13:7, 10; 14:12-13). It is clear that the devil and his cohorts wage war against the testimony of Jesus by propagating false teachings in the churches, and by killing those who bear the true testimony. It should also be noted that the prophets are at the forefront of those whose blood is shed on account of their witness (16:6; 18:24; cf. 6:9-10; 18:20), and they also rank first to receive their eternal reward (11:18). As a result, the prophets hold an esteemed place among the ranks of the saints in the Book of Revelation, and so for the rest of the Bible.<sup>33</sup> Again, the idea of the perennial persecution of the righteous—especially the prophets—comes out forcefully from the New Testament:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way *they persecuted the prophets who were before you*” (Matt 5:10-12 NRSV, emphases added)

Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,’ so that this generation may be charged with *the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world*, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation (Luke 11:49-51 NRSV, emphases added; cf. Matt. 23:31; Luke 13:34; Acts 5:32).

For both the Book of Revelation, as for the New Testament, those who bear testimony to Jesus, whether prophets, apostles or saints, have never escaped persecution in their respective generations. Through successive generations God sends his witnesses, but they are habitually persecuted and killed. Yet their blood will ultimately be avenged and their names vindicated (cf. Rev 6:10, 11; 16:6; 19:2).

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33. Nissinen, “Comparing Prophetic Sources,” 17, underlines that “the [Old Testament] prophets clearly enjoy an elevated position,” in their function as mediaries of the word and will of God.



### 3.8. Summary: An Abiding Prophetic Witness

In light of the discussion above as to the hermeneutical significance of the copious presence of Old Testament allusions in Revelation and the intertextual focus on the prophetic writings, I suggest that this intertextual dialogue holds significant hermeneutical implications for the Apocalypse. Yet, contra Bauckham, I contend that John is *not reinterpreting* Old Testament prophecy, and against Beale I maintain that Revelation is *not a midrash* on the Old Testament prophetic material.<sup>34</sup> Rather, the Book of Revelation presents itself as a univocal, final prophetic authority bearing witness to the *same realities* which the Old Testament prophets have been describing—however obscure their view—over the period of salvation's history. In other words, the Book of Revelation presents itself as the final episode in the prophetic *metanarrative* or “grandstory” of the canonical prophets—a story which speak of history's final consummation as a result of God's intervention.<sup>35</sup> As

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34. See Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 313-20. But note Childs, *New Testament*, 509: “The use of the Old Testament is, therefore, prophetic in nature and not midrashic.”

35. A “metanarrative” or “grand narrative” is generally understood as a system of thought which seeks to comprehend all phenomena, history, experience, etc., into a coherent explanation. Such paradigms are often found in religious or philosophical systems of explanation, such as Hegelianism, Marxism, Darwinism, and the like – all of which seek to find unifying threads in the world. Postmodernism, which is largely about pluralism, diversity, complexity and uncertainty, is particularly opposed to such overarching explanations of reality or “ultimate truth,” since in the postmodern view, such paradigms are totalizing, oppressive and stifling of creativity and diversity. Instead, postmodernists maintain that life is made up of an endless number of transient “little narratives,” which defy the kind of homogenization that grand paradigms presume. See further, Stuart Sim, *The Lyotard Dictionary* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 86-88; Christopher Butler, *Postmodernism: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13-43. Despite postmodernism's “incredulity towards grand narratives” (Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), xxiv), Bauckham, “Reading Scripture,” 47-53, argues that a biblical metanarrative is legitimated because the biblical conception of reality does not qualify as a modern grand story– the kind to which Lyotard's definition and critiques are directed. Bauckham understands that the Bible presents a grand story about reality, a universal claim about God's sovereignty over creation. But he differentiates this biblical narrative from Lyotard's conception for a number of reasons, including the suggestion that the biblical story itself, similar to postmodernism, is in many respects a critique of dominant paradigms; and that within the universal story of God's sovereignty over creation there is the *particularity* of God's identification as the “God of Israel and of Jesus Christ” (48, 51). My assertion that Revelation construes itself as a retelling of an overarching Old Testament prophetic story about God's purposes in the world (which includes the ultimate destiny of the world), pays no homage to postmodernism's criticism of grand narratives. For this writer, the concept of canon presupposes that such a story exists within the collective writings of the Bible. Yet, my assertion of a prophetic metanarrative in Revelation is not to be taken as a homogenization of the particularities and theological differences within the individual narratives that comprise

Bauckham points out elsewhere, "The apocalypses, Daniel and Revelation, like parts of the Prophets, presuppose 'the story so far' in envisioning its eschatological conclusion."<sup>36</sup>

The preceding arguments may be summarized in three main points: (1) Revelation calls attention to the "message" of the Old Testament prophets; (2) Revelation asserts itself as a continuation of this prophetic tradition, not merely by John reinterpreting the writings of the prophets, but rather by his *being commissioned by one and the same divine Spirit* which inspired the former prophets; and (3) it claims that its message, in accordance with theirs, is singularly about God's plan for the world through Jesus. Consequently, Revelation does not merely adapt the prophetic message and thus re-contextualize it; rather it first revivifies the message of the prophets, and creatively retells it, in so far as John stands in his own prophetic right as God's mouthpiece. Fekkes' observation that, "John not only takes up where the prophets left off—he also takes over what they left behind" is most pertinent in this respect.<sup>37</sup> It is therefore not incidental, as Fekkes reminds us, that "John's use of previous prophetic and apocalyptic tradition is almost exclusively limited to the OT."<sup>38</sup> It is their story, understood as a singular witness, which occupies center stage in the Apocalypse.

In his assessment of the process of canonization of the Old Testament prophetic books, Joseph Blenkinsopp makes the following poignant observation:

One of the most striking features shared by the book of Isaiah and several of the

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the whole. While recognizing diversity within the canon, I do suggest that part of God's purposes involves the disclosure of his plan for the world through the medium of his Spirit, and by means of the prophetic voice (Cf. Amos 3:7; Num 12:6). And it is from this perspective that I wish to suggest that John is God's chosen and final prophetic witness to his stated purpose regarding the consummation of history. On this Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 57-58, writes, "John not only takes it for granted that the prophetic heritage of Israel has become the inheritance of the church, but that with the revival of the prophetic office in Christianity, and the imminence of the *parousia*, the mantle has passed on for the last time."

36. Bauckham, "Reading Scripture," 39.

37. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 58. Whether Fekkes understands Revelation as a prophetic metanarrative is uncertain. But like Beale, he believes "John uses Daniel as a *Vorbild* for his presentation of the eschatological enemies of God" (84). Yet he also indicates that John *adopts* different Old Testament models (85).

38. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 38.

Twelve is that they conclude by presenting a scenario of the future and final condition of Israel, in some instances coinciding with the consummation of history and the transformation of the cosmos. This complex scenario sometimes stays more or less within the bounds of historical plausibility... but more often than not it describes a 'singularity' involving a universal meteorological catastrophe, warfare on a cosmic scale, new heaven and new earth, a final judgment by fire, and similar motifs.<sup>39</sup>

Blenkinsopp, following the lead of Klaus Koch, attributes these striking similarities of eschatological descriptions in the Old Testament prophetic writings to the “apocalyptic mentality” of the final redactors of these texts.<sup>40</sup> According to Blenkinsopp, the common presence of these motifs suggest that these books were redacted as a unit by apocalypticists who interpolated their ideas into the corpus.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, biblical apocalyptic tradition owes its existence to apocalyptic interpolations of later editors, as per Blenkinsopp. The Book of Revelation, on the other hand, understands these “striking similarities” of Old Testament prophetic declarations as bearing witness to a “singular,” ultimate eschatological reality: the consummation of history as we know it, the restoration of universal Israel and the establishment of God’s eternal reign—all effected through Jesus, the Word of God.

#### 4. Intertextual Strategy # 2: Daniel 7 as Emphasis

Craig Evans has underscored that the use of Daniel in New Testament writings is rivaled only by Isaiah and the Psalms.<sup>42</sup> And John Goldingay, noting the pervasive influence of

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39. Joseph Blenkinsopp, “The Formation of the Hebrew Bible Canon: Isaiah as a Test Case,” in *The Canon Debate* (eds. Lee Martin McDonald and James A. Sanders; Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson, 2002), 65. Blenkinsopp attributes these striking similarities to “individuals or groups owing allegiance to the apocalyptic worldview” who would have been responsible for the final redaction of this corpus.

40. Blenkinsopp, “Hebrew Bible Canon,” 65.

41. Blenkinsopp, “Hebrew Bible Canon,” 65.

42. Craig A. Evans, “Daniel in the New Testament: Visions of God’s Kingdom,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (2 vols.; eds. John J. Collins, Peter W. Flint and Cameron VanEpps; Leiden: Brill, 2001) 490: “The Book of Daniel is one of the books of Scripture that is quoted or alluded to in most of the New Testament writings... The index in the Nestle-Aland... which combines quotations and allusions lists some 200 references. Proportionately, this puts Daniel in the same category as Isaiah and the Psalms, the books most frequently

Daniel on New Testament writings, states: "If apocalyptic is at all the mother of Christian theology... Daniel certainly contributed to this mothering."<sup>43</sup> As for the book of Daniel itself, W.S. Towner has acknowledged the agreement among commentators that "chapter 7 is the single most important chapter of the Book of Daniel."<sup>44</sup> If it is the case that Chapter 7 of Daniel is the most important chapter of the book, then this importance is also reflected in the appropriation of Daniel in the New Testament. In his assessment of the use of Daniel in the New Testament, James Dunn observes that, "There can be no doubt that the visions of Daniel 7 were influential in the formation of NT writings... [and] in shaping the elements within the Gospel tradition."<sup>45</sup> Correspondingly, Collins writes: "From a Christian viewpoint, no passage in Daniel rivals Dan 7:13 in importance in the tradition."<sup>46</sup> Even for the Qumran community, whose self-identity was shaped in many respects by the book of Daniel,<sup>47</sup> by comparison, the most extensive use of Daniel 7 is to be found in its appropriation by New Testament Christianity.<sup>48</sup> Therefore, from a Christian standpoint, the book of Daniel is enormously influential. Much of Christian eschatology, the conception of the kingdom of God and Jesus' relationship to it in the Gospels is shaped by Daniel.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, James Dunn has made the case, and Craig Evans agrees, that Jesus' self-identity as the "Son of man" is firmly rooted in the tradition of Daniel 7.<sup>50</sup>

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quoted and alluded to in the New Testament."

43. John E. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC 30; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), xxviii-xxix. Goldingay refers to Käsemann's dictum that "apocalyptic is the mother of all Christian theology." Cf. Käsemann, *New Testament*, 108-37.

44. W. Sibley Towner, *Daniel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1984), 91. Cf. Thomas Hieke, "The Reception of Daniel 7 in the Revelation of John," in *Revelation and the Politics of Apocalyptic Interpretation* (eds. Richard B. Hays and Stefan Alkier; Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2012), 47; Judith L. Kovacs, Christopher Rowland and Rebekah Callow, *Revelation: The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ* (Malden, MA.: Blackwell, 2004), 3, write, "The Book of Daniel has influenced John's vision from almost the first verse to the last."

45. James D. G. Dunn, "The Danielic Son of Man in the New Testament," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (2 vols.; eds. John J. Collins, Peter W. Flint and Cameron VanEpps; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 537.

46. John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (ed. Frank Moore Cross; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 79.

47. Collins, *Daniel*, 79. Cf. Trever, "Book of Daniel," 89-102.

48. Collins, *Daniel*, 79.

49. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxix. Cf. Evans, "Book of Daniel," 490-527.

50. Dunn, "Book of Daniel," 528-49; Evans, "Book of Daniel," 501-2.

If it is the case that the Old Testament features most prominently in the Book of Revelation, and the prophetic writings takes centre stage, then the Book of Daniel—particularly Chapter 7—is the bullseye toward which Revelation aims. Beale, Bauckham and others have observed that Daniel 7 is the most fundamental chapter in all the Old Testament for the Book of Revelation.<sup>51</sup> Beale writes that Daniel 7 provides the “mother load” of allusions in the Apocalypse.<sup>52</sup> And Bauckham notes that “[N]ot only is Daniel one of John's major Old Testament sources, but Daniel 7 in particular is foundational for his work. He alludes to almost every part of that chapter at some point in Revelation, demonstrating that a consistent and complete exegesis of Daniel 7 lies behind his work.”<sup>53</sup> While this chapter will not develop this appropriation of Daniel 7 in Revelation to any extent, it is important to note that virtually every facet of the vision of Daniel 7 is present in Revelation: the great sea, voracious beasts, antichrist, persecution of the saints, Son of man, the clouds of heaven, establishment of the divine kingdom, eternal reign of the saints, and the fiery judgement of the beast, among others.<sup>54</sup>

Therefore, in light of what I have argued above, namely, that Revelation is not interpreting the Old Testament but rather stands in its own prophetic right in dialogue with this context, I suggest that it is not incidental that Daniel 7 dominates both the New Testament and Revelation intertextually and theologically. This dominance of Daniel 7 in the Book of Revelation is deliberately congruent with New Testament theological trajectory, as would be expected based on a shared theological history within the canon. In my view, the Apocalypse is to be understood as “reduplicating” or recapitulating the

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51. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 404, writes, “Daniel 7 as one of the key Old Testament texts on which Revelation is based and to which it frequently alludes.” Cf. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 78-82 and 98-99.

52. Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1082. Cf. Dunn, “Book of Daniel,” 537: “That the NT's own apocalypse... should be so influenced by the only Jewish apocalypse to gain canonical status (Daniel) is hardly surprising.”

53. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 329.

54. See Hieke, “Daniel 7,” 47-67, for a more in-depth study of the themes of Daniel 7 in the Apocalypse. Cf. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 329.

prophecies of Daniel, again, not as an interpretation or reinterpretation, but as a continuation and expansion of these visions.<sup>55</sup>

In terms of hermeneutical application, this means, as Beale affirms, that in order to get a clearer view of Revelation's message, one must "interpret the symbols of a passage mainly against the background of their meaning in the Old Testament text to which there has been explicit reference."<sup>56</sup> And what Hays argues regarding Paul's appropriation of the Torah is true for Revelation and the prophetic context of Daniel: "[T]he Torah is neither superseded nor nullified but transformed into a witness of the gospel."<sup>57</sup> In the same way, the theological trajectory of Daniel is neither altered nor transgressed, but re-presented as a prophetic metanarrative in Revelation. In other words, Revelation understands Daniel 7 to be a *long-range forecast* of God's purposes in the world and therefore does not see itself as reinterpreting unrealized prophecy, but rather as expanding the cosmic horizon and details of the grand-story begun in Daniel.<sup>58</sup> The case for this is presented most vividly in the next chapter, but lastly, I wish to demonstrate below that John is portrayed specifically as a second Daniel (and to a lesser extent a second Ezekiel) through a plethora of parallels between John's visionary experience and that of Daniel.

## 5. Intertextual Strategy # 3: Reduplicating the Theophanic Setting of Daniel/Ezekiel

The following chart outlines several parallels between John's theophany on Patmos (Rev. 1:9-3:22) and that of Daniel by the Tigris (Dan 10:1-12:13). I have also included the setting for the prelude to Ezekiel's theophany to demonstrate that John's visionary

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55. "Reduplication" is a term borrowed from Childs, *New Testament*, 511. Childs uses the term to indicate how a singular prophetic story is re-told (or in Childs view, "reinterpreted") from different perspectives. Childs sees this pattern in Daniel 7, 8 and 10-11, all of which reinterpret the dream of Daniel 2 from different perspectives. The term is used in this thesis to mean that Revelation re-presents the visions of Daniel in much the same way that Daniel 2, 7, and 8 presents the same scenario with different metaphors and with differing emphases.

56. Beale, *John's Use*, 21.

57. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 157.

58. See Chapter 5 for further discussion on this perspective.

experience mirrors that of these two biblical prophets deliberately. To be sure, the connections Revelation make between John and Daniel and Ezekiel strongly imply a continuity between John and these two prophets, in particular.<sup>59</sup> Though I could also compare Ezekiel's theophany in Chapters 1-3 with Revelation 4-5, this comparison does not immediately serve our purposes.<sup>60</sup> But Daniel stands out first and foremost because it is the book of Daniel above all others, and it is the prophet Daniel above all others with which the Book of Revelation is most interested in associating John.

Table 1: Theophanic Parallels

|                   | DANIEL   | JOHN  | EZEKIEL   |
|-------------------|--|---|---|
| Role              | Prophet-visionary  | Prophet-visionary                               | Prophet-visionary   |
| Social location   | Exile in Babylonian/Persian empire   | Exile in Roman empire                           | Exile in Babylonian empire  |
| <b>Theophany</b>  |  |   |   |
| Location          | On the bank of the river Hiddekel  | On an island                                    | On the bank of the river Kebar  |
| land-water binary | ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐπὶ τοῦ χεῖλους τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου, ὃς ἐστὶ Τίγρης (10:4, LXX) | ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμος (1:9)   | ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐν μέσῳ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Χοβαρ (1:1, LXX) |
| Immediate context | Those with him have fled (10:7)  | No one else mentioned (presumed alone)          | Among the exiles (1:1), but likely alone (cf. 3:15)                   |
| Theophany         | Man clothed in linen (10:5)  | One like Son of man clothed with garment (1:13) | God's throne-chariot and living creatures (1: 4-3:15)                 |

59. Ian Boxall, *Patmos in the Reception History of the Apocalypse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 41. Boxall notes the "strong connections between his book [Revelation] and those of prophetic predecessors such as Daniel and Ezekiel."

60. But see Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 154-228, who undertakes such a comparison.

|  |  |   |  |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | Belt of Uphaz around his waist (10:5)            | Golden belt around waist (1:13)               |  |
|  | Face like lightening (10:6)                      | Face like sun shining full strength (1:16)    |  |
|  | Eyes like flaming torches (10:6)                 | Eyes like flame of fire (1:14)                |  |
|  | Arms and legs like burnish bronze (10:6)         | Feet like burnish bronze (1:15)               |  |
|  | Sound of his words like a multitude (10:6)       | Voice like sound of many waters (1:15)        |  |
|  | Fall to ground in deep sleep (10:9)              | Falls prostrate as though dead (1:17)         |  |
|  | Hand raises him up (10:10)                       | Right hands laid upon him (1:17)              |  |
|  | Daniel told not to fear (10:12)                  | John told not to fear (1:17)                  |  |
|  | Message concerning Daniel's people (10:14-12:13) | Message concerning the 7 churches (1:19-3:22) |  |

### 5.1. *A Land-Water Binary*

The chart above demonstrates that like Daniel and Ezekiel, John is also an exile as a result of being deported by a dominant foreign power. Daniel is exiled to Babylon, though he continues during the Persian Empire. Ezekiel too is an exile in Babylon, while John is exiled to Patmos, presumably, on orders of Rome.<sup>61</sup> John is also a prophetic-visionary as his predecessors. Preparatory to their respective theophanies, all three visionaries are at pains to indicate their precise geographical and topographical location. They express themselves in the first person: “I was on the banks of great the river... Tigris” (ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐπὶ τοῦ χείλους τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ μεγάλου... Τίγρης); “I was... by the river Chebar” (ἐγὼ ἤμην... ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Χοβαρ); “I John... was on the Island... Patmos” (Ἐγὼ Ἰωάννης...

61. Boxall, *Reception History*, 1-55.



ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ... **τῇ... Πάτμῳ**).<sup>62</sup> Each is located, evidently by no deliberate effort on his part, immediately next to a body of water. In the case of Daniel he is on the banks of the “great” Tigris; Ezekiel is on the banks of the Chebar River; and John is on the island called Patmos surrounded by the Mediterranean, and hence, in a real sense, is also on the banks of the sea.<sup>63</sup> This land-water binary seems to be important to the visionary experiences of especially Daniel and John, since bodies of water feature prominently in both compositions.<sup>64</sup> For example, the setting for Daniel’s vision of the ram and goat is by the side of the river Ulai (8:2, 3); and the “Great Sea” holds important symbolic function in Daniel’s vision of the four beasts (7:2, 3), and so for John.<sup>65</sup> Hence, Revelation’s use of Daniel and Ezekiel appears to be rather purposeful in light of the strong parallels between their respective theophanic settings.

### 5.2. *A Three-Dimensional Setting*

In addition to the strikingly similar topographical setting in these three canonical visionary accounts, one cannot help but notice the word play between **ποταμοῦ** and **Πάτμῳ** (nom. **ποταμός/Πάτμος**). These words betray strong verbal likenesses. It is quite possible that this similarity is coincidental because the literary parallel is not direct. However, in light of the many parallels between these three visionary settings, the occurrence of these similar sounding words within this setting does not appear coincidental.<sup>66</sup> To the contrary, there seems to be an inverse parallelism between **τῇ νήσῳ... Πάτμῳ**, and **τοῦ ποταμοῦ... Τίγρης**, and **τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Χοβαρ**. Beale has demonstrated that one of the intertextual

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62. Dan 10:4, LXX; Ezek 1:1, LXX; Rev 1:9.

63. Cf. Rev 10:1-2, 13:1, GNT-TR.

64. Cf. Dan 7:2-3; 8:2, 11:45; 12:5-7; Rev 8:8-9; 10:2-5; 13:1; 16:3; 21:1. Cf. Ezek 26-28.

65. That Daniel’s beasts come up out of the “Great sea” or the Mediterranean sea and John is exiled in the middle of this body of water from which also his visionary beast also arises is far from coincidental. More is to be said on this in the next chapter. See Goldingay, *Daniel*, 160. Cf. Ezek 47:19, 20; Josh 1:4; 9:1.

66. The issue of whether John is dependent on the Greek or Hebrew is not necessarily relevant here since, as I maintain, John is not consciously dependent on any literary source in the immediate composition of the vision. He is *in the Spirit*.

strategies of the Apocalypse is to invert Old Testament contexts, often in ironic ways.<sup>67</sup> Thus, these common-noun/proper-noun combinations describe the topographical settings, and in each case creates a land-water binary. This land-water binary also appears at important junctures in Revelation (10:1-2; 13:1[12:18]). But actually, what appears to be a land-water binary is in fact a three-dimensional setting which includes heaven, since the theophanies originate from heaven and there are important interactions between these three dimensions.<sup>68</sup> For example, in Revelation the seven-headed beast rises out of the sea, while the lamb-like beast rises out of the earth. Both of these are destroyed by the Rider on the horse who emerges from heaven. In another instance, woe is pronounced against the inhabitants of “the earth and the sea” because of the ejection of the devil and his angels *from heaven* (12:9). This topographical construal then, creates a heaven-earth-sea setting deliberately, and draws attention to God’s sovereignty over all three dimensions.

### 5.3. *A Theological Statement on Creation*

It is argued here, that this three dimensional setting is making important theological statements about God’s rightful rule over “creation.” After all, Revelation exhibits significant concern regarding God’s claim over creation.<sup>69</sup> The “everlasting Gospel,” for example, which is preached “to every nation, kindred, tribe, tongue and people” involves the call to “worship him who made heaven, earth, the sea and the fountains of waters,” and threatens judgements against the inhabitants of the earth who refuse to worship the Sovereign One (14:6-7). Revelation 14:6 in its call to worship the Maker of heaven and earth, alludes to the fourth commandment of Exodus 20:11, where God is said to have made “*heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them,*” in six days.<sup>70</sup> Further, God’s sovereign

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67. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 94-96.

68. See for example, Dan 7:2; 9-14; 8:2-3, 10-11; 10:4; 12:5, 6; Rev 10:1-2; 14:6; 18:1, 21.

69. Cf. Rev 4:11.

70. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 753.

right over creation is most forcefully demonstrated in his capacity to do away with the current heaven and earth (20:11), but more importantly in his ability to recreate “a new heaven and a new earth,” with the sea eternally excluded from the new creation (Rev 21:1).

The most significant example of Revelation’s focus on creation, however, and the one which is most relevant to this section, comes from the recapitulation of a scene in Daniel 12:5-7, which is the latter part of Daniel’s vision by the Tigris. In the original scene, there are three heavenly beings standing by the Tigris river, *one on each bank* of the river, and the man in linen standing *upon the water*. The man upon the water raises his hands to heaven and “swears by the One who lives forever” that the end of “the wonders” (τῶν θαυμαστῶν) would be finished (συντελεσθήσεται) after “a time, times and half a time” (εἰς καιρὸν καὶ καιροὺς καὶ ἥμισυ καιροῦ; vv. 6-7, LXX). In reduplicating this scene in Revelation 10:1-7, a single angel comes down from heaven, places his right foot *on the sea* and his left *on the earth*. In raising his right hand to heaven, the angel swears by “him who lives forever and ever,” with the additional ascription, “who created *heaven* and the things that are in it, the *earth* and the things that are in it, and the *sea* and the things that are in it” (10:6). This addition is, again, another clear allusion to Exodus 20:11, a passage which affirms God’s ownership over the three dimensions of creation. The angel standing on the land and sea while raising his hands to heaven is a statement of divine claim over creation, both in the context of Daniel (the location of the two holy ones on the banks of the river, and the other upon the water, and the raising of the hands to heaven are all strategic, not haphazard), as well as Revelation, except in the latter context the allusion to creation is more explicit. Without a doubt, a direct theological statement of God’s sovereignty is being made in connection with heaven, earth and sea in this scenario. Therefore, this three-dimensional setting in Daniel and Revelation is a deliberate assertion of Divine authority over creation, and therefore guarantees his right to “judge” the inhabitants of the earth (Rev 11: 18, 14:6).

Continuing the scene, the angel announces that the “time” (χρόνος) would end at the sounding of the seventh trumpet. At that time, the “mystery of God” (μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ) would be “finished” (ἐτελέσθη) as he announced (εὐηγγέλισεν) to his servants the prophets (Rev 10:7)—a clear reference to the finishing (συντελεσθήσεται) of “the wonders” (τῶν θαυμαστῶν) of Daniel 10:6-7. Therefore, in conjunction with my argument in the previous section, in this “announcing of good news” (εὐηγγέλισεν) in connection to the mystery of God (Rev 10:7), Daniel is being singled out particularly based of the direct allusion to Chapter 10 in the reduplicated scene.<sup>71</sup>

#### 5.4. *Summary: John as a Second Daniel*

Based on what I have outlined above, it is reasonable to conclude that the parallels between John and Daniel and Ezekiel are certainly not incidental. The parallels pointed out support the findings of Beale and A. Vanhoye that Daniel and Ezekiel are respectively the most influential Old Testament books in the Apocalypse.<sup>72</sup> Specifically, the water-land binary, which turns out to be a three dimensional construal, is integral to the message of creation envisaged in Daniel, and especially amplified in Revelation. In other words, John is not on Patmos by accident! Neither is Daniel and Ezekiel in their respective settings by coincidence. Divine revelations are mediated to Daniel and Ezekiel near bodies of water as a symbolic declaration of God’s ownership over creation. In the case of Revelation, the topographical scene is deliberately chosen, not by John, but by Divine providence to convey the same theology about divine sovereignty vis-à-vis creation. And as we will explore in the next chapter, John’s geographical location on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea is also of

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71. Cf. Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1978), 56, who also emphasizes Daniel's proclamation of the "good news," though, as Baldwin suggests, the "message" was not as clear to him as in later Christian development.

72. A. Vanhoye, “L’utilisation du livre d’Ezekiel dans l’Apocalypse,” *Bib* 43 (1962): 473-75. Cited in Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 77, 86. Cf. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 424. Against Beale, Bauckham, and Vanhoye, Moyise, Ruiz and others maintain that Ezekiel exerts more influence than Daniel. Cf. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 123-29.

great significance in his vision of the beast from the sea. That John is exiled to Patmos on account of the "word of God" and the "testimony of Jesus," suggests a double *entendre*: while he is there on account of his faith in Jesus, he is also there, by divine appointment, to receive this final Revelation from God regarding the plan of salvation which the prophets have been announcing throughout salvation's history.

Further, it is highly significant that John's first vision in Chapter 1 (the theophany of the Son of Man) is a reduplication of Daniel's last visionary account in Chapters 10-12. It is plausible to suggest that John not only recapitulates Daniel, but also picks up where Daniel left off. For this reason, John's prophetic ministry is modeled on Daniel more so than any other prophet. More so than any other Old Testament prophetic account, Revelation is to be seen as deriving its message from and represents a continuation of Daniel's visions. Hence, this third intertextual strategy wherein the prophet-visionary-exile profile, the topographical setting, and the theophany of Daniel 10 are reproduced is strong evidence, in the view of this writer, that these two accounts are in dialogue and should be understood in combination as representing a prophetic grandstory of salvation's history.<sup>73</sup> Emphatically, Revelation is far from arbitrary in its concentration on the canonical prophets—the most important of whom is Daniel.

## 6. Conclusion

Everett Fergusson writes concerning the Gospels' use of the Old Testament, especially that of Matthew and Luke, "they were continuing the Old Testament story, were imitating it, and were writing a definitive account of the coming of Jesus and his place in the history of salvation."<sup>74</sup> This is contrasted with the apocryphal Gospel of Thomas, for

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73. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 96. In addition to the topographical setting, more immediately, all three visionaries seem to be alone. Daniel explicitly says he is alone (10:7, 8); Ezekiel, while among the exiles, seems to have been alone during his vision as per Chapter 3:14-15; and John's isolation on Patmos implies his solitude. It is under the conditions described above that the theophanies occur: to an exile who is physically alone, by a body of water.

example, which shows no indication of being rooted in the Old Testament.<sup>75</sup> In the same way I argue, that the overwhelming use of the Old Testament in Revelation indicates the continuation of this theological trajectory along the same lines as the Gospels, and even Paul.<sup>76</sup> For John the seer, as for the authors of the Gospels, Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. The sheer preponderance of allusions to the Old Testament compared to non-canonical texts, supports the thesis that Revelation is intentionally and almost exclusively drawing its meaning from this context. In addition, the concentration on the prophetic books, and the amplification of Daniel 7 in particular, are deliberate strategies on the part of Revelation, intended to focus the readers' attention ever so closely to these contexts.

It is for this reason that the tradition of the canonical prophets is so pervasive in the book, while one must necessarily postulate oral tradition to account for the putative extra-canonical tradition of which John makes use. The seer is therefore neither "international" nor "eclectic," but is rather *exclusive* in the tradition with which he identifies. He exhibits the same kind of exclusivism which rendered Christians social outcasts in Roman society. John is identifying with *canonical* prophetic tradition. It is this tradition which finds the most weight in his writing, whereas much more uncertainty surrounds the use of other traditions—mythical or apocalyptic. It is the tradition in which Jesus is preeminent—and not Enoch; and where the Old Testament's symbolic background—and not international mythic traditions—play the central role, with which John feels most at home.

This proposition is a very reasonable one and deserves to be taken seriously. To

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74. Fergusson, "Selection and Closure," 303. Fergusson is responding to and summarizing the 1999 Society of Biblical Literature presidential address by Moody Smith. See Moody Smith, "When Did the Gospels Become Scripture," *JBL* 119 (2000): 3-20.

75. Fergusson, "Selection and Closure," 303. Cf. Smith, "Gospels," 13-15.

76. Cf. Childs, *New Testament*, 509, writes, "He [John] formulated his message in the imagery of the Old Testament, predominantly from Daniel, and of the Synoptic Gospels, particularly the traditions of Matt. 24."

casually dismiss this context in favour of positing a contemporary historical one, is to fail to discern the fundamental role assigned to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation. This is not to suggest that John's contemporary situation is of not interest in the book; the letters to the churches indicate otherwise. Nevertheless, I am suggesting that the universal perspective in Revelation, and especially the *parousia*, which the book is so ostensibly about, put all history in proper perspective. For this author, the concept of a grand-story (Scripture's coherent story) in Revelation overrides the historical critical focus on John's contemporary situation. Revelation has salvation's history in mind, a history which subsumes and expands John's historical horizon, while holding important implications for the entire creation. Revelation is fundamentally about God's sovereign rule over creation—a rule that has been contested by the dragon and his supporters. So as we turn to the climax of this thesis, we look resolutely to the Old Testament context to determine the meaning of the eschatological sea beast symbolism in Revelation. This Old Testament contexts takes precedence over any contemporary historical considerations, and only when meaning is exhausted from this context, is it appropriate to look to John's contemporary circumstances. But as it turns out, in my view, there is much that has not yet been grasped from the biblical context as it relates to the seven-headed sea beast. It is to these issues that we must now attend.

# The Canonical Shaping of the Beast and the Conceptualization of History

## I. Introduction

Based on the intertextual orientation of the Book of Revelation, I have been making the case that its symbolisms should be understood first and foremost in relationship to the canon of the Christian Bible, specifically, the Old Testament, which stands out in bold relief in its background. To this end, I have sought to establish that a grand story regarding salvation's history which is outlined in the first canonical apocalypse is picked up and expanded in the second. Without changing the fundamental story in any way, Revelation adapts the Danielic imagery (along with many others from the Old Testament) to reveal the grand panorama of God's ultimate purposes for this world through Jesus. In this chapter, I bring these assertions fully to bear on the analysis of the seven-headed sea beast symbolism of Revelation. As stated in the introduction to this study, my investigation of this symbolism is primarily a conceptual one, envisaged as a canonical symbol. Thus, instead of moving immediately to relate its meaning to a putative historical situation, I explore this imagery as an integrative whole, and reflect on the multiple ways in which the context of the book of Daniel dictates both its conceptual amalgamation and meaning. While my main textual referent is Revelation 13:1-3, other key passages which inform the analysis of this symbol will also be investigated in this chapter and the next.

## 2. Text and Translation

I present first, the Greek text of my primary textual referent (Revelation 13:1-3) from GNT-TR and my own translation with notes:



1. καὶ ἐστάθην ἐπὶ τὴν ἄμμον τῆς θαλάσσης. Καὶ εἶδον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης  
θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον, ἔχον κεφαλὰς ἑπτὰ καὶ κέρατα δέκα, καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν  
κεράτων αὐτοῦ δέκα διαδήματα, καὶ ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτοῦ ὄνομα  
βλασφημίας. 2. καὶ τὸ θηρίον, ὃ εἶδον, ἦν ὅμοιον παρδάλει, καὶ οἱ πόδες  
αὐτοῦ ὡς ἄρκτου, καὶ τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ ὡς στόμα λέοντος· καὶ ἔδωκεν αὐτῷ  
ὁ δρᾶκων τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην.  
3. καὶ εἶδον μίαν τῶν κεφαλῶν αὐτοῦ ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον· καὶ ἡ  
πληγὴ τοῦ θανάτου αὐτοῦ ἔθεραπεύθη· καὶ ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ ὀπίσω τοῦ  
θηρίου·

1. And I stood<sup>1</sup> upon the sand of the sea. And I saw a beast coming up from the  
sea, having seven heads and ten horns, and upon his horns ten crowns, and  
upon his head names<sup>2</sup> of blasphemy. 2. And the beast which I saw was like a

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1. Notes on variant: 1a. Though καὶ ἐστάθη is supported by important manuscripts such as P<sup>47</sup> & A C, and about 25 miniscules, the variant Καὶ ἐστάθην also finds support from P 046 051 and most minuscules (See, Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (2nd ed.; London: United Bible Societies, 1994), 673. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:715-16, who notes that this variant is important structurally. The former reading implies that the dragon is standing on the shore of the sea, which would make 13:1-18 a continuation of the visionary episode of 12:1-18. In the latter case, John would be the one standing on the shore of the sea, making the whole sentence part of 13:1, and indicating a new visionary segment. While Metzger and Aune favour the former, I chose the latter for two reasons. First, based on the reduplicated patterns in Revelation (7 trumpets [8:1-9:21, 11:14-19]/7 bowls [16:1-21]; 144,000 sealed [7:3-1])/144,000 on mount Zion [14:1-5]; beast from Abyss [11:7]/beast from Abyss [17:8]; beast with 7 heads 10 horns [13:1-18]/beast with 7 heads and 10 horns [17:3-18], etc.), a new visionary segment is most likely in view here. The repeated number 42 months (11:2), 1260 days (11:3), 1260 days (12:6), time times and half a time (12:14), and 42 months (13:5) are all related, but these are reduplication of the same time period from different angles. This reduplication pattern here and the introduction of the sea beast symbol in 13:1 seem to warrant a separate, though related, visionary segment. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 681, also sees a new visionary segment here, though he also favours the first reading ("the dragon stood..."). The second reason for suggesting that John is on the seashore and not the dragon, is based on the pattern that I have suggested in the Old Testament where Daniel and Ezekiel are standing on the banks of rivers during visionary experiences. In 8:2 Daniel is standing on the bank of the Ulai river where he sees the vision of the ram and goat. And in 10:4 he is standing on the bank of the Tigris river where his final visionary account transpires (cf. Ezek 1:1, 3). Since I have suggested in the previous chapter that Revelation duplicates this setting, it seems implicit that John is also standing on the shore in the theophanic setting in Rev 1. If this is the case, it is highly likely, though not certain, that John is the one standing on the shore of the sea in 13:1 where he is presented with a different perspective on the repeated time period. Moreover, the fact that Daniel's vision of the four beasts (alluded to in Rev 13:1-3) constituted a singular and separate vision in Daniel, sets the precedence for Revelation. I have maintained that Revelation closely patterns Daniel. Therefore, it seems more likely that John is the one standing by the shore.

2. The textual evidence is divided between ὄνομα and ὀνόματα, though the former finds support from important manuscripts (P<sup>47</sup> & C 025; the latter is supported by A 046 051 fam 1611<sup>2329</sup>). Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:716. As

leopard, and his feet like a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority. 3. And I saw one of his heads as having been slain to death, but his death blow was healed. And the whole world marveled after the beast.

### 3. The Concept of the Beast in Current Scholarship

#### 3.1. *The Conceptual Shape of the Beast*

To be sure, very little attention has been paid to the *organism* or *concept* of the sea beast in scholarship, and even less to how the conceptual shaping of this apocalyptic construct may impact its interpretation. This is mainly due to the marginalization of the Old Testament context in Revelation in favour of viewing the contemporary-historical situation of the Seer as the primary locus of meaning. Because historical critical approaches to Revelation frequently conceive of its images as steno-symbols with immediate historical referents, some relationship between the *Nero redivivus* myth and the seven-headed sea beast is almost always inferred.<sup>3</sup> As a result of this association, interpreters have been restrained from paying careful attention to the *visual* organization of the beast. What Leon Morris thinks about the conceptual framework of this apocalyptic symbol is typical of most interpreters: "We should be clear that John's interest is in symbolism. He is not going into detail to help his readers visualize the beast. In fact, it seems impossible to put together all the features John mentions to make up one animal. But this is not his intention."<sup>4</sup> Still, despite Morris' conviction to the contrary, the conceptual analysis which follows below strongly suggests that Revelation does in fact intend for its readers to do just that—visualize the beast!

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Aune points out however, the parallel ὀνόματα in 17:3 gives support to the plural in 13:1 also. I agree with this assessment and have chosen the plural here as well.

3. A "Steno-symbol" is image with a singular referent, whereas as "tensive symbol" is an image with a range of meanings and potential referents. See, Gilbertson, *God and History*, 66-68; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 183.

4. Morris, *Revelation*, 161.

### 3.2. *The Beast and History*

By the same token, that Revelation contains historical periodization similar to Daniel has been near-universally denied. Numerous commentators have asserted that apart from the millennium, Revelation contains no historical schema.<sup>5</sup> But such conclusions depend on the aforementioned assertions of historical specificity and local context (deprivation, comfort and protest, etc.). I demonstrate this point of view by re-engaging the three scholars whose approach to Revelation was reviewed in the introduction. Here I simply outline what they make of the conceptual framework of the beast and the notion of historical schematization in Revelation:

With regard to the visual framework of the beast of Revelation 13, Aune writes:

This aspect of the vision is a pastiche based on Daniel's vision of the four beasts from the sea (Dan 7:1-8). The author of Revelation, who is concerned with a *single* kingdom rather than with a succession of four kingdoms, has created a single beast from characteristics of three of the four beasts in Daniel.... The seven heads of the beast in 13:1 have no direct correspondence in the beasts described in Dan 7:1-8, though the third leopardlike beast is described as having four heads (Dan 7:6).<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Yarbro Collins writes concerning the context of Daniel in Revelation 13:

The vision of the beast rising out of the sea (13:1-10) is a rewriting and adaptation of the vision of the four beasts rising out of the sea in Daniel 7.... Rather than describe four beasts, each more terrible than the last, John has combined the attributes of all four to create one overwhelmingly monstrous creature. The result is a reduction of attention to history and a focus on the terrors of the recent past and the present.<sup>7</sup>

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5. Cf. Travassos Valdez, *Historical Interpretations*, 101. Cf. John J. Collins, "Pseudonymity, Historical Reviews and the Genre of the Revelation of John," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 333-40.

6. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:734, (emphasis original).

7. Yarbro Collins, "Book of Revelation," in *Origins* (ed. Collins), 394.

Again, Yarbrow Collins' understanding of the historical implication of this conflation is expressed in this way: "The conflation of the beasts in Revelation 13 certainly shows that the author had less interest in the schematization of history than the author of Daniel 7 had..."<sup>8</sup> And once more, Yarbrow Collins emphasizes, like Aune, the singularity of the Roman Empire in opposition to the consecutive historical kingdoms of Daniel:

Revelation evokes Daniel in various ways but omits the reviews of history implied in the dream of Daniel 2 and the vision of Daniel 7. This omission highlights Revelation's focus on the Christ-event and on the *singularity* of the Roman Empire.<sup>9</sup>

I have shown in the previous chapter that Bauckham argues for the central place of the Old Testament context in determining meaning in Revelation. But as it pertains to the Old Testament background with regard to the conceptual shape of the beast, he writes:

That John's beast has seven heads and ten horns results from the fact that it combines the characteristics of all four beasts of Daniel's vision (Dan 7:3-7; cf. Rev 13:2). It sums up and surpasses the evil empires of history in itself.... Nevertheless, John would not have given his beast seven heads and ten horns purely for this reason. He uses the imagery he takes over from Daniel fairly freely. He does not, for example, take over the four wings of Daniel's fourth beast (Daniel 7:6), for which he evidently had no symbolic use. Whereas Daniel's individual 'Antichrist' figure is one of the ten horns (Dan 7:8, 20-21), John's is one of the heads of the beast.<sup>10</sup>

To the credit of all three authors, they recognize that the sea beast of Revelation 13 evokes, to one degree or another, the corresponding imagery in Daniel 7. However, their cursory dismissal of the Danielic context evinces their contemporary historical focus. For Aune, the "pastiche" in Revelation finds "no direct correspondence" to the imagery in Daniel. For

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8. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 172.

9. Yarbrow Collins, "Apocalypse Now," 453, emphasis added. For similar views, see Collins, "Historical Reviews," 329-343; Fiorenza, *Justice and Judgment*, 46.

10. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 404. Bauckham mistakenly attributes the four wings to the fourth beast of Daniel 7, rather than to the 3rd.

Yarbro Collins, “conflation” of Daniel’s four beasts shows that Revelation departs from the Danielic interest in history as a schematic outline. Bauckham’s rationale is the more surprising in view of what I pointed out in the previous chapter—he advances a high regard for the function of the Old Testament context in Revelation.

Bauckham’s two-pronged approach to Revelation, however, envisions an “intertextual” as well as a (historically) “contextual” hermeneutic.<sup>11</sup> While the former is of primary import in other parts of his treatment of the book (even to the point where Revelation is seen as the “climax” of Old Testament prophecy), it is nonetheless subordinated to the latter in his understanding of the eschatological sea beast. For Bauckham, John’s free adaptation of Daniel’s imagery suggests that he departs from the context in Daniel, at least in this instance. Nevertheless, as I intend to demonstrate below, all of our exegetes fail to do justice to the significance of the visual concept of the beast and its relationship to the context of Daniel. However, before tackling this issue head-on, it is necessary to make an important detour. In this excursus, I examine a final intertextual strategy of the Apocalypse which will illuminate our way toward a more comprehensive analysis of the visual concept of the eschatological sea beast.

#### *Excursus: Conflation and Thematic Analogy as a Literary Strategy*

It has been observed that “the writers of the NT sometimes present in the form of a single citation an assemblage of phrases or sentences drawn from two or more OT sources.”<sup>12</sup> This practice, often called “chain-stringing” can be seen throughout the Gospels, but especially in the Pauline writings. For example, according to Walter Kaizer, the longest chain of quotes is found in Romans 3:10-18 where allusions are drawn from Ps 14:1-2; 5:9; 140:3; Isa 59:7-8;

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11. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, xii-xiii.

12. Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 3.

and Ps 36:1.<sup>13</sup> The noticeable lack of direct citation in Revelation often obscures the same phenomena at work. Nevertheless, Beale has demonstrated that allusions to the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation most often occur in combinations.<sup>14</sup> He contends that though such fusions exhibit a purposeful and contextual arrangement, studying the individual fragments in their Old Testament contexts sheds greater light on their combined meaning in the Apocalypse.<sup>15</sup> This is in contrast to G.B. Caird who, while recognizing these conceptual mosaics in Revelation, contests that their Old Testament contexts need not be studied separately.<sup>16</sup> In accordance with Beale, Vanhoye has also noted that the combined allusions in Revelation are conflated based on their thematic association.<sup>17</sup> And importantly Fekkes underscores that “thematic analogues” in the Apocalypse do not betray “a conglomerate of divergent texts.” Instead, “one continually encounters various clusters of tradition which can be arranged according to the theme and purpose of the author in a given context.”<sup>18</sup>

In his analysis of the many Old Testament images amalgamated in Revelation 4-5, Beale writes that “without exception, they are all from descriptions of theophanies that function as introductory sections to announcements of judgement on Israel or the nations.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, his analysis of the “Son of Man” figure from Revelation 1:12-20 shows the conflation of contexts from Dan 2, 3, 7, 10, 12; Zech 4, 12; Isaiah 11, 49; and Ezek 9,

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13. Kaiser, *Old Testament*, 4. Cf. Matt 21:13 where the author quotes come from Is. 56:7 and Jeremiah 7:11. Also Luke 1:17 quotes from Mal 3:1 and 4:5-6; and Mark 1:2 where he cites Mal 3:1 and Isa 40:3 as Isaiah only.

14. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 79. Cf. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 154-271.

15. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 79. Cf. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 63: “It is not enough merely to be sympathetic to the presence and influence of possible OT texts. Because of the imbedded nature of allusions in Revelation, one must dig deeper and look closer at apparent biblical links.”

16. G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1987), 25. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 79. Commenting on the symbol of the Lamb of Revelation, Caird maintains that “We need not waste time searching through the Old Testament and other Jewish literature to find the meaning of this symbol, for John has told us what he means by it” (74).

17. Vanhoye, “d’Ezekiel,” 467. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 80.

18. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 70.

19. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 80. Cf. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 178-228.

among others—all of which deal with descriptions of heavenly beings, and/or “stone” striking the nations, and/or messianic and similar themes.<sup>20</sup> Beale concludes that these major Old Testament images are “interwoven in a well-thought-out manner” into a singular scene because of their thematic association.<sup>21</sup> Other Old Testament materials are used supplementarily, again, because thematically they compliment the picture in Revelation: “In this regard, other Old Testament texts have been linked with Daniel because of common overall pictures or themes, and sometimes by key-words or catch phrases.”<sup>22</sup> Beale points out similar mosaics created from the Old Testament in Revelation 13, 17, and elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

The conclusion which is clear from the analyses of the writers above is that Revelation amalgamates multiple imageries from Old Testament contexts based on their thematic similarities. And on account of the consistency of this phenomena, very purposeful and conscious conceptual constructs are discernible in the book. Such constructs, as Fekkes rightly concludes, suggest that correspondences between the contextual function of a symbol in Revelation and its original Old Testament contexts are deeper than mere “similarities in language and imagery,” and extend “to the setting and purpose of the original biblical passage.”<sup>24</sup> In other words, there is a direct correlation between Old Testament contextual meanings and their amalgamated function in Revelation.

One of Beale’s most significant conclusions, which will feature much into our discussion of the sea beast symbolism, relates to the use of Daniel 2 and 7 in combination in Revelation (and in other apocalyptic literature).<sup>25</sup> Beale writes that this combination is a

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20. Cf. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 154-177, esp. 174-77.

21. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 174. Beale nevertheless suggests that Revelation, like other apocalyptic texts like *1 Enoch* and *4 Ezra*, is using Daniel as a *midrash* or *Vorbild* (171, 173, 313-20).

22. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 171, 223.

23. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 229-271.

24. Fekkes, *Prophetic Traditions*, 101.

25. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 325-326.

“unique feature” deriving from the “awareness that both chapters refer to the same event.”<sup>26</sup>

Nevertheless, Beale has not himself made any connection between the two chapters in relation to the sea beast of Revelation 13, even though he also rejects the notion of a *Nero redivivus* myth as of central importance with respect to the beast.<sup>27</sup> In any case, his invaluable insights will become evident in the analysis to follow.

#### 4. Restating the Thesis

As I stated in the introduction, this study defends the thesis that a canonical understanding of the first beast of Revelation 13 reveals that this singular imagery is the result of a conflation of the four beasts in Daniel 7. The seven heads and ten horns of the singular beast of Revelation 13 are the sum of the seven heads and ten horns of the four beasts of Daniel 7, as we have already seen in the commentators above.<sup>28</sup> I contend here, however, that this amalgamation of the beasts, far from being arbitrary or intended to amplify the singularity of the contemporary Roman empire, is the result of a *deliberate* fusion of the two analogous schematic concepts of Daniel 2 and 7. Based on the discussion of thematic analogues above, it is therefore very logical that Revelation would conflate these thematically related schematizations of history, which from the earliest times have been acknowledged to represent the same scenario employing different metaphors. Put directly, the singular beast of Revelation is the result of the creative conflation of the four *individual* beasts in Daniel 7, presented in the conceptual framework of the *singular* metal image in Daniel 2. And if the context of the Old Testament informs, and even determines meaning

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26. Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 325-26. Cf. Rev 1:1, 7, 12-14, 19b-20a, 4:1, 12:7-8, 17:5-14, 20:11-12.

27. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 689-92, allows this identification as a “possibility,” though unlikely based on the multiple intra-textual parallels/parodies between the beast and Christ. He sees the wound deriving primarily as the result of Christ’s death.

28. Very few commentators have observed that Revelation’s beasts not only combine the characteristics of the beasts of Daniel 7, but also that the 10 horns belong to only the last and final beast. Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 404, is a notable exception. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 683-85; Austin Farrer, *The Revelation of St John the Divine: Commentary on the English Text* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964), 152.



in Revelation, as I have suggested throughout this thesis, then the singular beast represents a succession of world kingdoms in much the same way that Daniel 2 and 7 represents the rise of successive empires. From this perspective, the history of empires from Daniel are the same envisioned in Revelation as being in contention with the Lamb and the kingdom of God.

The function of Daniel 2 in the synthesis of the sea beast imagery in the Book of Revelation has been missed by commentators because its function in this context is *conceptual* more so than it is literary. The excellent work of Beale, Fekkes, Moyise, Paulien and others has been mostly concerned with identifying literary allusions, variously defined. Equal attention has not been paid to conceptual construals in the book. At any rate, the purpose here is to justify the assertion that there is a deliberate conflation of two analogous historical schematizations from Daniel whose amalgamated function is to *amplify*, rather than to diminish, attention to history. Both Daniel 2 and 7 outline the succession of a specific set of world empires, and the creative conflation of these two related contexts in Revelation suggests that there is more to the concept of the beast than has been previously thought. However, in order to work out the implications of this convergence in Revelation, as Beale and Fekkes suggest, it is necessary to briefly examine the Old Testament contexts from which these symbols derive.

## 5. Daniel 2 and 7 in Context

As per the current definition of the genre “apocalypse,” only Daniel 7-12 usually fit into this category, while Chapters 1-6 are classified as “court tales.”<sup>29</sup> However, because Revelation incorporates through allusions the overall themes of faithfulness to God in the face of idolatry found in the so-called “court tales,” this kind of restrictive categorization is

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29. See John J. Collins, “Current Issues in the Study of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (2 vols.; eds. John Joseph Collins, Peter W. Flint and Cameron VanEpps; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 5-6.

not shared by the Book of Revelation.<sup>30</sup> Commentators usually overlook the fact that in chapter 2 Daniel receives the dream by night, in the same way he does in Chapter 7. Without Daniel actually receiving, remembering and interpreting the dream of the metal image, there would have been no account of what the king actually dreamt. In other words, Daniel's involvement makes all the difference in the revelation of the dream and its interpretation. Not only so, but the LXX (Theodotion) uses the verb ἀποκαλύπτω (to reveal, uncover) seven times in relation to the vision of Daniel 2 (vv. 19, 22, 28, 29, 30, and 47). Therefore, the restrictive definition of "apocalypse" which unnecessarily bifurcates the book and these two visionary parallels is not shared by the canonical reading employed here.<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, the analysis of these two visionary sequences which follows, rests on the argument that Revelation (as does the rest of the New Testament) understands the prophecies of Daniel from a synchronic perspective. There is absolutely no hint of any kind of diachronic development of Daniel in other New Testament writings or Revelation. Therefore, from this synchronic perspective, the visions of Daniel 2 and 7 are complimentary representations of the same periodization. The second schema does not supplant or "interpret" the first; rather they are the same outline of history presented from different angles and with differing foci. Both schemata share the same *terminus a quo* (Babylon) and *terminus ad quem* (the establishment of God's eternal kingdom). The first schema presents the basic outline and the second adds complimentary details between the starting and ending points. In this way these two allegorical representations serve to inform each other. Chapter 2 is understood to be the foundation of all subsequent prophecies in Daniel, because while expansive, all later visions are built upon and in someway or another

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30. Cf. Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1082. See also Shepherd, *Daniel*, 1-2, 69-70, who disapproves of the form-critical, genre classification which isolates the book from its canonical context.

31. Cf. Baldwin, *Daniel*, 35-44, who argues (against the consensus) for the unity of the book.

reference this first vision.<sup>32</sup> What I have in mind with respect to the visions of Daniel 2 and 7 in their Old Testament contexts is not a detailed exegesis of these passages, but rather an exegetical exercise concerned with the overall layout of the two schema while amplifying specific aspects which will facilitate comprehension of the schematic concept of Revelation's beast.

### *5.1. Daniel 2: The Dream*

In Daniel Chapter 2 King Nebuchadnezzar has a vision which none of his wise men or magicians can recall, much less interpret. In a fit of rage the king condemns them all to speedy execution. But Daniel the Jew, who had newly come to the office of “wise man” (who evidently had not been summoned with the other counselors) halts the execution by requesting time from the king on the promise that he would reveal the mystery. Going home he and his friends entreat their God for mercy that they would not be destroyed along with the wise men of Babylon. “Then in a vision by night the mystery was revealed to Daniel” (τὸ μυστήριον ἀπεκαλύφθη, Theod). Before relating the dream and the interpretation to the king, Daniel acknowledges the God of heaven as the Source of all knowledge and the revealer of mysteries, removing attention from himself (vv. 20-23, 28, 30; cf. 45).

Relating the king's dream Daniel describes a huge metal image (εἰκὼν), whose appearance was frightening (φοβερά, Theod; v. 31). Its head was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, the belly and thighs were of brass, its legs of iron, and its feet and toes made partly of iron and partly of clay (vv. 32-33). While watching, the king saw a stone cut out of the mountains “without human hands” which struck the statue upon its feet of iron and clay and broke them to pieces (vv. 32-34, 45). “Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and

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32. See for instance, Dan 2:45 and Dan 8:25. Cf. Childs, *New Testament*, 511, who notes the “reduplication” of the vision of Daniel 2 in the subsequent visions of Chapters 7, 8, and 10-11.

the gold were broken to pieces all at once and became as chaff from the summer threshing floor, which the wind carried away, leaving no trace of them behind” (2:35). Meanwhile, the stone which struck the statue becomes a great mountain (ὄρος μέγα, Theod) and fills the entire earth (2:35).

### 5.2. *The Interpretation*

In interpreting the dream, Daniel tells the king: “You are this head of gold” (2:38). That is, the Babylonian empire represents the first metal compartment of the statue. After Babylon, another empire, pictured by the silver and “inferior” to Babylon would arise, followed by a third empire of bronze, then the fourth empire represented by the legs of iron (2:39-40). The iron empire is noted for its strength and power to break in pieces, crush and subdue all things (2:40). But this empire is destined to be divided (διηρημένη, Theod) into an admixture of iron and ceramic clay, as seen in the feet and toes. Attention is drawn specifically to “the toes of the feet,” noting that some of the “firmness” (τῆς ῥίζης, Theod) of the iron will remain in the divided empire (2:42). Still with attention to the toes, Daniel explains that “they” will “commingle” with human seed (a reference to royal intermarriage, as the NRSV infers) but their attempt at cohesion is as impossible as mixing iron and ceramic clay together (2:43). The toes are inferred to be “kings,” as per verse 44. Daniel explains, that “during the time of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom,” pictured as the stone which is cut out of the mountains without human hands (2:44-45). This divine kingdom will grind to powder and bring an end to (λεπτυνεῖ καὶ λικμήσει, Theod; v. 44) the human kingdoms of “iron, bronze, clay, silver and gold” (2:45). Whereas, unlike earthly kingdoms which are destroyed, God’s kingdom will remain forever.

### 5.3. *Summary:*

1. The dream is said to be given to the king by the God of heaven (v. 45)
2. The dream is about a succession of world empires (vv. 38-40)

3. Babylon is the first followed by three others
4. The fourth is to be divided and thus exists in two phases (v. 41)
5. Since the statue is clearly that of a human figure, 10 toes are implicit in the feet
6. The toes are said to be “kings” (v. 44)
7. *The succession of empires is presented conceptually as a unity.*
8. While each empire succeeds the other, the previous empire remains intact
9. The stone strikes the final phase (feet of iron and clay) of the statue
10. The entire statue is broken together, all at once.
11. Human kingdoms are once and finally destroyed by divine intervention
12. God’s kingdom is the fifth and final, eternal dominion

In addition to the summary above, it is to be noted that the fourth empire, in comparison to the three which preceded it, gets the lion’s share of attention. The nuptial activities of the ten kings are of special interest. Related to this, the desire of the kings to re-unite the divided empire suggests that the division is an undesirable outcome. Lastly, since there is an equation between “king” and “kingdom” (vv. 38-39), there is a high probability that these ten “kings” may also mean ten “kingdoms.”<sup>33</sup>

#### 5.4. *Daniel 7: The Dream*

In Chapter 7 Daniel gets a vision by night while upon his bed. He sees the “four winds” striving upon the “great sea” (τὴν θάλασσαν τὴν μεγάλην, Theod; v. 2). From the sea four great beasts emerge (τέσσαρα θηρία μεγάλα ἀνέβαινον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης, Theod; v. 3), each different from the other. The first one is like a lion (ὥσεὶ λέαινα), bearing the wings of an eagle (v. 4). The second beast, like a bear (θηρίον...ὅμοιον ἄρκῳ), was raised up on one side and had three ribs in its mouth (v. 5). The third, like a leopard (ὥσεὶ

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33. Quoting S. R. Driver, *The Book of Daniel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1905), vii, 7, Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 1:347, correctly observed that Daniel uses a horn to symbolize “either a king (see vii. 24, viii. 5, 8a, 9, 21) or a dynasty of kings (viii. 3, 6, 7, 8b, 20, 22) rising up in, or out of, the empire” Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 868. See also Daniel 7: 17, 23.

πάρδαλις), had four heads and four wings of a bird (v. 6). The fourth beast is different from the others; it is not like a normal animal. It has huge iron teeth and claws of bronze (vv. 7, 19). It is “dreadful and terrible” (φοβερὸν καὶ ἔκθαμβον, v. 7, Theod), exceedingly strong (ἰσχυρὸν περισσῶς; v. 7). It devours the earth and breaks it in pieces (καταφάγεται πᾶσαν τὴν γῆν...καὶ κατακόψει, Theod; v. 23), trampling what is left with its feet (vv. 7, 23). Among its ten horns another “little horn” came up (κέρας ἕτερον μικρὸν ἀνέβη), plucking up three of the first by their roots in its coming up (v. 9). This little horn, which appeared more dominant than the others, had eyes like a man and a mouth which spoke “great things” (στομα λαλοῦν μεγάλα, Theod; v. 8). It waged war and prevailed against the holy ones (τῶν ἁγίων) until judgement was given in their favour (v. 21).

On account of the arrogance of the little horn, divine judgement is passed against it (v. 11). Its dominion is brought to an end, the beast is slain, and its body destroyed and given over to the flames (v. 11). Whereas this last beast is destroyed and given to the flames while still exercising dominion, the dominion of the other beasts is taken away, yet their lives are extended for “a season and a time” (ἕως χρόνου καὶ καιροῦ, LXX; v. 12). The divine judgement results in the conferral of dominion, glory, and a kingdom, to “one like a Son of Man” (ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου; v. 13) and to the “saints of the Most High” (ἅγιοι ὑψίστου, Theod; v. 18). The kingdom of the “one like a Son of Man” and the saints is an eternal kingdom which is never to be destroyed or to pass away (v.14).

### 5.5. *The Interpretation*

As per the summary interpretation given to Daniel, the four beasts are four “kings” or “kingdoms” which will arise in the earth (7:17, 23), but the saints of God will ultimately take everlasting possession of “the kingdom” (7:18). Inquiring further into the identity of the fourth beast, the ten horns and the little horn, Daniel is told that the fourth beast is a

“fourth kingdom” which will be different from the previous ones. It will destroy the earth and tread it down and smash it to pieces (v. 23). The ten horns are said to be “ten kings” which will arise out of this fourth kingdom, and the little horn is another king which will arise after these ten. This king too is “different” from the other kings, and will put down three of them (v. 24). He speaks against the Most High and wears out his holy ones for “a time, times, and half a time” (v. 25). But, as a result of the divine judgement, his dominion is taken away and destroyed, and everlasting dominion and greatness is given to the holy ones of the Most High (vv. 26-27).

#### 5.6. *Summary*

1. Four great beasts arise from the “Great Sea.”
2. The beasts are different from each other.
3. The first three are like known beasts of prey (lion, bear, leopard).
4. The fourth is different from the others; it is not compared to a real animal.
5. The fourth beast has great iron teeth, and claws of bronze.
6. The fourth beast is dreadful, terrible, and exceedingly strong.
7. The fourth beast devours, tramples, and crushes the earth.
8. The ten horns are ten “kings” which arise from the 4th kingdom.
9. The little horn is a king which comes up among the ten, destroying three.
10. The little horn speaks against the Most High and wages war against his holy ones.
11. The judgement sits and takes away the dominion of the little horn and the fourth beast.
12. The beast is destroyed and his body is given to the fire.
13. *The other three beasts have their dominion taken away but their lives are extended for a specific time.*
14. The “one like a Son of Man” and the “saints” take eternal possession of the kingdom.

Several points warrant further comment. First, the nature of the fourth beast does not afford the seer any comparison to a real animal except to say that it is “different” from the rest. It remains “nondescript” in this regard.<sup>34</sup> Second, while the four-kingdom sequence

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34. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 299; Shepherd, *Daniel*, 88-89.

indicates that the vision of Daniel 7 parallels that of Daniel 2, there is a clear and specific connection made with Daniel 2 in the description of the fourth beast. This beast is said to possess “great iron teeth” and “claws of bronze” (7:7, 19). The reference to iron and bronze ties this beast, more so than the others, to the vision of Daniel 2. The incorporation of both iron and bronze into the description of the fourth beast establishes two precedents: (1) the amalgamation of elements from Daniel 2 and 7 in relation to the fourth beast;<sup>35</sup> and (2), a close connection, or genetic relationship between the third and fourth kingdoms. Third, the fourth kingdom (especially the second phase) is the major focus of the vision in comparison to the previous kingdoms. Specifically, the activities of the “little horn” dominate the narrative due to the nature of its opposition to the Most High and its warfare against his holy ones.

Finally, the other three beasts are given an extension of life for a specific time (ἕως χρόνου καὶ καιροῦ, LXX; v. 12) even though their dominion was previously taken away. While the argument has been put forward in regard to this verse that these three beasts “do not merit the same sentence as the fourth,”<sup>36</sup> this kind of reckoning fails to take seriously the parallel nature of the visions of Chps. 2 and 7. The precedent is already set for the prolongation of the lives of the first three kingdoms in Daniel Chapter 2. Even though each successive metal takes over the dominion of the former, they all remain intact, as part of the singular image. Their unitary destruction comes the moment the stone strikes the image on the feet of iron and clay. The striking of the image on the feet of the statue, pulverizes the entire thing. This has been long observed.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, verse 12 sets a precedent for our discussion of the beast in Revelation.

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35. Cf. Collins, *Daniel*, 299.

36. Collins, *Daniel*, 304.

37. Cf. Jerome, *Commentary*, 80: “In the one empire of the Romans, all the kingdoms at once are to be destroyed, because of the blasphemy of the Antichrist.”



Specifically, the first three beasts *remain alive* even after their dominion is taken away. Therefore, during the dominion of the final beast, these others are *still living*. It is therefore implicit, as per the inference from Daniel 2, that all of these beasts meet their demise together, so Goldingay.<sup>38</sup> In other words, the judgement against the little horn or the final phase of the last empire, is a judgment against all of the previous empires combined. This fits perfectly with the singular destruction of the image of Daniel 2. Furthermore, the sequence of the schema does not permit the prolongation of the lives of the other three beasts beyond the destruction of the fourth beast.

Table 2: A Comparison of the Schema

| Image                     | Beasts                           |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Gold                      | Lion                             |
| Silver                    | Bear                             |
| Bronze                    | Leopard                          |
| Iron                      | Dreadful Beast                   |
| Ten Toes of Iron and Clay | Ten horns + Little Horn          |
| Stone Kingdom             | Kingdom of Saints and Son of Man |

## 6. Amalgamation of Daniel 2 and 7 in the Beast of Revelation 13

### 6.1. *Justifications for the argument*

Based on the preceding arguments and outlines, there are a number of reasons to justify the assertion that the beast with 7 heads and 10 horns in Revelation 13 is a synthesis of the two

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38. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 166, writes, “The vision of Daniel 2 pictures the whole statue being destroyed at once. Here, similarly, all four creatures lose authority together.”

historical schema of Daniel 2 and 7. The justification for this assertion may be seen in:

1. Revelation's penchant for conflation of Old Testament contexts based on thematic associations.
2. Frequent association of Daniel 2 and 7 elsewhere in Revelation.
3. Precedent in Daniel 7's fourth beast for amalgamation of elements from Daniel 2.
4. Precedent in Daniel 7 of a genetic link between the 3rd and 4th kingdoms due to the mention of "iron" & "bronze" in the fourth beast.
5. The indication from Dan. 7:12 that the other three beasts remain alive during the period of the dominion of the fourth beast.
6. The precedent for the construal of imperial history as a unity in the image of Daniel 2.
7. The argument that the function of Daniel 2's schema is conceptual, providing the "organic" or integrated framework for the combination of the beasts of Daniel 7 in Revelation.
8. The argument that Revelation is a metanarrative of Old Testament prophecy, especially that of Daniel, describing the same prophetic realities, and therefore that it compliments, expands, and adapts Old Testament imagery while presenting the same coherent story about divine action in the world.

In addition to these justifications, the following will also be presented during the course of the discussions to follow:

1. John's location by the shore of the Mediterranean or the "Great Sea" as directly corresponding to Daniel's vision of the beasts rising from the "great sea."
2. The precedent for a "ten king" schema in Daniel 2 (without reference to the "little horn").
3. The fate of Revelation's beast as equivalent to that of Daniel 2 and 7, namely, ultimate demise at the hand of the Most High.
4. Patristic interpretation of Daniel 2, 7 and Revelation 13 and 17 in a metanarrative sense.<sup>39</sup>

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39. This last point is discussed in the following chapter.

Before moving to look specifically at the conceptual arrangement of the beast in chapter 13, it is necessary to get a better portrait of the beast by moving beyond this chapter in Revelation.

### 6.2. *Three Portraits of the Beast*

Many commentators agree that the beasts from the abyss in Rev. 11:7 and in 17:8 are to be identified as parallel descriptions of the sea beast of Chapter 13.<sup>40</sup> The evidence from the book strongly supports this conclusion. As I explained in the previous chapter, intratextual parallelism as literary strategy is consistently applied throughout the book. The same idea is presented, often in different ways scattered throughout the book, yet tied together through subtle literary, descriptive and/or functional similarities. The three pericopes dealing with the beast are intratextual parallels. At the literary level, the beast in 11:7 comes up from the abyss (τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαίνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου); in 17:8, the beast is about to come up from the abyss (Τὸ θηρίον... μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου); and in 13:1, there is a beast coming up from the sea (ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαίνον). The presence of θηρίον, ἀναβαίνω, and ἐκ τῆς in all three accounts are strong literary links. Furthermore, the equation of the “abyss” and the “sea” in the Old Testament (LXX) are too numerous to list here.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, since the abyss and the sea are descriptions of the same “location,” all three phrases equally describe the one beast and its place of origin.

There are descriptive and functional parallels as well. Like the beast in Chapter 13, its counterpart in Chapter 17 also has 7 heads and ten horns (v. 3). Both beasts also have

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40. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 587-90, 684; Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 176, 186. Even Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.26.1 (ANF 1:554-555), understood the beast of Revelation 13 and 17 to be parallel descriptions of the same entity.

41. See for example, the following in the LXX: Gen 1:2; Deut 8:12; Ps 33:7; 77:16; 135:6; Prov 8:24; Job 38:16, 30; Jonah 2:5; and Isa 51:10. The equation of the “sea” and the “abyss” has long been noted, for example, in Tyconius’ (c. 370-390) commentary on Revelation; see Weinrich, *Revelation*, 197. Cf. Aune, *Revelation*, 2:732; Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 588-90, 864-65; Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 176.

blasphemous names on their heads (13:1; 17:3). And since the beasts in 17:8 and 11:7 both emerge from the abyss, the beast in 11:7 can be inferred to fit the same descriptions. From a functional point of view, the earth dwellers, whose names are not written in the Lamb's book "will be amazed" (θαυμασθήσονται) when they see that the beast "was, is not, and shall be" (ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται; 17:8). In the parallel passage, after witnessing the healing of the death blow to one of the beast's heads, the "whole world wondered" (ἐθαυμάσθη ὅλη ἡ γῆ) in following the beast (13:3); and further, the earth dwellers whose names are not in the Lamb's book will worship the beast (13:8). From this parallel, the wounding and healing of one of its heads (13:3) is to be equated with the description that the beast "was, is not, and shall be" (17:8) since both expressions elicit the "wonder" of the earth dwellers.<sup>42</sup> And to "wonder" after the beast is to "worship" the beast (13:3, 8). Additionally, there is a parallel in 17:8a and 17:8b between "was, is not, and is about to come up from the abyss" and "was, is not, and shall be" (ἦν, καὶ οὐκ ἔστι, καὶ μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου; ἦν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν καὶ παρέσται). The rising of the beast from the abyss and his appearance (παρέσται) refers to one and the same "event" in Chapter 17. From this view point, there are a number of equations:

|           |   |                                       |       |
|-----------|---|---------------------------------------|-------|
| 17:8a     | The beast is about to rise from the abyss | The beast "shall be"                  | 17:8b |
| 17:8b     | The beast was, is not, and shall be       | Mortal wounding and recovery of beast | 13:3  |
| 17:8b     | The beast shall be                        | Death blow healed                     | 13:3  |
| 17:8/11:7 | The beast about to rise from the abyss    | The beast rising from the sea         | 13:1  |

Finally, the beast from the abyss in 11:7 kills the two witnesses (the saints), after the completion of their 1260 days of testimony. The beast in Chapter 13 makes war against the saints and overcomes them (v. 7). And the beast in Chapter 17 wages war against the Lamb

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42. Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 175, agrees with this when she says: "[I]t becomes clear that a parallel is intended between the image of the wound which is healed in ch. 13 and the "is not and is about to ascend from the abyss" in ch. 17."

and “those that are with him” (reference to the saints; v. 14).<sup>43</sup> In all three cases, the saints are victorious. In the first instance, the two witnesses are resurrected by the Spirit of God and ascend to heaven in a cloud (11:11-12). In the second, the Lamb stands on Mount Zion with the 144,000 who have his Father’s name written on their foreheads, a sign of their victory (14:1).<sup>44</sup> And in the last instance the Lamb and those who are with him overcome the beast and the ten kings (17:14).

Table 3: Comparison of Three Portraits

| Rev 11                                  | Rev 13  | Rev 17  |
|---|---|---|
| Beast which rises from the abyss (v. 7) | Beast rising from the sea (v. 1)  | Beast about to rise from abyss (v. 8)   |
|   | 7 heads 10 horns (v. 1)   | 7 heads 10 horns (v. 3)   |
|   | Blasphemous names (v. 1)  | Blasphemous names (v. 3)  |
|   | 10 crowns on its horns  |   |
|   | One head received death blow; death blow healed (v. 3)  | 1. Beast “was, is not, and is about to rise from the abyss” (v. 8a)<br>2. Beast “was, is not, and shall be” (v. 8b) |
|   | 1. Whole world “wondered” after the beast (v. 3)<br>2. Earth dwellers whose names not written in Lamb’s book “worshipped” the beast (v. 4, 8) | Earth dwellers whose names not written in Lamb’s book will “wonder” (v. 8)  |
| Beast kills the two witnesses (v. 7)    | Beast war against the saints and overcomes them (vv. 7, 10)   | Beast and 10 horns war against the Lamb and “those that are with him” (v. 14)                                       |

43. Cf. Yarbro Collins, “Political Perspective,” 248, who notes, “those that are with him” refers to the saints.

44. Rev. 13:1-14:5 is to be considered a single pericope. Those with the Father’s name are those who do not have the mark of the beast and are therefore victorious over the beast (Cf. 15:2, 22:4).

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| Two witnesses<br>resurrected and<br>ascends to heaven<br>(v. 11) | 144,000 with the Lamb standing on<br>Mount Zion (14:1) | Lamb and “those with him”<br>overcomes beast and ten kings (v. 14) |
|--|--|--|

Therefore, based on all of these points of convergence, the beasts of 11:7, 13:1-10, and 17:3-18 are to be understood as complimentary descriptions of the same entity and its activities. The conclusion that the beasts in Chapters 11, 17 and 13 are to be equated will facilitate our understanding of the conceptual framework of the beast and the temporal implications of its analysis.

### 6.3. *The Beast from the “Great Sea”*

I have stated above that Revelation 13:1 should read, “And *I* stood upon the sand of the sea.” Despite the textual variant here, I have suggested that John’s duplication of the theophanic scene of Daniel and Ezekiel standing on the banks of rivers is a strong indication that John is also duplicating their topographical location, and hence he (and not the dragon) is the one standing on “the sand of the sea.” In any case, John’s location on the island of Patmos puts him right in the middle of the Mediterranean or the “Great Sea,” even while he is standing on the shore. And it is this body of water from which John, in vision, sees the monstrous beast emerging. I have already pointed out that the setting for Daniel’s vision of the four beasts is also the “great sea” or the Mediterranean.<sup>45</sup> And based on the many parallels between Daniel and John which I have outlined in the previous chapter, I maintain that John’s visionary episode on the shore of the Mediterranean is far from coincidental. While Daniel saw the Great Sea in his vision, John is physically on the banks of the same. John’s physical presence on the banks of the Mediterranean intimates another direct

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45. Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, 160.

correspondence between his vision of the beast and that of Daniel's.

#### 6.4. *Conceptualizing the Beast*

Paralleling the description in Daniel, where “four great beasts came up from the sea” (τέσσαρα θηρία μεγάλα ἀνέβαινον ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης, Theod; 7:3), John also sees “a beast coming up out of the sea” (ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον; 13:1). Like Daniel's beasts, which are said to be “like a lion” (ὥσεὶ λέαινα), “like a bear” (ὅμοιον ἄρκω), and “like a leopard” (ὥσεὶ πάρδαλις), John's beast is “like a leopard” (ὅμοιον παρδάλει), its feet “like a bear” (ὡς ἄρκου), and its mouth is like a “lion” (ὡς στόμα λέοντος). The reverse presentation of the same sequence of animals is a *deliberate* intimation of the schematic outline in Daniel 7. Yet unlike Daniel's beasts which rise in succession, John's imagery presents a conglomerate beast with the primary characteristics of Daniel's beasts. Based on the schemata presented in Daniel, the beast of Revelation 13 has 7 heads as a result of the conflation of the all the heads of Daniel's beasts. The math looks like this: 1 + 1 + 4 + 1 = 7. Visually, the beast has one head of a lion, one head of a bear, four heads of a leopard, and one head of the dreadful beast which combines elements from all of the three previous beasts. The description that the beast is “like a leopard” means that its body is leopard-like since its mouth is lion-like and its feet are bear-like. The ten horns of the fourth beast of Daniel are incorporated into this last animal as well. Therefore, the ten horns exist *only* on the fourth beast, which in Revelation's schema would be equated with the the seventh head.

It is important to remember that one of the primary concerns here is to show that the conflation of the beasts of Daniel 7 in the Book of Revelation is a deliberate amalgamation of the thematically related contexts of Daniel 2 and 7. As noted in the previous chapter, Beale and Fekkes point out that this type of thematic amalgamation is a

deliberate intertextual strategy which occurs quite frequently in the book. Therefore, I propose that "seeing" the beast is helpful in understanding how the two Danielic contexts are merged in the singular beast.<sup>46</sup> The visual rendering of the beast which follows below is not an indication of what "the beast" looks like precisely. Naturally, it is impossible to know what the beast may have looked like for John while in vision. Accordingly, I make no claim to have replicated "the beast" here. Rather, the purpose in supplying a visual concept of the beast (and other visual aids), is suggestive of what the beast might have looked like, but more importantly, it is to help the reader envision how the two contexts of Daniel inhere in the beast of Revelation 13.

Picture 1: Visual Concept of the Beast



### 6.5. *The Singular Concept of the Beast*

If it is the case, as I have argued, that Revelation's sea beast directly corresponds to the historical schema represented by the image of Daniel 2 and the four beasts of Daniel 7, then

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46. Which is precisely what Morris, *Revelation*, 161, says John does not wish for the reader to do. I suggest, contrarily, that one should not rule the possibility that a clearer portrait of the beast can



how does its conceptual arrangement cohere with the Danielic periodization? First, in Daniel 2, the four kingdom schema is envisioned as a *singular* entity. The succession of each kingdom does not destroy the previous one; rather, the entire statue is pulverized in a singular instant by the divine kingdom. I am suggesting that it is *specifically* this singular, organic concept found in Daniel 2 which provides cohesion for the amalgamated beast of Revelation 13, rather than John's attempt to focus on the singular, contemporary Roman Empire.<sup>47</sup>

Secondly, based on Daniel 7:12, the first three beasts are *still alive* during the dominion of the final beast; succession of dominion does not affect their existence, similar to the image of Daniel 2.<sup>48</sup> The "living beasts" from Daniel 7 are merged together in Revelation 13 where the six heads of the first three beasts are *still alive in a single beast*, though dominion is clearly constrained to the seventh head and its ten horns. It should be noted again that this argument is based on the premise that Revelation's beast, which represents a recasting of Daniel's prophetic vision of the succession of world empires, fully respects the context of Daniel even while adapting Daniel's imagery in its retelling and expansion of the story. Like the singular image of Daniel 2 which presents a succession of particular world empires, so the singular beast-image of Revelation 13, presents a succession of world empires as a conceptual unit.

As in Daniel 2, where the entire statue is pulverized from the stone striking the feet and toes; and in Daniel 7, where all the beasts are given to the flames together, even so in Revelation, the beast with its 7 heads and ten horns is thrown into the lake of fire as a whole (19:20; 20:10). In a word, Revelation's recasting of what it understands to be the exact

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47. See discussion above (section 3) where Aune, Yarbo Collins, and Bauckham suggest that it is John's desire to emphasize the singular, immediate Roman Empire which drives John to amalgamate the beast images from Daniel 7.

48. See again, Goldingay, *Daniel*, 166, who writes "The vision of Daniel 2 pictures the whole statue being destroyed at once. Here, similarly, all four creatures lose authority together."

schematization of Daniel, suggests that Revelation and Daniel are in a prophetic dialogue—and one which presupposes the mediating and unifying work of the Spirit. Thus, the Danielic concepts of an organic entity and living beasts merge in Revelation’s sea beast. And as we will see in the following chapter, the merging of these two analogous concepts will necessitate that Revelation find a middle ground in its creative recasting of the prophetic schema.

Table 4: Daniel's Singular Image & Revelation's Amalgamated Beast



#### *6.6. The Ten Kings and the Little Horn*

A final way in which the two images blend together is in the conception of the “ten kings” and the “little horn.” In both Daniel 2 and 7 there is the parallel concept of the ten kings. But the schema in Daniel 2 ends with the “toes of the feet” without mentioning any

additional entities. Only the nuptial activities of the ten kings and their attempt to weld together the kingdom are described in Daniel 2. Daniel 7 goes further, however, in introducing the personality of the little horn. In fact, the little horn becomes the central focus of the vision in comparison to the other beastly entities. In addition to uprooting three of the other horns in its rising up (τοῦ ἀναβάντος, LXX Theod, Dan 7:20), the little horn: (1) is given “authority” to continue for “a time, times and half a time” (7:25); (2) uses its mouth to speak great things against the Most High (στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα; LXX Theod, Dan. 7:8); and (3) it wages war against the saints and overcomes them (7:21). The unitary concept of “ten kings” from Daniel 2 and the details about the “little horn” of Daniel 7 are merged together in Revelation’s sea beast. Revelation describes the beast as having ten horns and goes into much detail about the activities of these ten kings (Rev. 17:12-17). Revelation does not depict a “little horn” in regard to the ten horns. However, the beast itself in Revelation 13 embodies all the attributes of the little horn.

Like the little horn of Daniel, the beast: (1) receives authority to continue for 42 months (13:5);<sup>49</sup> (2) speaks great things and blasphemies against God (13:6); and (3) wages war against the saints and overcomes them (13:7). The little horn is therefore implicit in the action of the beast: the beast and the little horn are therefore synonymous. Again, the merging of the two Danielic allegories necessitates a creative re-rendering of the “little horn” and the unitary concept of the ten kings. When it is understood that Daniel 2 and 7 are conflated in Revelation’s sea beast, a clearer picture emerges regarding the temporal movement between the three portraits of the beast (Rev 11:7, 13:1-3, and 17:7-17). After some concluding remarks, the temporal implications of the beast schematization in dialogue with select Patristic sources will occupy us in the penultimate chapter.

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49. We have already noted that “time, times and half a time,” “forty two months” and “twelve hundred and sixty days” are parallel ways to set forth the same time period.

## 7. Conclusion

This chapter has been about establishing that the amalgamated beast in Revelation 13 reflects a deliberate strategy seen elsewhere in the book. The programmatic conflation of thematically related Old Testament images seen in the "one like a Son of Man" figure (Rev 1:10-20), and in the caricature of "Babylon the Great" (Rev 17-18), among others, is also operant in the sea beast symbolism of the Apocalypse. That the four beasts of Daniel 7 provided the conceptual material for the synthesis of the beast in Revelation 13 has been noted by many scholars. What has not been explored, however, is the perspective that the conflation of Daniel's beasts in Revelation 13 also depends conceptually upon another thematically related context in Daniel, namely the singular image of Chapter 2. Neither has much thought been given to the possibility that an understanding of the Old Testament intertextual and theological contexts to which the beast symbolism alludes, may provide needed guidance in its interpretation in the Apocalypse. Exploring the visual contours of the sea beast in Revelation with respect to its referent in Daniel 7, suggests that the seven heads of the beast are specifically: one head of a lion, one head of a bear, four heads of a leopard, and a single "dreadful and terrible" head. Furthermore, seen in dialogue with Daniel 7, the conceptual framework of the sea beast, suggests that the ten horns are located specifically and only on the seventh head in Revelation, which from Daniel's perspective represents the fourth beast. All of these heads share a singular body, which has characteristics of all the four beasts of Daniel.

It is to be recognized that conflation based on thematic similarity is not unique to Revelation, but finds its precedence in Daniel 7. That the fourth beast of Daniel 7 is said to have "iron teeth" and "claws of bronze" (Dan 7:7, 19) in reference to the iron and bronze of the image of Daniel 2, signals a synthesis which invites the reader to examine the fourth beast of Daniel 7 in relationship to the image of Daniel 2. Such is the logic in this study in reference to Revelation 13: the amalgamated beast invites the reader to examine afresh the

Old Testament intertextual context which it recalls in order to gain a deeper insight into its visual framework, its function, and its theological implications. It is the view of this writer that the synthesis of the two Danielic historical schematizations, invites the reader to envision a similar historical schema in Revelation's beast. When it is understood that both Daniel 2 and 7 are about the succession of a specific set of world empires, it becomes reasonable to infer that the conflation of these two Danielic contexts in Revelation, far from diminishing attention to history, as some scholars assert, is meant to re-render this original historical outline, and thus *amplifies* attention to a particular aspect of history. In short, the beast is shaped intertextually and therefore theologically from the *canonical* context of Daniel. The next chapter looks more closely at the function of the beast in its context in Revelation, and also explores one major approach to its interpretation in the early church—one which coheres with the inference of this study.

# The Beast as an Historical Schema

## I. Introduction

While the previous chapter sought to explain the *intertextual* relationship between the amalgamated beast of Revelation 13 and the image and beasts of Daniel 2 and 7 respectively, the current chapter builds on the previous by establishing *intratextual* links which further unpacks the meaning of the beast symbolism in the Apocalypse. Such intratextual connections are found primarily in Chapters 11:7, 13:1-10, and 17:3-17. The investigation here suggests that the function of the sea beast in the narrative of Revelation shows no concern with a contemporary myth about Nero's return. Rather, as a creatively crafted historical schema, the symbolic beast reflects an identical conceptualization of history as the Danielic contexts from which this image has been synthesized. Such a view of the beast symbolism is consonant with the dominant tradition of interpretation of the four-kingdom schema of Daniel 2 and 7, which existed in Christianity from the early church period up to modern times. The chapter concludes with the suggestion that this traditional interpretation, which has been displaced by contemporary historical views, warrants a reconsideration for any approach which aims to take the canonical context of Revelation seriously.

## 2. Discerning Temporality and Historical Periodization in the Beast

In positing that the 7 heads and ten horns of the sea beast in Revelation 13 represent a historical outline identical to Daniel 2 and 7, I trace the temporal movements between the phases of the historical schema in Revelation, noting five important conclusions: (1) the portrait of the beast in Chapter 17 specifically outlines the Danielic schematization; (2) Chapter 17 also emphasizes the activities of the "ten kings," in much the same way that Daniel 2 does; (3) temporally, the schematic outline in Chapter 17 anticipates that of

Chapter 13; (4) the portrait of the beast in Chapter 13 represents the final phase of the historical schema; and (5), as the final phase of the historical period, the beast in Chapter 13 represents not only the fourth kingdom of Daniel, but specifically the "little horn" of Daniel 7 and the eschatological opponent of the Lamb. The argument here is that, without changing Daniel's schematic outline, Revelation's creatively amalgamates the Danielic symbols in order to amplify and affirm the divine narrative regarding the final consummation of history. We look first at Revelation 17.

### 2.1. *Revelation 17: Establishing a Historical Location*

Most historical critical commentaries understand from Revelation 17:10 that John is writing during the reign of the 6th emperor (the one which *is*). What is usually open to debate is where to begin counting Roman emperors.<sup>1</sup> I would like to propose that Revelation 17:10 does not indicate *real time* vis-à-vis John's writing, but rather his time and place *in vision*, which is really a key transition point in the Danielic historical outline. It is important to understand first where John is, *as per the narrative*, when he "sees" the harlot and the beast.<sup>2</sup> In order to provide him with a panoramic view of the harlot and the beast which carries her, John says of his angel guide: "So *he carried me away* (ἀπὴνέγκέ με) *in the spirit* into a wilderness" (17:3). There are three other instances in which John is "in the spirit" (1:10; 4:1; and 21:10), and in two of these he is transported to a new visionary location. In 21:10 John is "carried away" again "in the spirit to a mountain great and high" in order to get a glimpse of the Lamb's wife, the antithesis of the beast's harlot. For John, the act of being transported

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1. Charles, *Revelation of St. John*, 2:69, writes, "This source was probably written, therefore, under the sixth emperor." Charles begins with Augustus, and eliminates Galba, Otho, and Vitellius based on Suetonius' description of their reign as "rebellio trium principum." Aune, *Revelation*, 2:949, writes: "The phrase 'one is living' appears to suggest that the person who formulated this statement was contemporaneous with the sixth king and wrote during his reign." Both Charles and Aune source critical approach maintains that the composition of Revelation reflects multiple sources and authorial hands.

2. This is an example of reading the text according to its narrative assumption and not according to contemporary historical expectation.

in the Spirit bears not only spatial, but also temporal implications. So, while John is carried away spatially to the great mountain in order to see the New Jerusalem coming down from heaven, the implication is that John is transported in the spirit *temporally* to a future time when the heavenly city will descend to earth. Similarly, in 4:1 John hears a voice which says, “come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this”; and “immediately I was in the spirit” (4:2). In this scene John is not only transported spatially to the heavenly throne room, but temporally as well since he is to witness “what must happen after this.” And again, in 1:19 John is instructed to write “the things which you have seen, the things which are, and the things which will be after this.” The implication here is of past, present and future.

## 2.2. *Discerning Temporality in the Beast*

Wherefore, when John is “carried away” to the wilderness “in the spirit,” from the narrative perspective, he is no longer on Patmos during the first century. Rather, he is taken to a visionary location where he sees all three temporal aspects of the beast (past, present and future) in panoramic view. When the interpretation which the angel relates to John is seen from this visionary, and not John's real-time setting, then another way of seeing the significance of 17:10 emerges. In explaining the meaning of the seven heads of the beast, the angel tells John they conceal a double meaning. In addition to being seven mountains on which the woman sits, they are also seven kings (v. 9):

Of which five are fallen, one is, the other is not yet come; and when he does come, it is necessary for him to remain a little while (v. 10).

Again, it is important to observe that this beast is seen from three perspectives: the past, the present, and the future. Five are in the past, one is present, and one is yet to come. But again, the “present” is *not the historical moment of John's writing* since, as I pointed out, John is *carried away* temporally. From this vantage point, the angel projects two “phases” of the



beast as being yet future. Therefore, John is transported to the past, specifically *to the temporal location of the sixth head*.<sup>3</sup> John's positioning at this historical location is a crucial point of emphasis because the sixth head represents the final phase of the third kingdom. Hence, John is placed at a key transition point in the historical schema so that he can witness the emergence of the seventh head, which is the fourth and final historical kingdom, the one that is of primary interest in both of Daniel's schemata. From this position, John "sees" the future activities of the final two phases of the last kingdom. Importantly, it is necessary (δεῖ) for the seventh head to remain (μεῖναι), or to wait for a little while. The verb here may bear the idea of anticipation or waiting for someone.<sup>4</sup> In other words, it is not the last in the sequence. The emphasis is decidedly on the eighth "head" which follows the seventh.

### *2.3. Outlining the Historical Schema*

Next, the angel explains:

And the beast that was and is not, he is an eighth but he belongs to the seven,  
and he goes to destruction (17:11).

I have already noted in the previous chapter that the future appearance of the beast is equivalent to its rising from the abyss.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, according to this verse, when the beast rises from the abyss it is also an "eighth" belonging to the seven. There is a three-way intratextual parallelism here: the future appearance of the beast is the same as the rising of the beast from the abyss, which is the same as its appearing as the "eighth-of-the-seven." The following illustrates this parallel.

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3. This view is in contrast to virtually all commentators who usually assume that the sixth king is contemporary with John. See for instance, Collins, "Historical Reviews," 339.

4. "μένω," BDAG 630. The verb μένω also bears the idea of anticipation in the sense of to *wait* for someone.

5. See section 6.2 of the previous chapter.

1. the beast “was, is not, and **is about to rise** μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου **from the abyss**” (v. 8a)

2. the beast “was, is not, and **shall be**” (v. 8b) παρέσται

3. the beast that was and is not, **he is an eighth** ὀγδοὺς ἐστὶν καὶ ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐστὶν but he belongs to the seven (v. 11)

As per the above equation, in the beast’s future appearance from the abyss it rises as an eighth but is still constituted in the previous seven. Put another way, the eighth beast is still somehow part of the seven because even though he is an “eighth” his appearance does not warrant the depiction of an eighth head. Therefore, there are a total of eight “phases” to the beast, but only seven visible “heads.” According to the schema, the eighth must be related to the preceding one most directly, though the text itself places him in relation to “the seven.” From this line of arguments, the translation rendered by the NASB and NEB is rather accurate: “he is one of the seven.”<sup>6</sup> It is also important to see that the conflation of the metaphors from Daniel 2 and 7 in Revelation’s beast necessitates the use of heads to depict the successive periods rather than individual beasts.<sup>7</sup> The fusion also means that the typical four divisions of history seen in Daniel 2 and 7 are re-presented in Revelation as 7 periods. Yet, the seventh period in Rev 17, which represents the fourth kingdom of Daniel is presented in two phases, as the diagrams below demonstrate.

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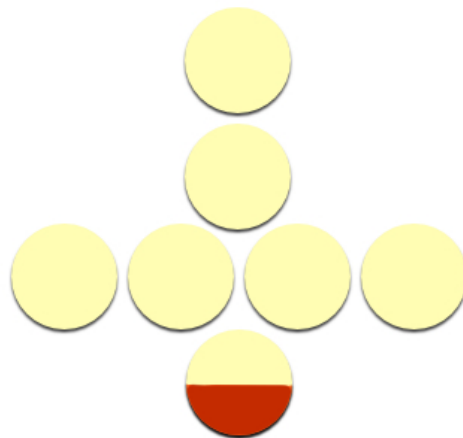
6. See Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 405, who also notes that the eighth “is one of the seven recurring as a kind of final excess of evil.” Cf. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 175-76.

7. In response to Bauckham’s [*Climax of Prophecy*, 404] rationale that John’s use of a head instead of a horn to depict the antichrist indicates the “free use” or non-contextual use of Daniel, I suggest rather that the use of a head instead of a horn is on account of the merging of the two metaphors of Daniel Chapters 2 and 7. John now uses heads to represent historical periods due to this fusion. The wings of the first and third beasts of Daniel 7 are not needed because they emphasize aspects of the first and third kingdoms, and these are not the focus in Revelation. There is in a sense a “free use” of the symbols of Daniel, in so far as these images are adapted in Revelation. But the adaptation of the images from Daniel does not automatically mean that John does not respect the context in Daniel.

Table 5: Historical Schemata Comparison

| Image                     | Beasts                        | Heads                                  |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Gold                      | Lion                          | First head                             |
| Silver                    | Bear                          | Second head                            |
| Bronze                    | Leopard                       | Third, fourth, fifth, sixth heads      |
| Iron                      | Dreadful beast                | Seventh head                           |
| Ten Toes of Iron and Clay | Ten horns + Little Horn       | Ten horns + “Eighth-of-the-seven” head |
| Stone Kingdom             | Kingdom "Son of Man" & Saints | King of the Lamb and the Saints        |

Figure 1: Diagramming the Heads



As noted in Daniel 2, the fourth kingdom exists in two phases, and it is the 2nd phase which occupies the bulk of the attention there, specifically the ten horns. Similarly, it is the second phase which gets the lion's share of ink in Daniel 7, specifically the little horn. In the same way, it is the ten kings along with the “eighth-of-the-seven” head which are the central focus of Chapter 17—not the previous seven heads. For example, the others are dealt with very summarily in only a single verse! The first six kingdoms are dismissed with

literally six words: οἱ πέντε ἔπεσαν, ὁ εἷς ἔστιν. The seventh is given marginal focus: ὁ ἄλλος οὕπω ἦλθεν, καὶ ὅταν ἔλθῃ ὀλίγον αὐτὸν δεῖ μέναι. By contrast, the ten horns and the beast from the abyss together account for verses 3, 8, 11-14, 16-17. Without a doubt, it is the final phase of this history which is of central interest to the two Danielic schema as well as to their parallel in Revelation.

### 3. The “Eighth-of-the-Seven”

#### 3.1. *Anticipating the “Eighth”*

We will now take a closer look at this final phase of the historical schema noting again Revelation 17:8, 12:

The beast which you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise up from the abyss and go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth, whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, will be marvelled when they see the beast, because it was and is not and shall be (v. 8).

And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings which have not yet received a kingdom, but they will receive authority (ἐξουσίαν) as kings for one hour, together with the beast (v. 12).

The key indication from verse 12 is that the ten horns have yet to receive their kingdom and authority as kings; this is to happen *together* with the beast. As a result of their being identified together, whenever the beast from the abyss receives its authority, the ten horns will also receive their “kingdom.” Both the beast and the kings will receive authority (ἐξουσίαν) *at the same future time*. Therefore, it should be inferred that the rising of the beast from the abyss or its future appearance is the moment it receives its authority (and kingdom) since its appearance elicits the admiration of the earth-dwellers according to 17:8. Therefore, the future orientation of the activities of the beast from the abyss and the ten horns is very clear from Chapter 17. Note the future orientation of the following verbs and

phrases: (1) the verbs μέλλει ἀναβαίνει (about to rise); (2) the verb παρέσται (will be); (3) the verb θαυμασθήσονται (they will be amazed) in describing the reaction of the earth-dwellers; (4) the phrase “not yet received a kingdom” (οἳτινες βασιλείαν οὐπω ἔλαβον); and (5) the verb λαμβάνουσιν (they will receive) with respect to the ἐξουσίαν (authority) which the kings are to receive. All of these are future tenses and indicators of the activities of the eighth beast and the ten horns.

Additionally, in looking at the “rising” in the three portraits of the beast, the verbal tenses are to be noted:

11: 7 τὸ θηρίον τὸ ἀναβαῖνον ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου

17: 8 τὸ θηρίον...μέλλει ἀναβαίνειν ἐκ τῆς ἀβύσσου

13:1 ἐκ τῆς θαλάσσης θηρίον ἀναβαῖνον

In the first instance, the present, articular participle in the nominative (τὸ ἀναβαῖνον) renders the phrase, “the beast **which rises up** from the abyss.” In the second example, the verb “about to” (μέλλει) with the present, indicative infinitive renders the phrase, “the beast...**about to rise up** from the abyss.” In the third instance, the present, active participle in the accusative (ἀναβαῖνον), renders the phrase “a beast **rising up** from the sea.” No specific temporality is indicated in 11:7; a future temporality is seen in 17:8; and present action is discernible in 13:1. It is reasonable to deduce that the beast in Chapter 17 which is “about to rise up” from the abyss is the same beast which is seen “rising up” from the sea in 13:1, and the same beast which “rises up” from the abyss in 11:7. The beast of Chapter 13 is therefore the *anticipated* beast of chapter 17. Or, put another way, it is the anticipated final phase of the historical schema of Daniel 2 and 7, namely, *the divided fourth kingdom*. If this is the case, then its description and function must fulfill a number of points:

1. Functionally it must fit the bill as the “eighth-of-the-seven”:
  - A. It must be shown that it “was, is not” and now exists
  - B. Its appearance must elicit the “admiration” of the earth-dwellers
  - C. It must receive authority (and a kingdom)
2. The ten kings must also receive authority and a kingdom at the same time with the beast
3. It must be shown to be the final phase of the 4th kingdom of Daniel:
  - A. It must be equivalent to the “little horn” of Daniel 7
  - B. It must speak against the Most High
  - C. It must persecute and overcome the saints
  - D. It must exercise authority for “a time, times and half a time”
4. It’s destiny must finally be “destruction”:
  - A. All the kingdoms must finally be destroyed together in this beast

To avoid repeating what I have written, the points already covered will only be noted in brief.

### 3.2. *The Wounded Head*

With respect to the first point that the beast of Revelation 13 is indeed the eighth and final phase of the beastly schema depicted in Chapter 17, I have already pointed out in section 6.2 of the previous chapter that the “wounding and healing of one of its head” is equivalent to the description that the beast “was, and is not and shall be.” Many commentators have noted the equation between “the beast” and “one of its heads.”<sup>8</sup> The wounding of “one of its heads,” is the same as the wounding of “the beast” (cf. Rev 13:3, 12, 14). This is because the seventh head of Revelation’s beast is equivalent to the iron kingdom of Daniel 2 and the fourth beast of Daniel 7. The wounding of one of its heads, therefore, is the wounding of the seventh head, because the dominion is only being exercised by the fourth kingdom. Correspondingly, in the same way that the iron kingdom in Daniel 2 is “divided” and

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8. Minear, *New Earth*, 250; Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 175-76.

reconstituted in the admixture of iron and clay, so Revelation describes the “wounding” and restoration of the beast's seventh head to indicate the reconstitution of the fourth and final kingdom. This wounding and restoration is equivalent to the expression in Rev 17:8 that the beast “was and is not and shall be.” When Daniel “considers” the ten horns and the little horn in Chapter 7, this consideration marks a transition to the second phase of the fourth kingdom. Similarly, the rising of the beast from the sea or the abyss indicates the restoration of the fourth kingdom and the transition to its final phase.

According to 17:8, the earth-dwellers will be amazed when they witness that the beast “was, is not, and shall be.” And in 13:3 the earth-dwellers are both amazed at the healing of its wound and worshipped the recovered beast (13:4, 8). The parallel could not be more clear: the anticipation of admiration of the beast from the abyss in Chapter 17 is “fulfilled” in the admiration of the beast which rose from the sea in Chapter 13 (see Table 3 in previous chapter).

According to 17:12, the beast is to receive authority, and implicitly a kingdom, upon its rise from the abyss. In 13:2 the dragon gives him “his power, his throne and great authority” (τὴν δύναμιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐξουσίαν μεγάλην). That the recovered beast receives “the throne” of the dragon indicates that its authority is bound up with its kingship. The resurrected beast thus receives his anticipated authority and kingdom (cf. Rev. 16:10; 17:17). The recovery of the beast constitutes its most viral phase yet, because the dragon personally empowers it. Its recovery and subsequent military power elicits the worship of the earth-dwellers: “Who is like the beast? Who is able to make war with him?” (13:4).

### 3.3. *Crowns as Emblems of Authority and Markers of Temporality*

Commentators are often at a loss to explain the presence of the ten crowns on the beast in Chapter 13, and their absence in Chapter 17.<sup>9</sup> This symbol is usually given short shrift. But as per the argument here, however, there is good reason why the horns in Chapter 17 are not depicted with crowns: *they have not yet received their kingdom and authority* (v. 12). However, because they are to receive authority at the same time with the restored beast, it is expected that some kind of indication of their royal authority would convey their joint rulership with the beast. The crowns on the horns in Chapter 13 serve this purpose. The ten crowns on the horns of the beast indicate that both the ten horns and the beast have come into their royal estate, compliments of the angel of the abyss, the dragon. The beast and the horns are in co-operation. Indeed, the horns have “one mind” to give their “power and authority” to the beast and join him in his warfare against the saints and the Lamb (17:13-14).<sup>10</sup> Clearly, the resurrected beast is the more dominant because the ten kings give him their wholehearted support in his warfare against God. From the temporal movement between Chapter 17 and 13, it can be seen that instead of a coterminous relationship between the plot sequence and the narrative sequence, these two chapters show an inverse relationship between them: the beast of Chapter 13 is anticipated by that of Chapter 17, and the crowns on the horns in Chapter 13 indicate a temporal development from Chapter 17.

### 3.4. *The Recovered Beast as the “Little Horn”*

I have already argued that Revelation 17, especially verses 12-17, focuses principally on the activities of the ten horns. While Chapter 13 depicts ten crowns on the horns to show their solidarity with the beast, in reality this chapter is chiefly about the activities of the

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9. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 684, rightly understands them as emblems of universal authority, though he does not comment on their absence in Chapter 17.

10. The depiction of ten horns does not supplant the details of Daniel 7 wherein the “little horn” destroys three of the ten. But again, fidelity to the schema of Daniel 2 necessitates that exactly ten horns remain in the picture. The little horn is portrayed more profoundly as the recovered beast itself.



resurrected beast, who is to be specifically identified with the “little horn” of Daniel 7. Therefore, in accordance with Daniel 2, Revelation 17 focuses on the activities of the ten kings, and in accordance with Daniel 7, Revelation 13 concentrates on the actions of the “little horn”—even though the beast and the ten horns are shown in cooperation in both pericopes through the conflation of the two Danielic imageries. Furthermore, I have already noted above that the beast embodies all the major actions of the little horn of Daniel 7: (1) it speaks great things and blasphemies against the Most High (13:5); (2) it wages war against the saints and overcomes them (13:7); and (3) it exercises authority for 42 months (13:5), an intratextual parallel of the “time, times and half a time” of Daniel 7. “The beast” proper in Chapter 13 is therefore synonymous with the little horn of Daniel 7, shown in cooperation with the ten kings. It is also to be noted that, like the beast of Revelation 13, the little horn also “rises up” in Daniel 7:8 (ἀνέβη; LXX Theod).

Another point which must also be highlighted is the fact that the beast of Revelation 13 is in a double sense the “eighth.” First, he is the “eighth-of the seven” due to his identity with, though distinction from the “seven heads.” But as the “little horn” of Daniel 7, he is also the “eighth horn” among the “seven horns” because in its rising up it destroys three of the ten (Dan 7:24). It has been maintained in this thesis that the Danielic context is neither transgressed nor supplanted in Revelation, but instead is adapted and expanded in this latter context. Therefore, in reality there are really only seven horns (or kings) in Revelation and not ten, but in order to demonstrate fidelity to the context of Daniel in the programmatic conflation of Chapter 2 and 7, Revelation must necessarily and consistently render the beast symbolism with a unitary “ten” horns. Revelation anticipates, however, that the informed reader will know that the context in Daniel is fully respected and that only seven horns are in view. From this vantage point then, the double *entendre* of the “eighth-of-the-seven” is highly incisive. Moreover, Daniel 7:20 indicates that the “little horn” would be more “dominant” than the others, to the point where it is able to overcome three in its rising up.

That the little horn is identified as the resurrected beast, means that it, more so than the ten horns, represents the continuation of the fourth empire. In other words, its authority and power is more genetically akin to the first phase of the fourth empire than that of the ten horns. These horns maintain a supportive role.

Finally, many commentators have noticed the parody between Christ and the beast.<sup>11</sup> In Revelation 5:6 John sees a Lamb as “having been slaughtered” (ὡς ἐσφαγμένον); and in 13:2 John sees one of the heads of the beast as “having been slaughtered to death” (ὡς ἐσφαγμένην εἰς θάνατον). And in the same way that the Lamb is resurrected (implicit in its standing up), so too the beast recovers from its mortal wound. Furthermore, in Daniel 7:14, the “one like a Son of Man” receives “dominion, glory, and a kingdom” in order that “all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him,” but in Revelation 13:7-8, it is said of the beast:

It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation, and all the inhabitants of the earth will worship it, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb that was slaughtered (ἐσφαγμένον; Rev 13:7-8 NRSV).

Thus in the same way that the Ancient of Days ultimately bestows all power, glory and the kingdom to the “one like a Son of Man” (Dan 7:13-14), so too the dragon gives its throne and authority to the beast (Rev 13:2). And like the “one like a Son of Man” who receives worship, so too the beast receives worship from the tribes and nations. Nevertheless, those who worship the beast have not had their names written in the book of life of the Lamb who was slain. The beast and the Lamb are direct antithesis, but the beast parodies or imitates the Lamb and secures the worship of the earth-dwellers. The saints worship the Lamb while the earth-dwellers worship the beast. Revelation thus adds new dimensions to the “little horn” of Daniel, making it more emphatic that this beast seeks to take the place

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11. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 689; Yarbro Collins, *Combat Myth*, 174.

of Christ.

### *3.5. The Destruction of the Beast and the Little Horn*

In Daniel 2, the stone which is cut of the mountain “without human hands” smashes the image specifically on the feet and toes and pulverizes the entire image (Dan 2:35, 44-45). In Daniel 7, the convening of the divine judgement results in the dominion of the little horn being taken away and the beast being destroyed by fire (Dan 7:11, 26). We have already concluded that all four beasts are destroyed together at the same moment, even though the lives of the previous three are prolonged for a specified time. In Daniel 7, the domain previously usurped by the little horn and its counterparts is turned over to the “one like the Son of Man” and to the saints of the Most High (7:13-14, 22, 27). The same divine judgement and singular destruction of the beast is also evident in Revelation. First, Revelation twice notes that this beast “goes to perdition” (εἰς ἀπώλειαν; 17:8, 11). The subtle connection to Paul’s “son of perdition” (ὁ υἱὸς τῆς ἀπωλείας; 2 Thess 2:3) should not be missed here, since the same agent is in view in both instances.<sup>12</sup> If Revelation is re-rendering Daniel 7’s antichrist and Paul in 2 Thess is doing the same, it is not surprising then that many Patristic

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12. I am not suggesting a literary dependence on Paul here (I assume for our present purpose that Paul is the writer of 2 Thessalonians), but rather that both Revelation and 2 Thessalonians share the same theological history, or tradition of interpretation regarding the “little horn” of Daniel. For example, Paul’s “man of sin” is empowered by Satan to perform marvelous signs and miracles, by which he deceives those who do not love the truth. He sits in the temple of God, as if he were God, and receives worship (2 Thess 2:3-12). Clearly, this man of sin fits the description of the beast in Revelation 13 and 17 in many respects. The beast of Revelation too is empowered by Satan, usurps divine authority by receiving worship, and (in cooperation with the earth-beast) deceives those who dwell on the earth (Rev 13:3-18). That the beast goes to “perdition” in Revelation 17 and that the man of sin is also called the “son perdition,” is but one of many parallels between these two entities in Revelation and 2 Thessalonians. According to 2 Thess 2:8, at the Second Coming, Jesus destroys the “man of sin” by the “breath of his mouth,” and in Rev 19:19-21, the beast and his army are assembled to war against the Rider on the white horse, but are destroyed by “sword” which “proceeds from his mouth.” This parallel is not incidental. It is noteworthy that right after reminding the Thessalonians of what they had previously learned of him in regards to the man of sin, Paul adds, “Therefore brothers, stand fast and hold firm to the traditions which you have been taught” (2 Thess 2:15). It is clear that this tradition was believed among the churches wherever Paul’s epistles were read. The presence of such a teaching in the Apocalypse, albeit more symbolic, is not surprising since as I have maintained, there is a shared history of interpretation between Revelation and much of the New Testament writings.

interpreters understood Revelation's beast in relationship to Paul's man of sin, as we shall see.<sup>13</sup> Next, I pointed out in Chapter 4 that the “mystery of God” would be completed at the sounding of the seventh trumpet, as announced to “his servants the prophets” (Rev. 11:7). When the seventh trumpet sounds, a “great voice” is heard in heaven announcing, “The kingdom of this world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev 11:15). In the same scene, the elders announce further outcomes of the judgement:

The nations were angry, but your anger has come, and the time for the dead to be judged, and to give reward to your servants the prophets, and to the saints and to those who fear your name, both small and great, and *to destroy those who destroy the earth* (Rev 11:18, emphasis added).

Like Daniel 7, the outcome of the judgement includes the bestowal of the kingdom to the Messiah and the rewarding of the holy ones who fear God. In true Danielic fashion, the Messiah and the saints receive the kingdom for eternity. But the outcome of the judgement also includes the arrival of God's wrath and the destruction of “those who destroy the earth.” In Daniel 7, it is the fourth beast who notoriously “devours the whole earth,” “breaks it in pieces,” and “stamps the residue with its feet.” And in Daniel 7 it is this beast which is singled out for judgement and destruction. In the same way, Revelation's judgement condemns this beast specifically (the seventh head), but it also entails the destruction of all the beasts with it. Fittingly, when the “Word of God” who executes the “wrath of God” rides out from heaven in Revelation 19:11 to take possession of the kingdom, the beast and its armies are prepared to wage war against him (19:19). Nevertheless, like the

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13. According to a long-standing tradition of interpretation, in 2 Thessalonians 2:6-7, Paul is referring to the division of the Roman Empire, the power which now “restrains” the appearance of the man of sin. Cf. David M. Whitford, “The Papal Antichrist: Martin Luther and the Underappreciated Influence of Lorenzo Valla,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 61 (2008): 36; Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse*, 25. While this traditional interpretation has been wholly rejected by current Pauline scholarship (so Charles A. Wannamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 250), in my view, such an interpretation is consonant with what we have seen so far from the exegesis of Revelation 13 and 17.

image in Daniel 2, he “shatters them like clay pots” (2:27; 19:15). The beast is taken and is condemned to the lake of fire along with the other villains (19:20; 20:10), and his army is slain by “the sword... which proceeds from his mouth” (Rev 19:21). Thus ends the quest of earthly rulers for perpetual dominion.

The final section of this chapter will look at the hermeneutical implications of what we have discovered thus far in light of the New Testament and Patristic interpretations of the Danielic historical timeline.

#### 4. Interpreting the Symbolism of the Sea Beast

##### 4.1. *Whose Interpretation?*

Since this study has proposed that the historical schema outlined in Revelation exactly parallels that of Daniel, a pertinent historical question is, how should Daniel’s schematization be understood in light of Revelation’s reproduction of it? Most scholars would agree that the “original” (and therefore “true”) meaning of the four-kingdom schema as presented in Daniel are *ex-eventu* prophecies intended to bring perspective to the terrors of Antiochus IV, the then ruler of the fourth kingdom—Greece.<sup>14</sup> The prophecies of Daniel have been subsequently “reinterpreted” in the New Testament and later period and applied to the new religio-political threat of Rome.<sup>15</sup> Although the interpretation of Daniel’s four-kingdom schema is another issue which the scope of this thesis does not allow to be explored in detail, I would at least like to look at how I believe Revelation understands the historical application of this schematic outline in relation to Daniel.<sup>16</sup> I

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14. See James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*. (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1927), 62; Collins, *Daniel*, 72-90 .

15. For example, Childs, *New Testament*, 509-12.

16. Jan-Wim Wesseliuss, “The Writing of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception* (2 vols.; eds. John J. Collins, Peter W. Flint and Cameron VanEpps; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 291, notes for instance, “Scholarly ideas on the origin and writing of the book of Daniel are probably more diverse than for most other biblical or non-biblical books.... For many issues both extreme positions are defended by respectable scholars, with an

propose that Revelation's historical understanding of Daniel's four-kingdom schema is consonant with the rest of the New Testament, especially 2 Thessalonians 2, as well as with the major tradition of interpretation in the Patristic period, and beyond. Again, I am interested to show that there is a Christian consensus, a clearly attested tradition of interpretation—even though specifics vary—regarding the historical application of the four kingdom schema from the Book of Daniel.

With regard to Daniel's prophetic status in the Intertestamental and New Testament period, John Goldingay has pointed that, "For Josephus, as for the Greek Bible, Qumran, Jesus, and the NT writers, Daniel is a prophet and has similar authority to the prophets within the Hebrew canon, though we do not know when the bounds of this canon were established."<sup>17</sup> The same holds true for the Patristic period: the book of Daniel, as part of Hebrew canon, was virtually unquestioned in Christian circles.<sup>18</sup> Further, with regards to the interpretation of Daniel's four-kingdom periodization in the writings of the church Fathers, Goldingay continues, "There are *occasional* witness to the view that the four empires are Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece."<sup>19</sup> Whereas, "the interpretation of the empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome *predominates* among Christians as among Jews."<sup>20</sup> In light of this ancient consensus, it is pertinent to inquire if the New Testament and Patristic writers consciously undertook the task of *reinterpreting* the prophecies of Daniel, or did they believe that they were correctly *interpreting* these prophecies?

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outspokenness rarely found with respect to other problems in Hebrew Bible research."

17. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxx. Cf. Shepherd, *Daniel*, 67-68.

18. Cf. Baldwin, *Daniel*, 64.

19. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxxi, emphasis added.

20. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxxi, emphasis added.

#### 4.2. *Jesus and the New Testament on Daniel*

A brief look at the New Testament may provide clarity on this issue. The first thing to observe is that Jesus appropriates Danielic symbols and presuppose a Danielic timeline without qualification. For example, Jesus' self-address as the "Son of Man" is a direct appropriation of the phrase/title from Daniel 7:13.<sup>21</sup> And his statement "The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls" (Matt 21:44 NRSV; cf. Luke 20:18), is a claim that he is the stone of Daniel 2.<sup>22</sup> It is clear that Jesus appropriates the two key symbols of divine judgement from Daniel 2 and 7. Similarly, in Mark 1:15, his reference to "time" being "fulfilled" in relation to the "kingdom of God" is clearly an allusion to Daniel 2 and 7.<sup>23</sup> Thus, in the same way that Jesus claimed of Isaiah 61:1-2, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21), so he intimates that he is the fulfillment of the Danielic promise of divine reign. Yet, even after his resurrection, he tells the disciples not to concern themselves with the "times or seasons" (χρόνους ἢ καιροὺς; cf. Dan 7:12, LXX, χρόνου καὶ καιροῦ) regarding the establishment of the divine kingdom, since these were under the sole control of the Father (Acts 1:6-7). Therefore, while Jesus saw his mission as a fulfillment of the Danielic prophecies (and so for the rest of the Old Testament), he betrays an awareness of a timeline of salvation's history along which aspects of divine action and the ultimate realization of the divine kingdom still lie in the future.

Indeed, Jesus refers to his "coming with the clouds of heaven" as still future (Matt 24:30; 26:64; cf. Dan 7:13); the abominating desolation is still future (Matt 24:15; Mark 13:14; Luke 21:0; cf. Dan 8:13; 11:31; 12:11); the "time of trouble such as never was" still lies in the future (Matt 24:21; Mark 13:19; cf. Dan 12:1); and the resurrection of the dead is yet future

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21. See Dunn, "Book of Daniel," 528-49.

22. Cf. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxix.

23. Bruce, *The Canon*, 27; Evans, "Book of Daniel," 510-18.

(John 5:25-29; cf. Dan 12:2). For Paul also, the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead still lie in the future (1 Thess 4:13-18; 1 Cor 15:51-57). But more specifically for Paul, the coming of the Christ cannot happen before “the apostasia” and the appearance of the “man of sin,” since this would violate the Danielic timeline. Not only so, but Paul also speaks of an “appointed day” (ἔσθησεν ἡμέραν; Acts 17:31) for the judgement of the world which lies in the future. Correspondingly Revelation announces the arrival of the “hour” of God’s “judgement” (Rev 14:6) which, again, lies in the future.<sup>24</sup> In a word, the major eschatological events spoken of by Daniel, with reference to the historical location of Jesus and Paul, still lie in the future. Therefore, instead of reinterpreting the prophecies of Daniel, I propose that Jesus, Paul, the New Testament and the Patristic writers claimed the *exclusive right* to correctly interpret these prophecies, and so for all of Scripture (cf. 2 Pet 1:2; 3:16; 2 Tim 3:16; Gal 1:7).<sup>25</sup>

For example, the Gospels often portray a distinction between Jesus’ understanding of Scripture and that of the religious leaders of his day. According to Mark, Jesus viewed the Sadducees’ interpretation of Scripture, which denied the resurrection of the dead, as erroneous (Mark 12:18-24). And in the fourth Gospel, Jesus reprimands the religious teachers for their failure to see that the Scriptures bore unanimous testimony of himself (John 5:37-40; cf. Luke 24:24, 44). Indeed, it was the authoritative manner in which Jesus interpreted and appropriated the Scriptures which set his teachings markedly apart from that of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt 7:29; Mark 1:22). Outside of the Gospels, the letter

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24. It is important to note that both Paul’s notion of an appointed day for God’s judgement and Revelation’s announcement of the arrival of the judgement has important implications for “creation.” Paul’s speech on Mars Hill was much about the “God who created the world” (Act 17:24-26), and Revelation’s announcement of the judgement calls the inhabitants of the world to “worship Him who made heaven, earth, the sea and the fountains of waters” (Rev 14:6).

25. Thomas R. Hatina, “Jewish Religious Backgrounds of the New Testament: Pharisees and Sadducees as Case Studies,” in *Approaches to New Testament Study* (eds. Stanley E. Porter and David Tombs; Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 46-47, who notes that each Jewish sect of the first century CE—Samaritans, Essenes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Christians—respectively claimed to be “the true community of God in practice and belief,” and therefore that their respective interpretation of Scripture was the authentic version.



of 2 Peter not only denies a “private” interpretation of Scripture (1:20), but also affirms that it is possible to distort the Scriptures to one’s own destruction—even those Scriptures of Paul (3:16).<sup>26</sup> And lastly, as I already pointed out regarding the Patristic overseers, their whole notion of “orthodoxy” (implicit in their vehement denunciation of “heresy”) is predicated upon an interpretation of Scripture that is in accordance with a specific tradition of interpretation or “rule of faith.”<sup>27</sup>

From a New Testament perspective, therefore, not all interpretations are legitimate. There is the notion of a right interpretation, of which the “earliest” tradition may not be the correct one. In reference to pseudo-messiahs, Jesus says, “All who ever came before me are thieves and robbers...” (John 10:8). While examples abound of individuals who have used the Scriptures to support their messianic pretensions, as per the New Testament, there are no other genuine claimants, whether arriving before or after Jesus. True apostolic Christianity recognizes only one Messiah. There is, therefore, an exclusive claim in the Gospels that the Scriptures refer to Jesus, and this is shared with the rest of the New Testament and subsequent Christianity in an insistence of being in possession of *the* correct understanding of the Scriptures.

For this reason, the view that the New Testament reinterprets Daniel derives from the supposition that Daniel had an “original” interpretation in a second century B.C.E. crisis

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26. Note Josephus (J.W. 6.5.3) [William Whiston, ed., *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1987)] who laments that the destruction of Jerusalem was in part due to a misunderstanding of a prophecy: “Thus it was that the wretched people were deluded at that time by charlatans and pretended messengers of God; while they neither heeded nor believed in the manifest portents that foretold the coming desolation, but, as if thunderstruck and bereft of eyes and mind, disregarded the plain warning of God. So it was when a star, resembling a sword, stood over the city, and a comet which continued for a year.”

27. Irenaeus [*Adv. Haer.* 3.12.12 (ANF 1:435)], the prime example, takes issue with the Gnostics for their distorted interpretation of the Scriptures: “But all the rest, inflated with the false name of “knowledge,” do certainly recognize the Scriptures; but they pervert the interpretations, as I have shown in the first book.” Cf. Bruce, *The Canon*, 172, who notes concerning Patristic interpretation of Scripture: “Heretics might appeal to the text of scripture, but their interpretation was vitiated because it did not accord with the rule of faith—the summary of Christian teaching handed down in the apostolic tradition.”

situation wherein Antiochus IV persecuted the Jews. Such a view is not shared by the New Testament. Furthermore, that the New Testament and the majority of the Patristic writers still understood aspects of the four kingdom schema of Daniel to lie in the future, supports the argument that these writers did not understand themselves to be reinterpreters of Scripture, but rather interpreters of Scripture—and claimed exclusive rights to do so. Those who would interpret Scripture according to different principles than these were excluded from the faith (Tit. 3:10). Before turning directly to the major Patristic interpretation of the Danielic four-kingdom schema, an "interpretation" of the beast symbolism of Revelation 13 is proposed based on the preceding arguments.

#### *4.3. The Beast in the Context of Revelation 13*

According to the analysis outlined in the previous chapter, Revelation duplicates with strict fidelity the four-kingdom schema of Daniel 2 and 7. Like Daniel, John depicts a *specific*, *successive*, and *genetically related* set of world empires with their historical roots in Babylon. The schema pictures no gaps or breaks, but a *continuous unfolding* of historical development which culminates in divine intervention and the establishment of God's eternal kingdom. Like Daniel, John's interest lies principally in the fourth empire; but even more specifically in the second and final phase of this empire. John is taken back in time (Rev 17: 1) to the historical location of the final head of the third empire, in order witness the rise of the fourth (Rev. 17:10-12).

But this final empire is prophesied to receive a "wound by a sword," or a "death-blow" (13:3, 12, 14) from which it would recover to exercise universal dominion. This "wounding" is equivalent to the "division" of the fourth empire in Daniel 2 and the presence of the ten horns and the rise of the "little horn" on the fourth beast of Daniel 7. Thus, when Yarbro Collins states that "the beast in Rev 13:1-10 is best understood as the fourth kingdom of Daniel, reinterpreted to refer to Rome and the wounded head as Nero," I can

agree with the view that Revelation 13 does in fact have the fourth kingdom of Daniel in mind.<sup>28</sup> However, I contest that it is neither a reinterpretation of Daniel nor a reference to the wounding and resurrection of Nero. Instead, the depiction of the wounding and healing of the head of the beast is a portrait of the recovered fourth empire (or the very last phase of the schema), or “the beast from the abyss” with the support of the “ten kings” (Rev. 13:1-3; 17:8, 12; 11:7; cf. Dan 2:41-43; 7:8, 20-21). In short, it is the divided fourth empire. The beast from the abyss is identical to the “little horn,” the “man of sin,” the “son of perdition,” who usurps divine authority, while the ten horns (seven in reality) are “ten kings” who support him in his schemes. As per Daniel, this “little horn” is “different” from and more “dominant” than the others, possessing “eyes” and “a mouth” which utters “great words” against the Most High. The beast from the abyss parodies Christ and arrogates to himself divine privileges. But, he is really a ploy of Satan who is the real force behind its power. Its power and military ability elicits the worship of the dwellers of the earth. This power is to be destroyed by the returning Christ.

Like the vast majority of Patristic Christian interpreters of Daniel (see below), John identifies the fourth empire with Rome, and therefore the previous ones as Greece, Media-Persia and Babylon. They are identified as genetically related, with the three previous concentrated in the Roman Empire, the seventh head. The immediate implication of this is that the portrait of the beast in Revelation 13—the “eighth”—is *a prediction* of the division and recovery of Rome under a dominant spiritual head (known in Patristic interpretation as “the antichrist”) with the support of multiple political polities.

Though Rome recovers from its wound “by a sword” (Rev 13:14), it is forever to remain politically disunited. Unity is achieved only through the willing cooperation of the political polities with the spiritual head. The beast in Revelation 13 is identified then as a

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28. Yarbrow Collins, *Combat Myth*, 175.

“kingdom” and not merely a king. Revelation then puts in perspective that the “man of sin” is not a single individual, but as the final phase of the historical schema, “he” is to be identified with the divided and recovered Roman Empire, or the perennial spiritual head of the recovered Roman Empire. The ten (minus three) polities then lend support to this spiritual head, and together they constitute “the beast” of Revelation 13. According to this interpretation then, the beast of Revelation 13 functions as the final expression of the Danielic historical schema, depicting the amalgamation of the beast and the ten kings, or the religious and political unity of the recovered Roman Empire. As I show in this next section, a major tradition of interpretation in Christianity for nearly two millennia would more or less agree with this conclusion.

## 5. Patristic Interpretation of the Four Kingdoms

As noted above, the majority of Christians and Jews in the Patristic period understood Rome to be the fourth empire. This view persisted, as the majority view, well into the modern period.<sup>29</sup> But Christian interpreters also anticipated the division of the Roman Empire, into specifically ten kingdoms. While this majority view was first contested by the Neoplatonist Porphyry who understood the fourth kingdom to be Greece, in refuting Porphyry Jerome wrote, “We should therefore concur with the traditional interpretation of *all the commentators of the Christian Church*.”<sup>30</sup> For Jerome, writing in the fourth and fifth centuries, there was a unanimous tradition of interpretation in the Christian church regarding the prophecies of Daniel 2 and 7. One of the earliest church fathers to comment

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29. Travassos Valdez, *Historical Interpretations*, 295. It is important to note that the Patristic writers took it for granted that the the prophets, including John of Patmos, were witnesses of a common reality which included the past, present and future. Hippolytus of Rome, *Antichrist* 2 (ANF 5:5204), is typical of the Patristic writers: “For as the blessed prophets were made, so to speak, eyes for us, they foresaw through faith the mysteries of the word, and became ministers of these things also to succeeding generations, not only reporting the past, but also announcing the present and the future, so that the prophet might not appear to be one only for the time being, but might also predict the future for all generations, and so be reckoned a (true) prophet.”

30. Jerome, *Commentary*, 77, emphasis added.

on the Danielic four-kingdom periodization is Irenaeus bishop of Lyons (ca. 130/140–ca 200 A.D.), who wrote in the late second century.

### 5.1. *Irenaeus*

After outlining the traditional view of Daniel's fourth kingdom and its division, Irenaeus writes:

In a still clearer light has John, in the Apocalypse, indicated to the Lord's disciples what shall happen in the last times, and concerning the ten kings who shall then arise, *among whom the empire which now rules [the earth] shall be partitioned*. He teaches us what the ten horns shall be which were seen by Daniel.... It is manifest, therefore, that of these [potentates], he who is to come shall slay three, and subject the remainder to his power, and that he shall be himself the eighth among them.... For that *the kingdom must be divided*, and thus come to ruin.... It must be, therefore, that the kingdom, the city, and the house be divided into ten; and for this reason he has already foreshadowed the partition and division [which shall take place].... The ten toes, therefore, are these ten kings, among whom the kingdom shall be partitioned, of whom some indeed shall be strong and active, or energetic; others, again, shall be sluggish and useless, and shall not agree.<sup>31</sup>

Irenaeus' programmatic interpretation takes all Scripture to be speaking about the same prophetic realities. In this and other passages, he weaves together references from Daniel 2, 7-9; 2 Thess 2; Revelation 13 and 17; and even Jeremiah 8:16 to describe the activities of the fourth empire and the antichrist.<sup>32</sup> Without qualification, he asserts that what the former prophets have seen, John, "in a still clearer light" has also witnessed of the same realities. For Irenaeus then, the Apocalypse to John is a prophecy, in part, about the future division of the Roman Empire, which is to pave the way for the activities of the Antichrist. On this

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31. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.26.1 (ANF 1:1555), emphases added.

32. Cf. Oegema, "Book of Daniel," 244. Like most Patristic projections of the future antichrist, Irenaeus understands the mysterious figure to be of Jewish origin, arising specifically from the tribe of Dan; *Adv. Haer* 5.30.2 (ANF 1:559). Cf. Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 14 (ANF 5:207); Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary," 139.

last point, he writes further:

But, knowing the sure number declared by Scripture, that is, six hundred sixty and six, let them *await, in the first place*, the division of the kingdom into ten; then, in the next place, when these kings are reigning, and beginning to set their affairs in order, and advance their kingdom, [let them learn] to acknowledge that *he who shall come claiming the kingdom for himself*, and shall terrify those men of whom we have been speaking, having a name containing the aforesaid number, is truly the abomination of desolation.<sup>33</sup>

Again, one can see Irenaeus' strategy of interpreting Daniel and Revelation as a prophetic witnesses to the divinely determined unfolding of history. For Irenaeus the two prophetic books serve to inform each other, and the current Roman Empire, as per the prophetic forecast, is destined to be divided in order to pave the way for antichrist's arrival.

#### 5.2. Hippolytus

For Hippolytus (ca 170–236), too, the four kingdoms are Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.<sup>34</sup>

[T]he legs of iron, and the beast dreadful and terrible, expressed the Romans, who hold the sovereignty at present; the toes of the feet which were part clay and part iron, and the ten horns, were emblems of the kingdoms that are yet to rise; the other little horn that grows up among them meant the Antichrist in their midst; the stone that smites the earth and brings judgment upon the world was Christ.<sup>35</sup>

Anticipating the division of the Roman Empire he writes:

*As these things... are in the future*, and as the ten toes of the image are equivalent to (so many) democracies, and the ten horns of the fourth beast are distributed over ten kingdoms.<sup>36</sup>

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33. Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer.* 5.30.2 (ANF 1:1559), emphasis added.

34. Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 25 (ANF 5:5209).

35. Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 28 (ANF 5:5210).

36. Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 27 (ANF 5:5209–210).

*For this is the fourth beast, whose head was wounded and healed again, in its being broken up or even dishonoured, and partitioned into four crowns; and he then (Antichrist) shall with knavish skill heal it, as it were, and restore it.* For this is what is meant by the prophet when he says, "He will give life unto the image, and the image of the beast will speak."<sup>37</sup>

It is striking that Hippolytus recognizes the wounded and healed beast of Revelation 13 as the fourth beast of Daniel 7. Hippolytus again demonstrates a linear understanding of the prophecies of both Daniel and Revelation. For Hippolytus, the beasts of Revelation 13 are to be understood in relation to Daniel in a metanarrative sense. Rome will be divided into "democracies" and antichrist will heal and restore the divided empire.

### 5.3. Tertullian

Writing in the second and third centuries, the North African father, Tertullian (ca. 160-225), makes a clear connection with Daniel 2 and 2 Thessalonians in his historical interpretation of the arrival of antichrist:

What obstacle is there but the Roman state, the falling away of which, by being scattered into ten kingdoms, shall introduce antichrist upon (its own ruins)?<sup>38</sup>

Writing specifically with the Apocalypse in mind, he notes:

In the Revelation of John, again, the order of these times is spread out in view... that the city of fornication may receive from the ten kings its deserved doom, and that the beast Antichrist with his false prophet may wage war on the Church of God.<sup>39</sup>

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37. Hippolytus, *Antichrist* 49 (ANF 5:5214). For Hippolytus, "all the prophets" bear witness about the Antichrist, and John is the final voice among them; see Oegema, "Book of Daniel," 247.

38. Tertullian, *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* 24 (ANF 3:563).

39. Tertullian, *Resurrection* 25 (ANF 3:563).

That Tertullian understands a future fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel, 2 Thessalonians and Revelation in relation to the antichrist and the Roman Empire should be clear from the above.

#### 5.4. *Origen*

Origen (ca. 184-254), who is known for his allegorical interpretations of Scripture, does not hesitate to show that he believes in a historical fulfillment of the prophecies of Daniel. Like most commentators, Origen exegetes 2 Thessalonians in connection to Daniel's prophecies about antichrist. Following his exegesis of 2 Thessalonians, Origen writes:

The prophecy also regarding Antichrist is stated in the book of Daniel, and is fitted to make an intelligent and candid reader admire the words as truly divine and prophetic; for in them are mentioned the things relating to the coming kingdom, beginning with the times of Daniel, and continuing to the destruction of the world.<sup>40</sup>

#### 5.5. *Jerome*

Three important hermeneutical points of agreement between Jerome (ca. 331/347-420 C.E.) and Revelation will be noticed in the citations below. First, Jerome understands that the previous three empires are “concentrated” in the last and final one. Second, Jerome expects the division of the fourth empire before the activities of the ten kings and the little horn. And third, Jerome connects the little horn of Daniel 7 with the Pauline “son of perdition” (2 Thess 2:3). With regard to the conflation of the previous beasts into the fourth, Jerome writes:

“While they [previous three kingdoms] are *all included* in the one Empire of the Romans, we recognize at the same time those kingdoms which were previously

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40. Origen, *Against Celsus* 5.5 (ANF 4:547).



separate.”<sup>41</sup>

“In the earlier beasts he had seen various symbols of fright-fulness, but they were *all concentrated* in this one [the fourth beast].”<sup>42</sup>

*"In the one empire of the Romans, all the kingdoms at once are to be destroyed, because of the blasphemy of the Antichrist."*<sup>43</sup>

From the above, it is striking that Jerome understands that all the kingdoms are subsumed in a singular Roman Empire, from a prophetic standpoint, and are destined to be destroyed together. Jerome explains further the “traditional interpretation” of the Christian church in relation to the fourth empire and the antichrist:

[A]t the end of the world, when the Roman Empire is to be destroyed, there shall be ten kings who will partition the Roman world amongst themselves. Then an insignificant eleventh king will arise, who will overcome three of the ten kings.... Then after they have been slain, the seven other kings also will bow their necks to the victor... one of the human race, in whom Satan will wholly take up his residence in bodily form.... For this is the man of sin, the son of perdition, and that too to such a degree that he dares to sit in the temple of God, making himself out to be like God.<sup>44</sup>

He will also lift himself up against all that is called God, subjecting all religion to his own authority.”<sup>45</sup>

Jerome again, anticipates the division of the Roman Empire into ten kingdoms and the reign of the antichrist thereafter. For Jerome, the antichrist is a spiritual leader who will arrogate divine prerogatives and usurp divine authority by "subjecting all religion to his own authority." Further, Jerome believed he was witnessing the fragmentation of the Roman Empire in his day:

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41. Jerome, *Commentary*, 76.

42. Jerome, *Commentary*, 76.

43. Jerome, *Commentary*, 80.

44. Jerome, *Commentary*, 77.

45. Jerome, *Commentary*, 81, emphasis added.

Now the fourth empire, which clearly refers to the Romans, is the iron empire which breaks in pieces and overcomes all others. But its feet and toes are partly of iron and partly of earthenware, *a fact most clearly demonstrated at the present time*. For just as there was at the first nothing stronger or hardier than the Roman realm, so also in these last days there is nothing more feeble, since we require the assistance of barbarian tribes both in our civil wars and against foreign nations.<sup>46</sup>

It is noteworthy that Jerome sees the need for assistance from barbarian tribes as a sign of the weakness of the Roman Empire. Indeed it would be the barbarian tribes which would subsequently cause the fragmentation of the Roman Empire.

#### 5.6. *Theodoret of Cyrus*

For Theodoret of Cyrus (d. ca 460) the four empires remain Babylon, Media-Persia, Macedonia, and Rome.<sup>47</sup>

By the fourth beast he refers to the Roman Empire... about the end of the empire ten kings will arise at the one time, some of whom will be strong, others very weak.<sup>48</sup>

It is therefore obvious that he is foretelling that the ten will arise at the one time toward the end, and the antichrist will arise as the last, get control of the empire, wage war on them, and destroy three of them.<sup>49</sup>

For Theodoret, like the others above, the rise of the antichrist is preceded by the division of the Roman Empire. The antichrist will gain control over the divided Roman Empire.

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46. Jerome, *Commentary*, 32, emphasis added. It is a point of interest that Jerome connects the Roman Empire's need for the assistance of the Barbarian tribes with its weakness. Ultimately, it is these tribes which will cause the "fall" of the Western Roman Empire according to most historians of late antiquity.

47. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on Daniel* (ed. Robert C. Hill; trans. Hill, Robert C.; Atlanta: SBL, 2006), 49.

48. Theodoret, *Commentary*, 183.

49. Theodoret, *Commentary*, 195.

### 5.7. Andrew of Caesarea

In his commentary on Revelation 13, Andrew of Caesarea (c.563-610), like Irenaeus, is especially noted for his exegesis which treats the beast symbolism as a combination of Daniel 2 and 7.<sup>50</sup> Andrew still maintains the same historical understanding of the prophecies about the final empire.

[T]his beast is to be interpreted as the antichrist who comes from the tumultuous and rough sea of this life.... The ten horns and seven heads also signify the division of the earthly government at the end of time into ten, and the earthly government corresponds to this world, which... is divided into *seven successive kingdoms*, as will be discussed below.<sup>51</sup>

The kingdom of the Greeks is signified by the leopard; the Persians are signified by the bear; the Babylonians are signified by the lion. *The antichrist, who will come as a king of the Romans*, will rule them and destroy their empires, when he beholds the clay toes of their feet, by which is indicated the destruction of a weak and brittle kingdom.<sup>52</sup>

From the above, Andrew understands the antichrist arising after the division of the empire, and serving as a "king of the Romans." Importantly, like Hippolytus, Andrew believes that the "healing" of the wound may be a prediction about the division and restoration of the Roman Empire, such as was the case in the past:

That he had a head that was wounded... could indicate that the Roman Empire, *having suffered a kind of wound through division*, seems to be *healed by a unified rule*, as occurred at the time of Augustus Caesar.<sup>53</sup>

We say that the healing of the wound of the beast is either the apparent, *short-lived unity of the divided empire*, or *the temporary restoration by the antichrist of the tyranny of Satan* that had been destroyed or the fraudulent resurrection of one of

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50. The exact dating for the life of Andrew of Caesarea or for the writing of his commentary is not certain. However, commentators believe that he wrote his commentary sometime between the years 563-610 or so. See discussion in Oden, *Greek Commentaries*, xxxiii-xxxiv.

51. Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary," 160.

52. Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary," 160.

53. Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary," 160.

his associates who had died.<sup>54</sup>

While it is clear that Andrew saw the "healing" in more than one way, yet the idea that antichrist would be instrumental in the restoration of the empire is clearly the preferred interpretation.

### 5.8. *Summary*

More Patristic sources could be cited to demonstrate the long-held historical view on the interpretation of Daniel's four-kingdom prophecy. Clearly, there are differences in the specifics of each interpreter, but their agreement that Rome is the fourth empire and that its division paves the way for the rise of the antichrist is unmistakable. Moreover, all of these exegetes understood that the prophecies concerning the antichrist lie future to their own time. The tacit assertion that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation should be seen in relationship to each other is also evident, especially in Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Andrew of Caesarea. This does not mean, however, that every Patristic interpreter saw the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation this way. For example, we have already noted that Victorinus, while holding to a future view of the antichrist, also connected this figure to a resurrected Nero.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, Commodianus, foresaw a resurrected Nero in the person of the antichrist.<sup>56</sup> And as Goldingay points out, "There are *occasional* witness to the view that the four empires are Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece."<sup>57</sup> Yet, it is the case that this type of linear historical approach "predominates among Christians as among Jews."<sup>58</sup>

Based on my own exegesis of the beast images of the Apocalypses, I am prepared to say that the major school of interpretation among Patristic sources demonstrates that their

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54. Andrew of Caesarea, "Commentary," 160.

55. Weinrich, *Latin Commentaries*, 17-18.

56. Commodianus, *The Instructions in Favour of Christian Discipline* 41 (ANF 4:211): "moreover, when Nero shall be raised from hell, Elias shall first come to seal the beloved."

57. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxxi, emphasis added. The allegorical interpretation of

58. Goldingay, *Daniel*, xxxi.

classification of the Apocalypse with Daniel and Paul is not misplaced. Paul also anticipates the removal of the “restraining” power before the appearance of the “man of sin”—a possible intimation of the collapse of the Roman Empire, as we have already noted. As Paul’s antichrist is the “son of perdition,” for John the beast from the abyss is bound for “perdition” (Rev. 17:8, 11); and so for Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Jerome and others of this bent. As the antichrist is to be destroyed by the coming of Christ for Paul, so too for John and many Patristic writers. Paul’s understanding of the prophecies of Daniel do not depart from John’s understanding; and the Patristic writers are consonant with both. The understanding of the prophecy of Daniel which identified Rome as the fourth and final empire persisted as a major tradition of interpretation far beyond the Patristic period up to even modern times.<sup>59</sup>

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59. For example, the Italo-Roman Cassiodorus Senator writing in the sixth century, sought to emphasize, in relation to his German patron Theodoric, that “the Roman Empire, the fourth and final universal monarchy, was being perpetuated by the Germans.” See William A. Green, “Periodization in European and World History,” *Journal of World History* 3 (1992): 17. Cf. Ernst Breisach, *Historiography Ancient, Medieval, & Modern* (3rd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 89; Jonathan J. Arnold, *Theodoric and the Roman Imperial Restoration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 7-8. In the middle ages this view prevailed in the likes of Otto I, Bishop of Freising (d. 1158); see, Otto I, Bishop of Freising, *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 A.D.* (eds. Austin P. Evans and Charles Knapp; trans. Charles Christopher Mierow; New York: Octagon Books, 1966), 29-30. According to Otto: “There was from the beginning of the world four principal kingdoms which stood out above all the rest, and that they are to endure unto the world’s end, succeeding one another in accordance with the law of the universe can be gathered in various ways, in particular from the vision of Daniel” (29). Summarizing Otto’s universal history, the editors write: “And like Jerome, Otto believes that—in accordance with Daniel’s prophecy—the Roman Empire is to last until the end of the world: the Roman Empire, that is, as continued by the Byzantines, by the Franks, and finally by the Germans.” Cf. Breisach, *Historiography*, 143-144. The mystic Joachim of Fiore (c. 1135-1202) held similar views; see Travassos Valdez, *Historical Interpretations*, 195-216. During the Reformation era, Martin Luther (c. 1483-1546), the Jesuit philosopher Antonio Vieira (c. 1608-1697), and many others continued this tradition; see Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 200-08. Cf. Whitford, “Papal Antichrist,” 35-6; Travassos Valdez, *Historical Interpretations*, 295. Surprisingly, even great thinkers like Sir Isaac Newton (1643-1727) reflected upon the prophecies of Daniel along the same lines; see further, Isaac Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel* (London: James Nisbet, 1831), 24-128. And even the views of some current historians seem to affirm the notion of a Roman Empire that continued beyond the “Decline and Fall.” According to Breisach, *Historiography*, 88, “By 500 the Roman Empire in the West had faded into the emerging world of German successor states...”. Christians now lived in “a world not of one empire but of many kingdoms.” Similarly, Gabriele Marasco, *Greek and Roman Historiography in Late Antiquity: Fourth to Sixth Century A.D.* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 349, notes concerning the state of the Roman Empire during the middle of the 6th century, “The apparatus of Roman government continued to function, but authority resided ultimately in either the kings of the nations now settled in Italy, Spain and Gaul, or the warlords who held sway

## 6. Conclusion

Before turning to the concluding chapter, it is necessary to provide a summary of what we have discussed in the current and previous chapter. In these two chapters I have suggested (and hopefully have demonstrated) that the lack of attention to the conceptual framework of the beast of Revelation 13 and 17 has restrained a clearer analysis of this eschatological symbol. From the investigation above, it may be safely concluded that the insistence of many scholars that a contemporary historical reference to *Nero redivivus* is to be found in the sea beast symbolism of the Apocalypse is misplaced. The cursory manner in which the conceptual shape of the beast is dealt with has hindered a more canonically

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throughout Britain. While the imperial domain was no longer unified politically it was still bound with strong cultural and religious threads and, west of Constantinople, with Latin as a common language for most discourse.” Similarly, Peter R. L. Brown, *The World of Late Antiquity, AD 150-750* (New York: Norton, 1989), 19-20, also does not advocate a “Decline and Fall” scenario for late antique Rome. Brown writes instead, “The ‘Decline and Fall’ affected only the political structure of the western provinces of the Roman Empire: it left the cultural powerhouse of Late Antiquity—the eastern Mediterranean and the Near East—unscathed. Even in the barbarian states of western Europe, in the sixth and seventh centuries, the Roman Empire, as it survived at Constantinople, was still regarded as the greatest civilized state in the world: and it was called by its ancient name, the *Respublica*.... It is not always the conventional dates that are the most decisive. Everyone knows that the Goths sacked Rome in 410: but the lost western provinces of the empire remained a recognizably ‘sub-Roman’ civilization for centuries. By contrast, when the eastern provinces of the empire were lost to Islam after 640, these did not long remain ‘sub-Byzantine’ societies: they were rapidly ‘orientalized’” (20). Again, Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer, “Introduction,” in *Romans, Barbarians, and the Transformation of the Roman World: Cultural Interaction and the Creation of Identity in Late Antiquity* (eds. Ralph W. Mathisen and Danuta Shanzer; Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 4, write: “Many of the contributions remind us that the transformation of the Roman world took place in a Roman context. Contrary to many modern studies that to a greater or lesser degree begin by assuming that the transformation is about barbarians, with Romans playing only supporting roles, this volume demonstrates the pervasive influence of Rome that continued long after the “fall” of the western Roman Empire. The transformation occurred in a Roman intellectual context and a Roman geographical-political context.... Barbarians had been part of the Roman world, on both sides of the frontier (however the “frontier” is defined), long before they collectively crossed it and established their own kingdoms.” The editors’ point of view that the “integration of Romans and barbarians,” was “generally peaceful,” challenges the established view of a “fall” of the Roman Empire. According to this revisionist perspective, Rome did not fall, but was rather transformed by the integration of barbarian kingdoms which had long been part of the Roman world. The editors are clear about the aim of the book: “This volume aims to break down old stereotypes about the cultural and social segregation of Roman and barbarian populations. Its contributors demonstrate that, contrary to the past orthodoxy, Romans and barbarians interacted in every way imaginable, social, cultural, political, and religious. An understanding of the degree of *interaction, integration, and assimilation* between Romans and barbarians during Late Antiquity does much to help explain how the barbarian settlement of the west was accomplished with a minimal, relatively speaking, level of disruption and how *barbarian populations were integrated so seamlessly into the old Roman world*—through the emergence of a *composite barbaro-Roman culture* that integrated elements of the cultures of all of the peoples involved” (4, emphases added).

coherent interpretation.

By contrast, I have suggested that a clearer picture emerges from a careful analysis of the conceptual shape of the beast in dialogue with its contexts in Daniel (and even in Paul). I have posited that this symbol is, in every respect, shaped by canonical theology. Furthermore, I have endeavoured to show that Daniel's interest in historical periodization, instead of being diminished or dismissed in Revelation, is actually amplified and expanded. The same outline of world kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7 is presented afresh in Revelation. Revelation's penchant for conflation by thematic association comes out most pointedly in its programmatic amalgamation of the two most important historical outlines in Daniel. In a word, Revelation betrays a profound concern with history.

Furthermore, not only have I given many reasons why Revelation would conflate and adapt the Danielic schemata, but I have also worked out precisely how the historical schema in Revelation 17 parallels that of Daniel 2 and 7. And while it is the case that Revelation's picture of the beast imagery is fragmentary, in that its many pieces are scattered throughout the narrative, yet these fragments are tied together by strong intratextual links. A clearer portrait emerges when these fragments are seen in relationship to each other. For example, through literary, descriptive and functional intratextual parallels, we have seen that the portrait of the beast in Chapter 17 anticipates that of Chapter 13 (and 11:7), thus demonstrating in this instance an inverse relationship between the plot sequence and the narrative sequence.

Finally, despite the obscure nature of its historical schematization, Revelation exhibits a profound respect for and consciousness of the Danielic historical outlines. I have contended that Revelation is neither reinterpreting nor creating a midrash of Daniel but picks up and creatively re-render this prophetic metanarrative about God's ultimate purpose in the world. In my view, this chapter has confirmed this contention: the same Danielic

grand story about imperial history has been adapted and expanded in Revelation. In other words, from Revelation's point of view, there is a coherent story unfolding in Daniel; one which it retells more expansively. For instance, the "ten kings" of Daniel 2 and 7 are identical to the "ten kings" of Revelation 17. This adaption and expansion, while remaining true to the original context, is evidence that John stands in his own prophetic right. Revelation is indeed the climax of canonical prophecy. Lastly, we reflected on how most Patristic writers (indeed most Christian interpreters up to the modern period), in dialogue with other portions of Scripture, understood the four kingdom schema of Daniel in relationship to the beast symbol of the Apocalypse. This type of linear historical interpretation which is wholly displaced today in favour of other approaches, in the view of this writer, deserves a thorough reconsideration for any exegesis which wishes to take the Apocalypse and canon seriously. As Michael Shepherd writes, "Without a doubt the philological advances of the last two centuries have contributed greatly to biblical interpretation, but such a clean break with the history of interpretation is not advisable. The eschatological and messianic nature of the book's [Daniel] composition and its relationship to the rest of the Hebrew Bible demand the reader's careful attention."<sup>60</sup>

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60. Shepherd, *Daniel*, 70.



## Conclusion

### I. Summary of the Arguments

This thesis has been about one principal contention: that the Book of Revelation is first and foremost a canonical document and that its interpretation is best negotiated from a canonical perspective. The contemporary historical approach which predominates in the interpretation of the book, while providing many valuable insights into the historical situation of the churches of Asia Minor and the Roman Empire of John's day, has also obscured the theological moorings of the Book of Revelation. A sound theological interpretation of the Apocalypse to John defies the universal application of some of the working assumptions of the historical critical approach. Chief among such assertions is that Revelation must be interpreted in relationship to extra-canonical apocalyptic works and that in John's historical situation one is to find his "original" message and meaning. These presuppositions ingrain the tendency to look "behind the text" rather than "to the text" for its intended meaning. Along the same vein, the focus on Revelation as an "apocalypse," as presently defined, has equally contributed to the distortion of its message. When commentators approach the book as an apocalypse with all of the underlying assumptions which this categorization entails, the canonical context in which it has been inherited is marginalized. But I have suggested, and hopefully have demonstrated in this thesis, that "apocalypse," as is generally understood, is an inadequate rubric by which to understand the theological message of Revelation chiefly because the theology and intertextuality of the final book of the Bible identifies it unequivocally with Old Testament prophecy, and places it firmly in the theological context of those documents which make up the canon.

Therefore, the canonical stance as advocated in this thesis, sets boundaries which

excludes non-canonical works from the *immediate* hermeneutical task. This exclusion is not to deny that knowledge of extra-canonical writings can help to put canonical interpretation in perspective. To the contrary, understanding the worldview, ideology, literary and rhetorical strategies of contemporary nonbiblical works can add valuable insights into one's interpretation of a biblical text. Indeed, canonical writings did not emerge in a vacuum, but biblical writers lived in a particular cultural milieu and interacted with their surroundings, though always in dialectical tension.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, understanding this cultural background and its literature will definitely shape, in positive ways, hermeneutical conclusions regarding a particular biblical writing.<sup>2</sup> But the problem arises when extra-canonical works are given equal status with canonical writings in the theological interpretation of biblical books. Even though biblical writers shared many aspects of the worldview of their contemporaries, and employed common rhetorical and literary strategies, to assume that their ideological position was identical to that of their Jewish, Gnostic, and/or pagan counterparts is to overstate the case by orders of magnitude. Indeed, much of the religious ferment in Greco-Roman antiquity resulted from ideological wars both within internecine contexts as well as in the broader cultural milieu.<sup>3</sup>

The Christian canon then represents, in great measure, the ideological stance of the Christian church from its very inception.<sup>4</sup> The canonical approach establishes that the faith community recognizes the books of the Bible as authoritative for faith and practice and that these books occupy a “privileged” role in the business of interpreting the texts of the canon.

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1. McGlasson, “Significance of Context,” 69.

2. For example, one can see that the beast portrait in the Book of Revelation is meta-historical, in opposition to the contemporary-historical focus of the Roman Empire found in *4 Ezra* and the *Sibylline Oracles*. John is not concerned with individual Roman emperors as is usually deduced from Revelation 17. Revelation's theological trajectory is different from that expressed in these non-canonical apocalypses.

3. Cf. Judith M. Lieu, “Jews, Christians and ‘Pagans’ in Conflict,” in *Critique and Apologetics: Jews, Christians and Pagans in Antiquity* (eds. Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Jörg Ulrich and David. Brakke; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2009), 44.

4. McGlasson, “Significance of Context,” 68.

That certain books are included in the canon while others are excluded affirms that there was an ideological “rule of faith” from the earliest proclamation of the Christian message, and one which largely determined the shape of the final form of the literary canon. This rule is seen in an ideological bent in the New Testament and early church toward the rejection of teachings that were not deemed to conform to the tradition which was handed down by God to Christ, Christ to the apostles, and the apostles to the church.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, the construal of a parity between canonical and non-canonical texts, as is largely the case with “scientific” methods of investigations, is to deny a truly “historical” reading of biblical writings. In the original historical contexts biblical writers and their heirs differentiated themselves theologically from those whose beliefs and practices were deemed at variance with their own. Thus, a democratic hermeneutic which fails to discriminate between divergent ideological traditions, cannot but obscure the distinct Christian witness about Jesus Christ in the New Testament and the “orthodox” Patristic writings.

Of all the books of the New Testament, Revelation, as a generic apocalypse, is the one most frequently abstracted from its canonical context and function as the climax and summary of the Bible, and interpreted in relationship to a host of extra-biblical apocalypses and other works on the basis of its classification. But, Revelation’s theological and intertextual affinity is most akin to the books which constitute the Christian canon, and from these perspectives it demands to be seen in relationship to this corpus of Scripture. This means that no hermeneutical cross-referencing is conducted between Revelation and other apocalypses on the assumption that the meaning of a particular symbol, phrase, or the use of a “tradition” bears the same theological weight and/or meaning across the board.<sup>6</sup>

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5. Cf. Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics* 19 (ANF 3:3252-52) 37 (ANF 3:3261): "Since this is the case, in order that the truth may be adjudged to belong to us, "as many as walk according to the rule," which the church has handed down from the apostles, the apostles from Christ, and Christ from God, the reason of our position is clear..."

6. Cf. Boccaccini, "Jewish Apocalyptic Tradition," 35.

Because the canon is a classification of religious texts based on ideological affiliation, the theology of a biblical book like Revelation is best negotiated in relationship to documents classified as canonical. It is not incidental, as Davies points out, that the notion of a fixed religious canon is unique to Judaism and Christianity.<sup>7</sup> Both of these religious traditions claim to be the sole possessors of the oracles of God, and both have the dubious distinction of being labelled as atheists in their exclusive religious claims.<sup>8</sup>

Intertextually, Revelation reveals significant dependence on one tradition: the books of the Old Testament. There is a paucity of evidence for the inference of other traditions. It is the writings of the Old Testament which are uncontestedly the background and foundation upon which the ideological blocks of the final book of the Bible are stacked. The prophetic books more so than the others, and the book of Daniel in particular, are the primary players in its pages. It is their prophetic “grand story,” their “Gospel” as it pertains to God’s ultimate purposes for the world through his Messiah, which Revelation is concerned to retell. This intertextuality reveals strong parallels between the Book of Revelation and that of Daniel. Particularly, the prophetic profiles of John and his Old Testament predecessor bear striking similarities. In addition to being exiles in a foreign land, their respect visionary settings are near-identical. On several occasions Daniel has visionary episodes while standing next to a river; and in his vision of the four beasts it is from the “Great Sea” which these monsters arise. John too, though having a singular visionary experience is not only by a body of water, but is right in the middle of the “Great Sea” from which he too sees Daniel’s beasts (though conflated into a single beast) emerging. Such ideological parallels are strong indications that John is identifying with the visions and continuing the story of Daniel more so than that of any other Old Testament personage.<sup>9</sup>

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7. Davies, “Jewish Scriptural Canon,” 37.

8. Cf. Jeffrey W. Hargis, *Against the Christians: The Rise of Early Anti-Christian Polemic* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), 6-7.

9. Cf. Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1082; Beale, *Use of Daniel*, 154-305.

Revelation is part two of the Danielic saga.<sup>10</sup>

When the canonical approach is taken to its logical conclusion in the Book of Revelation, it reveals that the three portraits of the sea beast symbolism (Chapters 11:7, 13, 17), without any appeal to extra-canonical literature, work in concert to reveal an identical historical schematization to that of Daniel 2 and 7. When keen attention is paid to the conceptual shape of the sea beast imagery, such an analysis demonstrates that Revelation's sea beast betrays not even the slightest concern regarding a contemporary *Nero redivivus* myth. It shows instead that there is much more to John's conceptual construction than has been previously appreciated. Though the deliberate, programmatic conflation of the two Danielic contexts necessitate the adaptation and re-rendering of the schemata as "heads," it is clear nonetheless, that Revelation does its utmost to remain faithful to the contexts of Daniel. Thus, contra Bauckham, the Old Testament context, and not John's historical context, takes precedence in the construction and interpretation of this important eschatological symbol. A closer investigation of this imagery is shown, contra Aune, to have a direct correspondence with not only the beasts of Daniel 7, but also with the image of Daniel 2. And contra, Yarbrow Collins, Revelation's beastly schema is concerned not only to amplify "history," but also to look beyond the singularity of the contemporary Roman empire to encapsulate the total panorama of salvation's history. When seen in light of the canon, the wounding of the beast by a "sword" and its subsequent resurrection represents the division and reconstitution of the fourth empire, under the antichrist and the ten kings—a scenario paralleled in both Daniel 2 and 7. And like Daniel, Revelation reveals the ultimate fate of this eschatological foe: the beast, along with all of its progenitors, is bound for destruction at the hand of God and his Messiah.

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10. Baldwin, *Daniel*, 57: "The Revelation of John does the same thing on a grand scale, recapitulating all that has gone before in the Bible to stage a final panorama of human history, by comparison with which Daniel is merely a kind of first draft."

As I stated in the introduction to this study, the analysis herein is only preliminary. There is much more which could have been said and many insights which I have missed. Nevertheless, what I have outlined here, barring further amplification and rigour, is most probably what Revelation has in mind concerning the eschatological symbolism of the sea beast. And if this is the case, then the implications of its “interpretation” are truly significant.

#### *1.1. Possible Methodological Implications of the Study*

The following are highlighted as the most important methodological implications of this study:

First, the identification of a Danielic historical schema in the Book of Revelation supports the argument for the privileging of a canonical context over against an eclectic approach in the interpretation of the canonical Apocalypse. Only within a canonical context would it be possible to identify that Revelation’s cryptic sea beast symbolism is in reality an identical historical schematization to that of Daniel 2 and 7. This conclusion also includes recognizing that “apocalypse,” as it relates to the Apocalypse, is best defined and understood from the point of view of the biblical canon.

Second, the meaning of John’s symbolisms should be sought first and foremost in the background of the Old Testament. It seems certain that John employs deliberate and systematic intertextual analogies rooted in this background. Hermeneutically, a direct correspondence between the two contexts should be inferred.

Third, with the prominence of the prophetic material, and especially the book of Daniel, the argument that a prophetic metanarrative exists between Revelation and the Old Testament, and especially between both canonical apocalypses, should be more readily accepted. Too many parallels, some of which John has no control over, demonstrate that

John's literary genius is not the chief architect in the construction of his apocalyptic message. John's presence on Patmos (Πάτμος) in the heart of the Great sea, in relation to Daniel's visions while standing by bodies of water, including the "great river," and the "great sea," and the identical historical schematization in both apocalypses indicates the actions of divine Providence.

Fourth, while respecting the Old Testament context faithfully, the many expansions and details in Revelation as compared to Daniel, indicate that John's prophecy is not a reinterpretation or midrash of the Old Testament, but rather an authentic visionary experience shown to him by, as he claims, the heavenly Jesus. For instance, the incorporation of the dragon, the harlot, and the land beast in various supporting roles with the beast, shows that John's prophetic horizon is far broader, though dependent, on Daniel's. John stands in his own prophetic right.

Fifth, the privileging of the canonical context for the Book of Revelation means reorienting the focus away from a contemporary historical one to one that has broader historical significance. Revelation's historical schema subsumes and expands John's own historical horizon. This broad salvation-historical focus may also hold significance for the interpretation of other aspects of the book, including a clearer understanding of the 7 trumpets, the 7 seals, and even the letters to the 7 churches.

Sixth, two important literary strategies—conflation by thematic analogies and intratextual parallelism—should be seen as literary designs which are indispensable for a clearer understanding of the symbols and concepts in the book.<sup>11</sup> In regards to the first, understanding that purposeful designs reside in conflated imageries, including conceptual arrangements, can go a far way in perceiving their function in the narrative. In the case of

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11. Neither of these are "new." Beale and Fekkes, for example, have already identified many thematic analogues, though more work needs to be done in terms of conceptual analogues.

the latter, intratextual parallels show that important “dialogues” are taking place between different parts of the text, and understanding this interaction can help to bring clarity to other perplexing issues. For example, instead of viewing the plot and narrative sequence as coterminous throughout the book, analyzing parallel concepts may often show the plot sequence to be different, even opposite, to that of the narrative.

Finally, it should be recognized (though it was not argued here) that the seven heads and ten horns of the dragon are also an identical historical schematization to the sea beast imagery, though shown from another angle. That the dragon has seven crowns on its heads indicates that the devil is the true “king” behind the seven heads of the earthly empires. That the dragon gives his “throne” to the beast further supports this conclusion. The dragon in Chapter 12 and the beast in Chapter 13 are parallel perspectives on the same historical schematization.<sup>12</sup>

## 2. Conclusion

Despite the overwhelming agreement in scholarly circles that the sea beast of Revelation is to be understood vis-à-vis the Roman Empire of the 1st century C.E., the conclusion of this study suggests, contrarily, that the picture of the beast with seven heads and ten horns, a portrait of monstrosity and devastation, must be perceived as a prophetic construal of the long and grinding history of the ambitions of Babylon and its posterity to dominate the earth and its peoples. While it would take another thesis to substantiate this proposition, according to the interpretation offered herein and supported by a longstanding Christian tradition of interpretation, the beast is to be identified with the imperial history of Western civilization, with its roots in Babylon. Without a doubt, by *analogy*, the beast represents all earthly empires, past and present, wherever they may be found across the

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12. Cf. Beale, *Book of Revelation*, 681.



globe. Such empires surely fall under the divine indictment of Revelation. However, by *genealogy*, the beast is to be identified with the archetype of empire—the history of Western civilization. This identification of imperial history as the eschatological beast of prophecy, highlights a tension between the New Testament’s admonition to honour the powers that be (the micro level) since they are established by God (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Pet 2:17); while at the same time acknowledging that the very powers that govern the world, from a spiritual perspective (the macro level), are also instruments of satanic malice, objects of idolatry, and collectively the embodiment of rebellion against God.

Such an apocalyptic construal of the modern world necessitates inquiring further whether there are not other hidden dimensions of our reality which the Book of Revelation might be concealing. Surely, it is not beyond the God of the “spirit of the prophets,” who declared his knowledge of the “end from the beginning and from ancient time things not yet done” (Isa 46:10), to reveal to a self-absorbed and boundlessly self-confident world the reality of our situation, however mysteriously configured. Therefore, despite the widespread scholarly affirmations to the contrary, it is the view of this writer, that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation continue to bear prophetic witness to history’s inexorable march towards its anticipated climax.<sup>13</sup> Ultimately, it is the Lamb—and not the beast—which will exercise everlasting dominion over creation.

When as a young boy my friend related to me the nature of the ravenous beast, my anticipation of its arrival at some future period was a cause of immense terror. However, a more mature reflection on the nature of the eschatological animal brings to mind the realization that the beast has been here all along, imperceptible to most, yet leaving the

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13. Cf. Collins, “Study of Daniel,” 2: “It [Daniel] must be read, then, as a witness to the religiosity of that time, not as a prophecy of western political history or of the eschatological future”; Trever, “Book of Daniel,” 92: “[I]t should be clear that it is very important that the book of Daniel be understood in terms of the historical-literary ethos of the second century B.C. rather than in the usual eschatological ('end-time') sense.”

wreckage of its passage in every conceivable crevice of the globe. Thus, for the reason that Revelation envisions, according to the interpretation proposed here, a continued and eschatologically significant role for the beast of the Apocalypse, in the view of this writer, the study of this symbolism remains profoundly relevant to our contemporary world.

If there is any credence to Neville Morley's assessment of the contemporary global empire, then surely the church's longstanding tradition of interpretation of the symbolic beast of Revelation deserves a reconsideration:

Rome is seen as the greatest civilisation of the past, with *a direct genetic and historical connection* to Europe and the West.... Later European empires sought to emphasize their connection to Rome, as a means of establishing their historical status and legitimizing their dominance of others.... The wish to claim a special relationship with the Roman Empire recurs time and again, from the insistence of the Carolingian kings on being styled 'emperor and Augustus' to the public pronouncements of the Holy Roman Empire, from the French and British empires of the nineteenth century to the Fascist and Nazi projects of the twentieth century. Modern empires drew on Rome above all for their iconography... the use of classical templates and styles both imitated the Roman deployment of monumental architecture as a means of domination and *asserted a claim to be their rightful heirs*.<sup>14</sup>

It [Roman imperialism] continues to shape our understanding of the nature of imperialism and, thus, however subtly, to influence the workings of the world.... However, the reason why historians have devoted so much attention to Rome and disparaged the claims of other empires, the way that Rome has been claimed as one of the foundations of our entire civilisation, is precisely why we need to keep studying it: *the Roman Empire is still ruling us, and we need to understand our rulers and their system to liberate ourselves*.<sup>15</sup>

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14. Neville Morley, *The Roman Empire: Roots of Imperialism* (New York: Pluto, 2010), 1-2, emphasis added.

15. Morley, *Roots of Imperialism*, 13, emphasis added.

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