

ABSTRACT

The grammatical irregularities of Revelation have been noticed by interpreters interacting with the book at the linguistic level since Dionysius of Alexandria commented on the unusual style in the third century CE. Although Revelation has been recognized as an incredibly complex and sophisticated document, simultaneously, a prevailing scholarly judgment was that the book contained the worst grammar in the NT and that the author struggled with Greek as a second language. To add to the confusion, there are instances of ungrammaticality which appear to be intentional while other instances appear erratic and inexplicable. The proposed solecisms include: disagreements in case, number, and gender; verbal incongruence in the use of tense and mood; incorrect use of prepositional phrases; tautology; et al. Scholars have attempted to make sense of these syntactic features of the book by appealing to various grammatical explanations; literary, rhetorical, and theological motivations; and even some aspect of John's visionary experience.

Because Revelation was designed with aural intent and because the issue of ungrammaticality is a stylistic matter, I argue that the rhetorical milieu of the Greco-Roman world preserved in the extant rhetorical handbooks provides windows into better understanding the unusual feature of grammatical irregularity in Revelation. The ancients distinguished between accidental grammatical error which was frowned upon and intentional, artistic ungrammaticality for rhetorical purposes. Quintilian even provides the criteria that one might use to distinguish intentional from unintentional ungrammaticality. Quintilian's criteria point to the fact that ungrammaticality was acceptable and artistic if used by an authoritative, past model which is based on the pervasive ancient impulse of *imitatio*/μίμησις.

After observing how ancients conceived of and practiced *imitatio* in literary and rhetorical compositions, I apply these insights to John's systematic use of Ezekiel in Revelation. One of the most common observations in scholarship on Ezekiel is that the inaugural vision—which was influential for Revelation—is full of stylistic and grammatical difficulties. Because stylistic imitation was a central component of *imitatio*, I argue that John's irregular grammar was caused by his imitation of this unusual feature encountered in the prophetic commissioning scene of his authoritative predecessor. It is one component of John's overall strategy to align his prophetic voice with the voice of Israel's authoritative prophetic tradition. He speaks in the *vox Ezechielis*.

Finally, I investigate whether this proposal can be grounded in apocalyptic visionary phenomenology. Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision served for centuries as the catalyst for visionary experience, especially in *merkabah* mysticism and the *hekhalot* texts. Ezekiel's inaugural vision was also influential in rabbinic Judaism, Second Temple Jewish texts, apocalypses, and early Christianity. Several scholars contend that the meditation of Scriptural texts like Ezek 1 served as the catalyst for visionaries to “see again” what the prophets saw, and I posit this helps us understand why the unusual grammar of Ezekiel's inaugural vision may have left such an indelible mark on the unusual style of John's Revelation. Lastly, I demonstrate that the Greco-Roman world had ready-made categories for understanding *imitatio* as inspired experience, not merely rhetorical or literary fiction. *Imitatio*, when encountered in texts, was perceived as resulting from the divine inspiration of the gods or from authoritative figures of the past.

IMITATIO EZECHIELIS: THE IRREGULAR GRAMMAR OF REVELATION
RECONSIDERED

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Soli Deo gloria.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM OF SOLECISMS IN REVELATION

Introduction

The grammatical solecisms in Revelation have been noticed by almost all interpreters working with the book at the linguistic level. This dissertation represents a journey to discover what caused this unusual feature in one of the most fascinating and complex books in the NT. Chapter 1 will present the major categories of grammatical and stylistic irregularity found in Revelation. I will demonstrate that while some irregularities appear to be intentionally created, others exhibit an apparent and inexplicable randomness which appears erroneous; however, these two disparate groups are united in their jarring and jolting nature.

Chapter 2 summarizes the major categories and explanations found in the scholarly literature addressing this topic. While many of these studies draw on a number of methodologies to provide invaluable and provocative insights to better understand this stylistic phenomenon, no argument seems to comprehensively explain the complexity of Revelation's grammatical irregularity. In recent decades, scholars working in biblical studies have drawn on a number of different methods and perspectives to better understand the biblical texts within their ancient contexts. I seek to contribute to this discussion by integrating insights from diverse perspectives which have heretofore not been combined to examine Revelation's unusual idiolect.

Because the irregular grammar is a matter of style and because Revelation was composed with aural intent, chapter 3 will incorporate insights from Greco-Roman rhetoric. Rhetoricians, like the great synthesizer Quintilian, discuss grammatical irregularity. Quintilian even proposes criteria for determining when an irregular construction is accidentally erroneous and when an ungrammatical construction is intentional and rhetorically artistic. His criteria are grounded in

the prevalent practice of μίμησις/*imitatio* in rhetoric, literature, art, and ethics. If a particular ungrammatical construction was due to stylistic imitation of an authoritative predecessor of the past, Quintilian says this was to be considered artistic and rhetorically intentional.

Because John draws so heavily and thoroughly on his prophetic predecessor, Ezekiel, chapter 4 contains an extensive argument that Revelation should be understood as an *imitatio Ezechielis*.¹ Stylistic imitation was an essential component of successful *imitatio*. It is a commonplace in scholarship on Ezekiel that the inaugural (*merkabah*) vision contains the most irregular and ungrammatical Hebrew in the entirety of the OT. The inaugural vision of Ezekiel was influential for John's Revelation and in rabbinic, apocalyptic, and early Christian mystical experience. I posit in this dissertation that John imitates the irregular prophetic style encountered in Ezekiel's inaugural vision and provide plausible analogous texts to substantiate this claim.

Chapter 5 completes the journey by exploring apocalyptic visionary experience and mystical phenomenology to investigate whether the identification of *imitatio Ezechielis* can be explained in phenomenological terms. Taking John's claim to visionary experience seriously, in this chapter, I demonstrate that there are readymade phenomenological explanations to account for why Revelation is an *imitatio Ezechielis*. The journey of discovery begins with the text itself containing the record of a purported visionary experience by John of Patmos two-thousand years ago and examines attempts to understand the unusual grammar up to the present day. Through the integration of insights from rhetoric, *imitatio*, and apocalyptic visionary experience, I attempt to shed new light on understanding John's unusual grammar and style which helps us better understand John, his prophetic self-conception, and his text. Readers are invited to join this journey of discovery.

¹ I will refer to the author as "John" (see comments in "Locating Revelation in its Historical Context" in ch. 3). My thesis does not necessitate the precise identification of the historical John.

Grammatical Solecisms in Revelation

It has long been noted that Revelation contains grammatical irregularities. In the third century CE, Dionysius of Alexandria remarked, “I observe his style [διάλεκτον] and that his use of the Greek language [ἐλληνίζουσιν] is not accurate [οὐκ ἀκριβῶς], but that he employs barbarous idioms [ιδιώμασιν τε βαρβαρικοῖς χρώμενον], in some places committing downright solecisms [σολουκίζοντα].”² Dionysius (and Eusebius following him) used the impropriety of John’s Greek to posit that the author of the Apocalypse could not be the same author of the grammatically correct Greek of the Fourth Gospel.³ In almost every modern work which involves commentary on the Greek of Revelation, scholars are forced to address John’s peculiar syntax. In 1896, Wilhelm Bousset said, “Durch das ganze Buch hindurch finden sich besondere und in solcher Menge nur in der Apokalypse nachweisbare grammatische und stilistische Härten, welche dem Sprachcharakter der Apokalypse sein eigentümliches Gepräge verleihen.”⁴ More recently, Joseph Verheyden described it this way: “the style and language of the Apocalypse not infrequently is nightmarish. John makes grammatical mistakes, all sorts of mistakes, and

² Dionysius of Alexandria cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.26–27 (Oulton, LCL).

³ “That, then, he was certainly named John and that this book is by one John, I will not gainsay; for I fully allow that it is the work of some holy and inspired person. But I should not readily agree that he was the apostle, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, whose are the Gospel entitled According to John and the Catholic Epistle. For I form my judgement from the character of each and from the nature of the language and from what is known as the general construction of the book, that [the John therein mentioned] is not the same.” (Dionysius of Alexandria cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.7–8 [Oulton, LCL]); Also “And further, by means of the style one can estimate the difference between the Gospel and Epistle and the Apocalypse. For the former are not only written in faultless Greek, but also show the greatest literary skill in their diction, their reasonings, and the constructions in which they are expressed. There is a complete absence of any barbarous word, or solecism, or any vulgarity whatever. For their author had, as it seems, both kinds of word, by the free gift of the Lord, the word of knowledge and the word of speech. But I will not deny that the other writer had seen revelations and received knowledge and prophecy; nevertheless I observe his style and that his use of the Greek language is not accurate, but that he employs barbarous idioms, in some places committing downright solecisms. These there is no necessity to single out now. For I have not said these things in mockery (let no one think it), but merely to establish the dissimilarity of these writings.” (Dionysius of Alexandria cited in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 7.25.25–27 [Oulton, LCL]).

⁴ Wilhelm Bousset, *Die Offenbarung Johannis*, KEK 16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1896), 183.

apparently (almost) all the time.”⁵ This feature marks Revelation as *sui generis* since no surviving literary work of the size, scope, and complexity of the Apocalypse is expressed with such randomly flawed Greek. Thomas Paulsen muses, “Es gibt wohl wirklich keinen zweiten antiken griechischen Text, der sich dermaßen kühn über die etablierten Regeln der Syntax und Grammatik des Altgriechischen hinwegsetzt.”⁶ Likewise, R. H. Charles, one of the most important commentators on Revelation in the last century, concluded, “My own studies, which have extended from the time of Homer down to the Middle Ages, and have concerned themselves specially with Hellenistic Greek, so far as this Greek was a vehicle of Hebrew thought, have led me to a very different conclusion on this question, and this is, that *the linguistic character of the Apocalypse is absolutely unique.*”⁷

Recently surveying Revelation’s irregular grammar, Laurențiu Florentin Moț has suggested that since the beginning of the twentieth century scholars have proposed as many as 232 grammatical and morpho-syntactical solecisms in the Apocalypse. The proposed solecisms include: disagreements in case, number, and gender; verbal incongruence in the use of tense and mood; incorrect use of prepositional phrases; tautology; et al. The peculiarity of this feature of Revelation is magnified by two aspects. First, Revelation was designed with aural intent.⁸ In the oral/aural world of the first century, texts and orality were intrinsically bound together in a

⁵ Joseph Verheyden, “Strange and Unexpected: Some Comments on the Language and Imagery of the Apocalypse of John,” in *New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, BETL 291 (Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2017), 161.

⁶ Thomas Paulsen, “Zu Sprache und Stil der Johannes-Apokalypse,” in *Poetik und Intertextualität der Johannesapokalypse*, ed. Stefan Alkier, Thomas Hieke, and Tobias Nicklas; WUNT 346 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 4.

⁷ R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), 1:cxlili.

⁸ David E. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 51; David A. deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 9–18; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, Proclamation Commentaries (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 20–22; Allen Dwight Callahan, “The Language of Apocalypse,” *HTR* 88 (1995): 459.

dynamic relationship. Revelation is at once letter, prophecy, and apocalypse. The introduction indicates that it was meant to be read aloud (1:1–3), and the first makarism is pronounced on the lector (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων) and the hearers (οἱ ἀκούοντες). At the end of the book, John warns of divine punishment for “anyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book” (παντὶ τῷ ἀκούοντι τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου) and fails to do them (22:18). A repeated emphasis occurs throughout the book on “hearing” the message (e.g. 2:7, 11, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; 22:17–18). Second, the author of Revelation shows an intimate familiarity with the production of texts. As Harry Gamble notes in his *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, “It is not too much to say that the author of the Apocalypse, despite his idiosyncratic grammar and style, may be the most textually self-conscious Christian writer of the early period. In no other early Christian text do the notions of books, writing, and reading occur so prominently.”⁹ These observations point to a fascinatingly paradoxical feature of the Apocalypse: Despite being a “textually self-conscious Christian writer” who 1) elaborately weaves hundreds of OT allusions into a complex prophetic message to Christian communities in Asia and 2) carefully designed the discourse for reading with aural intent, the author exhibits “idiosyncratic grammar and style” that would appear to otherwise work contrary to these aims.

Defining Terms

The two types of errors that occupied the attention of both Greek and Latin writers during this period were barbarisms and solecisms. Malcolm Hyman demonstrates there is an essential definitional continuity between various authors of the ancient world concerning what constituted

⁹ Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 104; see also Hans-Georg Gradl, *Buch und Offenbarung: Medien und Medialität der Johannesoffenbarung* (Wien: Herder, 2014), 123–31.

barbarism and solecism. He also shows that ancient philologists developed a vocabulary and various taxonomies for identifying barbarisms and solecisms. According to the ancients, a barbarism was an error at the phonological level where a single word deviated from the correct form. Solecism was an error in the inflected morphosyntax involving the discordant relationship of two or more elements of the sentence.¹⁰ These distinctions will be held in the course of this study.

Categories and Examples

It is difficult to determine the precise number of solecisms in the Apocalypse. One reason for this difficulty is scribal activity in the text's transmission. Variant readings exist for most of the alleged solecisms.¹¹ Another reason for the difficulty is that scholars identify individual occurrences differently. Identifying a grammatical construction as solecistic involves distinguishing between a construction which is grammatically difficult and one that is syntactically incorrect—such a distinction involves scholarly subjectivity. One scholar's solecism is another scholar's anacoluthon, *constructio ad sensum*, or ellipsis.¹² “In part this has to do with the fact that some rhetorical figures are the result of stretching the rules of grammar and syntax beyond what is considered to be ‘the norm’.”¹³

¹⁰ Malcolm D. Hyman, “Barbarism and Solecism in Ancient Grammatical Thought” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2002), 1–2; See also Raija Vainio, “Latinitas and Barbarisms According to the Roman Grammarians: Attitudes Towards Language in the Light of Grammatical Examples” (Thesis, University of Turku, 1999); Laurențiu Florentin Moț, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities in the Book of Revelation: A Greek Hypothesis*, Linguistic Biblical Studies 11 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 46–48, 56–64.

¹¹ *Lectio Difficilior* is an important criterion for variant readings in the Apocalypse.

¹² E.g., see Iwan Whiteley who argues that the anacolutha in Revelation are not grammatical mistakes but features of the author's hermeneutical agenda. He prefers “anacolutha” to “solecisms” (“An Explanation for the Anacolutha in the Book of Revelation,” *FilNeot* 20 [2007]: 33–50).

¹³ Verheyden, “Strange and Unexpected,” 166.

In one of the most comprehensive studies to date, Moř evaluates every proposed solecism and concludes that 45 individual occurrences could be labeled actual solecisms for which he is unable to find a possible rationale or explanation. He mitigates this number by claiming there are only 9 types of solecisms committed multiple times.¹⁴ Other scholars propose longer lists.¹⁵ In what follows, Moř’s schematization of solecisms in the Apocalypse will be used to provide examples of solecistic constructions in Revelation. Particular attention will be given to occurrences where a construction is syntactically discordant in one instance but is used in the expected form elsewhere in Revelation. These instances are instructive since they point to syntactically incongruous constructions while also highlighting the author’s general aptitude in Greek.

Disagreements of Case, Gender, and Number

The most frequently occurring category is disagreements of case, gender, and number. In 3:12, the feminine nominative articular participle ἡ καταβαίνουσα (“coming down”) is appended to τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ (“the new Jerusalem”) where one would expect to see the genitive τῆς καταβαίνουσας. The participial form of καταβαίνω is used five times elsewhere in Revelation (10:1; 18:1; 20:1; 21:2, 10), and in each occurrence, it correctly modifies its antecedent. In 21:2, a similar construction occurs where the accusative καταβαίνουσιν is in the expected accusative form modifying τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἱερουσαλήμ καινὴν. John competently employs the participial form of καταβαίνω five times, but for some reason, erred in rendering ἡ καταβαίνουσα in the nominative in 3:12.

¹⁴ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 218. His list of actual solecisms includes: 1:20; 2:13; 3:12; 4:1; 5:6, 11–12, 13; 6:10; 8:7; 9:14; 11:4, 18; 13:14; 14:6–7, 8, 9, 14; 17:3, 8, 11, 16; 19:20; 21:9, 14.

¹⁵ See especially Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxvii-clvi.

The seemingly erratic occurrences of the participial forms of λέγω and ἔχω are instructive.¹⁶ Λέγω occurs 32 times in the present, participle, masculine, singular and plural forms and in several instances does not stand in concord with its antecedent. For example, in 1:10–11 (ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος λεγούσης...), one would expect the accusative λεγούσαν; instead, the genitive λεγούσης modifies σάλπιγγος rather than φωνήν.¹⁷ The solecism in 4:1 is particularly striking (ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἣν ἤκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλούσης μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων). Here, the feminine λαλούσης is used immediately before the masculine λέγων. However, in many cases the participial λέγω correctly modifies φωνή (cf. 6:6; 10:4; 12:10; 14:13; 16:1, 17). Moṭ has made the most comprehensive exploration as to whether John’s use of λέγω as a modifier to ἡ φωνή is erroneous.¹⁸ After examining nine instances (4:1; 6:10; 7:4; 9:13–14 [twice]; 11:4, 15; 14:3; 19:1, 6), he discovers a rule: “wherever the voice heard is unidentified, the participial modifier is rendered in the feminine.”¹⁹ However, Moṭ must immediately qualify: “In conclusion, when the voice heard is indefinite, John usually renders the modifying participle in the feminine, but in 9:14 and 11:15 he does not stick with this rule. He might even be charged with inconsistency and lack of clarity, but the writer has someone of masculine gender in view.”²⁰ Thus, even when a rule is discovered, the author is said to violate his own rule in two of nine constructions. Another example involving participial λέγω occurs in 13:14 where John uses λέγων to modify τοῦ θηρίου. Just a few words later, John uses the masculine pronoun ὃς to modify τῷ θηρίῳ. This occurrence is striking because previously, John correctly modifies τό θηρίον with the neuter five times, four of which occur in the immediate

¹⁶ See Charles, *Revelation*, 1:ccv–ccvi.

¹⁷ Similar constructions occur in 4:1; 19:1, 6.

¹⁸ Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 161–66.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 165.

context (11:7; 13:1, 2, 11, 12). Certainly, it is possible the present participial forms of λέγω reflect a Greek concretized form for the Hebrew gerund רמל which is found frequently in the Septuagint; however, if this is the case, John does not do this consistently, and as we will see next, the same phenomenon occurs with the participial forms of ἔχω for which there is no Semitic antecedent.²¹

The present, participle, masculine, singular and plural of ἔχω occurs 36 times in Revelation. Of these, 16 stand in concord with their referents. Another 13 occur in the participial ὁ ἔχων which stands as the subject of the clause.²² The remaining 5 instances are solecistic. For example, in 5:6 John saw (εἶδον) ἀρνίον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον ἔχων, where ἔχων is in the nominative modifying an accusative phrase.²³ In 9:14 (λέγοντα τῷ ἔκτω ἀγγέλῳ, ὁ ἔχων τὴν σάλπιγγα), the nominative ὁ ἔχων is modifying a dative antecedent. One would expect τῷ ἔχοντι. In 14:14, the nominative ἔχων modifies the accusative phrase καθήμενον ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου where one expects ἔχοντα.²⁴ In 5:6, in one of the most striking images in Revelation, John saw ἀρνίον ἐστηκὸς ὡς ἐσφαγμένον ἔχων κέρατα ἑπτὰ. Here, the masculine participle ἔχων points back to the neuter ἀρνίον. One might be tempted to argue for *constructio ad sensum* in this particular usage were it not for the immediately preceding participles correctly modifying ἀρνίον in the neuter (ἐστηκὸς; ἐσφαγμένον). In 17:3–4, two occurrences of the present active participle occur. In 17:3, the masculine nominative participle ἔχων incorrectly modifies θηρίον which is neuter and accusative. John modifies θηρίον with the accusative, singular, neuter κόκκινον. One might argue *constructio ad sensum* for John's use of ἔχων, but elsewhere, John

²¹ Ibid., 206.

²² 2:7, 11, 123, 17, 18, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 22; 13:18; 20:6.

²³ Ibid., 123–24.

²⁴ NA28 opts for ἔχων in 17:3 which would be a further instance of the nominative used as a qualifier of the accusative θηρίον; however, there are strong alternative readings for ἔχοντα (R, P, 2053). See Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 131.

modifies θηρίον with the neuter participle (cf. 11:7; 13:1, 11), and in the immediate context uses a neuter adjective. In 13:1, θηρίον is modified by the expected ἔχον. In the following verse, the feminine participle ἔχουσα correctly modifies ἡ γυνή. The juxtaposition of the expected and unexpected uses of the participial ἔχω is notable. In 21:14, the masculine ἔχων stands in apposition to the neuter phrase τὸ τεῖχος τῆς πόλεως.

Another fascinating example occurs in the use of the genitival participial τῶν γεμόντων (“full of”) modifying the accusative τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας (“the seven bowls”) in 21:9.²⁵ It should be in the expected accusative form τὰς γεμούσας. The solecism here is notable because previously, the author used the participial form of γέμω correctly (e.g., 4:6; 5:8; 15:7). In both 5:8 and 15:7, the author uses the expected accusative participle γεμούσας to modify φιάλας χρυσᾶς. It is the juxtaposition of the author’s aptitude in using the participial form of γέμω and his two previous uses of the feminine γεμούσας modifying φιάλας that makes the irregularity in 21:9 striking.

Another example involving a solecistic use of the genitive occurs in 19:20 (τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς καιομένης) where καιομένης agrees in gender with λίμνην but in case with πυρὸς. A final example involving the use of accusatives in place of a dative occurs in 11:18 (καὶ δοῦναι τὸν μισθὸν τοῖς δούλοις σου τοῖς προφήταις καὶ τοῖς ἁγίοις καὶ τοῖς φοβουμένοις τὸ ὄνομά σου, τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους...). Here, the two accusatives τοὺς μικροὺς καὶ τοὺς μεγάλους are in the accusative where one expects appositional datives.

A curious use of an adjective occurs in 4:3 (ἴρις κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου ὅμοιος ὁράσει σμαραγδίνῳ) where the feminine ἴρις is modified by the masculine adjective ὅμοιος. In 10:1, John demonstrates his knowledge that ἴρις is feminine. Another example of a solecism involving

²⁵ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 145–46; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:clii; Paul M. Bretscher, “Syntactical Peculiarities in Revelation,” *CTM* 16 (1945): 98; David Mathewson, *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 289–90.

a masculine adjective is found in 14:19 (εἰς τὴν ληνὸν τοῦ θυμοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ τὸν μέγαν) where the masculine τὸν μέγαν modifies the feminine τὴν ληνὸν. The comparative adjective ὅμοιος occurs 21 times in Revelation. In 19 instances, ὅμοιος is followed by the expected dative. In 1:13 and 14:14 the phrase ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου occurs. These are the only two instances in the NT of ὅμοιος used with an accusative, and they are the only occurrences of the phrase υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου making this irregular grammatical construction appear intentional. In 9:3–5, ἀκρίδες is followed by three pronouns. The first two are the expected feminine plural pronoun αὐταῖς, but the third is the masculine αὐτοῖς. In 8:7, the singular verb ἐβλήθη is expected to be in the plural since it follows two singular subjects (γάλαζα καὶ πῦρ).

Verbal Incongruence in Tense and Mood

Three types of syntactical irregularity in John's use of verbs have been identified by scholars. First, T. Cowden Laughlin identified instances of John's use of the present with a future meaning. Laughlin notes, "The present and future tenses are found coordinately in the same clause or sentence where, according to the usage of the language, we should expect the future of both verbs."²⁶ As examples, Laughlin gives 1:7; 2:5, 16, 22; 3:9; 17:13–14. However, as Moṭ rightly notes, "It is almost needless to demonstrate that Greek scholars see the futuristic present as an aspect of the Greek present tense."²⁷

Second, John's use of finite verbs in place of participles or infinitives has been labeled as solecism.²⁸ Examples of this irregularity occur in 1:5–6, 16, 17–18; 2:2, 19, 20, 23; 3:9; 7:2, 14;

²⁶ T. Cowden Laughlin, "The Solecisms of the Apocalypse" (PhD diss., Princeton University, 1902), 19.

²⁷ Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 192.

²⁸ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxliv–cxlvi; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 2nd ed. (New York: MacMillan, 1907), cxix; Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 66–67.

13:11, 15; 14:2–3; 15:2–3; and 20:4. Anticipating the history of research section, these scholars maintain that this construction reproduces a Semitic (Hebrew or Aramaic) idiom. However, Gerard Mussies, who agrees John was influenced linguistically by Semitic idiom, denies 11 of the examples provided above by Charles.²⁹ The final two passages listed by Mussies are 1:5–6 which Moř identifies as anacoluthon, and 1:16 where there is no real scribal emendations for the finite verb φάινει demonstrating there was no real perceived problem. Stanley Porter maintains that, “Resolution of the participle into a finite verb can be paralleled in Greek from Homer through the papyri.”³⁰ Moř notes multiple occurrences of this construction in Xenophon and Thucydides for which Semitic influence cannot be the cause.³¹ This construction, although possibly infrequent, does not appear to constitute solecism.

In the final proposed verbal incongruence, some scholars have labeled John’s use of verb tenses as erratic.³² “Revelation’s visionary material exhibits these tense shifts while usually referring to the same temporal sphere, normally a narrative account of what John saw.”³³ Mussies, Steven Thompson, and Edward Dougherty identified this feature of John’s use of verbs.³⁴ Thompson notes the “sudden and seemingly inexplicable shifts among aorist/present/future tenses of verbs” which are not accompanied by a shift in time.³⁵ Thompson gives as examples 6:15–17; 7:16, 17; 14:2b–3; 20:7–10 and concludes that in Revelation, the

²⁹ 1:17–18; 2:23; 7:14 because they are copulative. 7:2; 13:11; 14:2–3; 15:2–3 which all form separate clauses. Mussies also denies 2:2, 9, 29; 3:9 belong here (Gerard Mussies, *The Morphology of the Koine Greek as Used in the Apocalypse of St. John: A Study in Bilingualism*, NovTSup 27 [Leiden: Brill, 1971], 326–27).

³⁰ Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament, with Reference to Tense and Mood* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), 140.

³¹ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 196.

³² Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxxiv.

³³ David Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect in the Book of Revelation: The Function of Greek Verb Tenses in John’s Apocalypse*, Linguistic Biblical Studies 4 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 117.

³⁴ Mussies, *Morphology*, 340; Thompson, *Semitic Syntax*, 47; Edward C. A. Dougherty, “The Syntax of the Apocalypse,” (PhD diss., The Catholic University of America, 1990), 426–28.

³⁵ Thompson, *Semitic Syntax*, 47.

orist is equivalent to the Semitic perfect, the present is equivalent to the Semitic participle, and the future is equivalent to the Semitic imperfect.³⁶ However, this is only an issue for those who view the Greek tenses from a temporal standpoint rather than via verbal aspect theory. In verbal aspect theory, the tenses do not primarily convey temporality, but rather the author's view of the action. David Mathewson summarizes the aspectual values of verbal tenses:³⁷

Aorist	External viewpoint, action portrayed in its entirety
Present	Internal viewpoint, action portrayed as in progress, developing
Imperfect	Internal viewpoint, action portrayed as in progress, developing, [+remoteness]
Perfect	Action portrayed as a state of affairs
Pluperfect	Action portrayed as a state of affairs, [+remoteness]
Future	Action that can be expected to take place, often future

Mathewson analyzes the passages which have the most shifting tense forms from verbal aspect theory.³⁸ Mathewson shows that John's choice of verb tenses in individual units are intentional. John often uses the aorist to summarize background events while using the present and imperfect tenses to bring certain actions to the foreground. John uses perfects sparingly, and they are used to move "the most central narrative event" to the foreground.³⁹ After examining nine texts, Mathewson concludes, "According to this study, Revelation's use of aspect falls well within the range of the functions one encounters elsewhere in the New Testament, rendering judgments regarding its aberrant or inconsistent nature in Revelation misguided and unnecessary."⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., 48–49.

³⁷ Reproduced from Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect*, 37.

³⁸ Rev. 5; 7:9–17; 9; 11:1–13; 12–13; 17; 18:4–20; 19:11–21.

³⁹ Cf. Mathewson, *Verbal Aspect*, 127–28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 173.

Prepositional Irregularities

One of the most jarring instances of grammatical irregularity occurs in 1:4–5.⁴¹ In 1:4b, John uses the preposition ἀπό followed by the nominative phrase ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. Immediately following in 1:4c, John again uses ἀπό with the genitive τῶν ἐπὶ πνευμάτων, and again in 1:5a with the genitive Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. In total, John uses ἀπό 36 times—always with the expected genitive—except at 1:4a. Given his immediate shift back to using it with the genitive (1:4b, 5a), it is difficult to avoid the conclusion this jarring irregularity was intentional.

William Henry Guillemard identified John’s use of μετά with the meaning of “against” as going “against all good Greek usage” and suggested the preposition should have been ἐπί.⁴² While the conflictual use of μετά does not occur in Greek literature, it does appear 15 times in the Septuagint where all 15 occurrences reflect the Hebrew phrase *בַּעַד מִלְּךָ*.⁴³ Thus, this peculiar prepositional use either reflects direct Semitic interference or influence mediated by the author’s familiarity with the Septuagint.

A final example occurs in John’s use of the preposition ἐκ in 15:2 (τοὺς νικῶντας ἐκ τοῦ θηρίου). David E. Aune proposes that the usage of this preposition is due to Latin influence.⁴⁴ Charles favored a pregnant sense of the construction.⁴⁵ Gregory K. Beale suggests the ablative (separative) sense of ἐκ is in view here.⁴⁶ Moṭ conjectures John’s use of ἐκ here is combining the

⁴¹ Swete referred to this as an example of an “idiotism” (*Apocalypse*, cxxiii). I include this here since it involves the preposition ἀπό whereas Moṭ includes it in his discussion of “Nominative Qualifying an Oblique and a Vocative Referent” (108–16).

⁴² William Henry Guillemard, *Hebraisms in the Greek Testament: Exhibited and Illustrated by Notes and Extracts from the Sacred Text* (Cambridge: Deighton, Bell, 1879), 116–17.

⁴³ Judges 5:20; 11:20; 20:14, 18; 1 Sam 17:32–33; 28:1; 2 Sam 10:17; 11:17; 21:15; 1 Kings 12:24; 2 Kings 14:15; 19:9; Dan 11:11.

⁴⁴ David E. Aune, “A Latinism in Revelation 15:2,” *JBL* 110 (1991): 691–92. See also James Moffatt, *The Book of Revelation* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1905), 443; Georg Benedikt Winer, *A Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament: Prepared as a Solid Basis for the Interpretation of the New Testament*, 7th ed., rev. and trans. Gottlieb Lünemann (Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1877), 367.

⁴⁵ Charles, *Revelation*, 2:28.

⁴⁶ Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGCT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 790.

source and partitive sense of the preposition although he admits, “A decision between these view is difficult and practically impossible due to a lack of evidence, for the idiom is unique to the Apocalypse.”⁴⁷

Redundancies (Pleonasm and Tautology)

The distinction between stylistic repetition and pleonasm can be quite subjective. Most of the examples in this category are resumptive pronouns found in relative clauses. For example, in 3:8 (θύραν ἠνεωγμένην, ἣν οὐδεὶς δύναται κλειῖσαι αὐτήν), the pronoun αὐτήν is redundant. Another example occurs in 13:8 (οὗ οὐ γέγραπται τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ) where there is both a relative pronoun and a personal pronoun in the same clause.⁴⁸ There are also three occurrences of redundant relative adverbs: ὅπου ἔχει ἐκεῖ (12:6); ὅπου τρέφεται ἐκεῖ (12:14); and ὅπου ἡ γυνὴ κάθηται ἐπ’ αὐτῶν (17:9).⁴⁹ While this construction does occur in original Greek works without Semitic influence, it is far more frequently found in the LXX as a translation of the Hebrew resumptive pronoun. Moṭ conjectures the resumptive pronouns in Revelation are due to Semitic influence mediated by the LXX.⁵⁰

Pleonasm (also known as tautology) refers to a repetition which serves no function in the syntax of a sentence. Many of the proposed repetitions are explicable as amplifications, clarifications, or uses for rhetorical effects; however, Moṭ claims, “there are a few that seem tautological.”⁵¹ As examples of this category, he points to ἄλλος ἄγγελος δεῦτερος (14:8) and ἄλλος ἄγγελος τρίτος (14:9) where the ordinal following the adjective ἄλλος seems tautologous.

⁴⁷ Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 205.

⁴⁸ Other examples include 7:2, 9; 13:12; 20:8.

⁴⁹ Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxxiii; Laughlin, “Solecisms,” 19.

⁵⁰ Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 211–12.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 215.

Moṭ notes this phrase is completely unique in Greek literature and conjectures this must be caused by an ellipsis but is unsure exactly what John expected to be supplied.⁵²

Summary and Preliminary Conclusions

This brief survey of the grammatically irregular and incongruous constructions in Revelation highlights the main categories of solecisms as well as provides several examples of each category. The majority of solecisms occur in the category of disagreement in case, number, and gender where several examples of solecisms occur in almost all parts of speech. It was also concluded that John's use of verb tenses has been labeled as solecistic by some; however, John's use of verb tenses is explicable in light of verbal aspect theory. John also has a few irregularities in his use of prepositions. Finally, while many of the repetitions in Revelation are explicable in light of rhetorical effect, there are examples of pleonasm.

Additionally, this brief survey of solecisms in Revelation reveals four characteristics of John's irregular Greek. First, the solecisms are frequent. In the most comprehensive study to date, Moṭ suggests that scholars have proposed as many as 232 solecisms. After categorizing the solecisms, Moṭ analyzes them each individually and divides them into three categories: alleged, explicable, and actual. The first category (alleged), he finds nothing incorrect about the proposed solecism. In the second category (explicable), Moṭ asserts that the constructions are differentiated from the last category yet still explicable within Greek and should not be considered solecism. The third category (actual) Moṭ reserves for "solecisms that are without linguistic explanation". In this third category, he identifies 45 instances of solecism. The conclusion of Moṭ's analysis is that scholars have overestimated the irregularity of Revelation's

⁵² Ibid.

Greek since the actual number is only 19% of the proposed solecisms.⁵³ Yet even Motz's condensed list of solecisms averages to two occurrences per chapter.

Second, some of the solecisms appear intentional.⁵⁴ For example, John's use of the preposition *ἀπό* with the nominative case occurs with the phrase *ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος* that John repeats (1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5). John uses the preposition *ἀπό* 36 times, 32 of which he uses with the expected genitive substantive.⁵⁵ In four cases, John uses an adverb with the preposition (14:13; 18:10, 15, 17). John's work demonstrates that he is familiar with correct use of the preposition *ἀπό* and is intentionally using it in an irregular way in 1:4. Similarly, the two occurrences of *ὅμοιος* with the accusative *υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου* rather than the expected dative hardly seems accidental, especially since John uses the adjective 19 times with the dative.⁵⁶ Thus, a sizeable number of the violations of grammatical syntax appear to be intentional.⁵⁷

Third, in juxtaposition to point two, many of the solecisms appear inconsistent. This was highlighted in the brief survey above by the examples where a parallel expression to the proposed solecism occurs elsewhere correctly. For example, in 3:12, the feminine nominative articular participle *ἡ καταβαίνουσα* is appended to *τῆς καινῆς Ἱερουσαλήμ* whereas the almost parallel phrase is in the expected form in 21:2. Further, John uses the participial form of *καταβαίνω* five times elsewhere correctly. Similarly, John uses the genitival participial *τῶν γεμόντων* to modify the accusative *τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας* ("the seven bowls") in 21:9 whereas

⁵³ After attributing many of John's peculiarities to Semitic influence, Charles lists 50 examples of "slips of our author" (1:clii).

⁵⁴ Lars Rydbeck says, "Revelation, the author of which is an idiosyncratic stylist; deviances from normative Greek grammar are intentional" without elaboration ("The Language of the New Testament," *TynBul* 49 [1998]: 367).

⁵⁵ 1:4, 5; 3:12; 6:16 [twice]; 7:2; 9:6, 18; 12:6, 14; 13:8; 14:3, 4, 20; 16:12, 17, 18; 17:8; 18:14 [twice]; 19:5; 20:11; 21:2, 10, 13 [four], 19 [twice].

⁵⁶ 1:15; 2:18; 4:3 [twice]; 4:6, 7 [thrice]; 9:7 [twice], 10, 19; 11:1; 13:2, 4, 11; 18:18; 21:11, 18; however, Wilhelm Bousset called these two occurrences, "Eine einfache grobe Nachlässigkeit ..." (*Offenbarung*, 184).

⁵⁷ Callahan, "Language of Apocalypse," 456.

elsewhere the participial form of γέμω correctly modifies its antecedent (e.g., 4:6; 5:8; 15:7).

Moreover, in both 5:8 and 15:7, the author uses the expected accusative participle γεμούσας to modify φιάλας χρυσᾶς. Finally, John's use of λέγω and ἔχω demonstrate the irregularity of John's grammar. Moř summarizes:

Λέγω is found 32 times in the participle, present, masculine, singular and plural forms. Of these, 29 occurrences are undoubtedly of a correct case relationship with their antecedents.... The participle, present, masculine, singular and plural of ἔχω is found 36 times in Revelation. Many of them stand as the subjects of their clauses. Of the remaining, there are 13 indisputable occurrences of ἔχων and ἔχοντες in perfect concord with their referents. There are only five occurrences of ἔχω that comprise the real and the explicable solecisms of the nominative as a modifier of an oblique case.⁵⁸

After a detailed exploration of John's varied use of ἔχω, Verheyden summarizes, "It seems that it was not always used with a particular intention, or at least not one that we are still able to detect, but that John introduced it rather randomly."⁵⁹

Fourth, the solecisms are jarring. It is the author's general aptitude in Greek that makes the frequent solecisms rhetorically jolting.⁶⁰ Allen Callahan notes:

The crudest *koine* Greek speaker would no doubt balk at the prepositional phrase of ἀπό followed by the nominative case in Rev 1:4.... This verse seems to require emergency remedial grammar, but it is important to note that it does not mark the language of the work as a whole. The author of Revelation knows that the genitive is obligatory for ἀπό and complies with the basic rule of grammar elsewhere.⁶¹

Any account of the cause of the solecisms must take into account these four features of them. As will be demonstrated in the history of research, scholars typically place more weight on one of these characteristics than the others.

⁵⁸ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 133.

⁵⁹ Verheyden, "Strange and Unexpected," 176.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

⁶¹ Callahan, "Language of Apocalypse," 456.

CHAPTER TWO

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM OF SOLECISMS

Introduction

Much ink has been used to explicate the cause of the grammatical irregularities in Revelation. There have been two major trajectories taken in scholarly literature since the beginning of the twentieth century. The first major approach analyzes the phenomenon grammatically. Within this approach, two major camps have emerged. The first camp posits that the solecisms are due to Semitic language interference. The means by which Hebrew (or Aramaic) affected the author have been diversely explained. In response to this dominant line of inquiry, a second camp holds that Revelation's Greek should be viewed as a Greek idiolect without recourse to Semitic language transfer. The second major approach analyzes the grammatical irregularities as intentional literary and rhetorical devices aimed to have some effect on the audience. A final explanation, rarely discussed, is the possibility that some feature of the author's visionary (ecstatic) experience resulted in irregular grammar.

Forschungsgeschichte

GRAMMATICAL APPROACHES

Semitic Language Transfer

Two scholars have proposed Revelation originally was written in a Semitic language and subsequently translated into Greek. In 1928, R. B. Y. Scott argued the Apocalypse was translated from a Hebrew *Vorlage*.¹ Thirty years later, Yale University professor Charles C. Torrey argued that the Apocalypse was translated from an Aramaic *Vorlage*: "In fact, underlying all of the

¹ R. B. Y. Scott, *The Original Language of the Apocalypse* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1928).

amazing solecisms is seen the wording of the Semitic original.”² After examining verb usage in Revelation, Torrey concluded, “In short there is in Revelation no trace of Hebrew usage in the tenses employed. Whatever evidence there is of falsely or too literally rendered verbs points to Aramaic rather than to Hebrew.”³ The grammatical “monstrosities” were due to the fact that the author was translating (and frequently mistranslating) an unpointed Aramaic text.⁴ Explanations relying on a Semitic *Vorlage* are entirely conjectural since no evidence remains to suggest that either a Hebrew or Aramaic *Vorlage* existed; thus, no other scholars have been persuaded by these theses.

The dominant explanation holds that the Semitic interference is caused by bilingualism. In his 1902 dissertation at Princeton University, T. Cowden Laughlin asserts, “The Greek of the Apocalypse is marked by a series of most striking peculiarities which, as has long been recognized, are due in large part to the influence of the Hebrew idiom.”⁵ Laughlin analyzes the solecisms under three headings: peculiar words, peculiar phrases, and peculiar constructions. As an example of Laughlin’s overall approach, when he discusses the disagreements in gender, he says that “*Feminine nouns* are frequently followed by an adjective or participle in the *masculine*.”⁶ He gives 4:1, 9:13–14, 11:4, 11:15, and 17:3 as examples of this. He posits this is due to Hebrew structure since in Hebrew the masculine gender is often used when females are spoken of or when the nouns to which they refer are feminine: “The Apocalypticist imitates this Hebrew construction in the passages just given. His defiance of grammar in those instances was intentional. He knew, for example, that the feminine adjective should agree with the feminine

² C. C. Torrey, *Apocalypse of John* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 27–47, quoting from 19.

³ *Ibid.*, 57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

⁵ Laughlin, “Solecisms,” 4.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13.

noun, as a number of texts show.”⁷ Laughlin considers the absolute use of the participle λέγων to correspond to the usage in the LXX corresponding to לאמר.⁸ Laughlin concludes, “Viewing the evidence as a whole, the impression is strong that the author of the Apocalypse made use of the LXX and Hebrew idiom in a conscious effort to reproduce the manner and spirit of the ancient Prophets; it was not through ignorance of correct Greek usage.”⁹

In his 1906 commentary, Henry Barclay Swete addressed the solecisms in Revelation. He notes that most of the discordant constructions are due to various forms of anacoluthon.¹⁰ He proceeds to give examples of the major categories: nominatives in apposition to other cases; irregular uses of λέγων and ἔχων; redundant pronouns and adverbs; and faulty agreement in genders, numbers, or cases.¹¹ Besides these examples of anacoluthon, Swete identifies a large number of “idiotisms.”¹² He gives sudden shifts in tense and moods without explanation; adjectives and verbs governing cases other than those required by usage; and other unusual constructions as the major categories providing multiple examples of each. As to the explanation for these phenomena, Swete points to the use of ὁμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου in 1:13 and 14:14 and notes that the author has not erred in all these cases due to grammatical ignorance.¹³ He opines:

His eccentricities of syntax are probably due to more than one case: some to the habit which he may have retained from early years of thinking in a Semitic language; some to the desire of giving movement and vivid reality to his visions, which leads him to report them after the manner of shorthand notes, jotted down at the time; some to the circumstances in which the book was written.¹⁴

⁷ Ibid., 14.

⁸ Ibid., 16–17.

⁹ Ibid., 22.

¹⁰ Swete, cxxiii.

¹¹ Ibid., cxxiii–cxxiv.

¹² Ibid., cxxiv.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., cxxv.

Probably the most influential work on Revelation which is most often cited with regard to the irregular grammar is Charles's two volume *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Apocalypse of St. John* (1920). Until recently, it remained the most comprehensive analysis of John's grammar and style. In section 13 of the introduction, Charles begins "A Short Grammar of the Apocalypse" which comprises 43 pages. After providing brief analyses of John's use of the major parts of speech, in subsection 10, Charles investigates "The Hebraic Style of the Apocalypse." Charles notes that the Greek of the apocalypse is completely unique from all other Greek literature including the LXX, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and even the papyri.¹⁵ Charles asserts that the author is an artist full of the message of the great Hebrew prophets of old; however, his unusual style is not intentional.¹⁶ Charles then posits of John's unusual Greek, "The reason clearly is that, *while he writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew*, and the thought has naturally affected the vehicle of expression."¹⁷ Additionally, he has taken over some Semitic Greek sources which had already been translated from Hebrew. Charles postulates that John: "never mastered Greek idiomatically—even the Greek of his own period. To him very many of its particles were apparently unknown, and the multitudinous shades of meaning which they expressed in the various combinations into which they entered were never grasped at all, or only in a very inadequate degree."¹⁸ Indeed, Charles maintains that the Apocalypse "is more Hebraic than the LXX itself." He divides his exploration of the Hebraisms into two categories: (i) The Greek text needs at times to be translated into Hebrew in order to discover its meaning; and (ii) Other Hebraisms. Under "Other Hebraisms", Charles gives examples of misrenderings of

¹⁵ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxliii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:cxliv.

Hebrew words or phrases by the author as well as six examples of corruptions in the Hebrew texts which John used (or corruptions already present in the Greek translation the author used).¹⁹

In a somewhat confusing section, Charles includes a very short section 11 on “Unique Expressions in our Author.” The first two of three examples involve the phrase ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὃ ἐρχόμενος. Charles comments, “Our author knows perfectly the case that should follow ἀπό, but refuses to inflect the divine name.”²⁰ Charles summarizes that all the examples in sections 10–11 comprise examples of *literal* reproduction in Greek of Hebrew idioms which were intentionally chosen by the author. In section 12, Charles addresses “Solecisms due to slips on the part of our Author.” These are instances for which Charles was unable to explain as Hebraic idioms. He says, “The bulk of these solecisms, though not all, are simply slips of our author which a subsequent revision would have removed, if the opportunity for such a revision had offered itself.”²¹ Charles’s methodology for suggesting these were accidental oversights is demonstrating that for each solecistic construction, John demonstrates aptitude in parallel constructions elsewhere. For example, in the first example of 1:10, Charles points to 6:6; 14:3; and 16:1 “where the construction is normal.”²² Regarding the irregular use of τῶν γεμόντων in 21:9, Charles says, “It is hard to explain how such a slip as τῶν γεμόντων (A8 025) could have arisen, but if one investigates one’s own slips, it is often impossible to account for them.”²³ The author uses the participle attributively in 15:7 suggesting, “Our author would no doubt have corrected this phrase into τὰς γεμούσας as certain cursives have done....”²⁴ In section 13, Charles attributes some irregularities to scribal corruptions due to accidental and deliberate changes.

¹⁹ Ibid., 1:c1–clii.

²⁰ Ibid., 1:clii.

²¹ Ibid.; Charles gives the following: 1:10, 15, 20; 2:27; 4:4; 6:1, 14; 7:9; 10:8; 11:1, 3, 4; 13:3; 14:6–7, 14, 19; 19:20.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 1:cliv.

²⁴ Ibid.

One of the main challenges to Charles's hypothesis is that many of the constructions Charles posits are due to "thinking in Hebrew" are found in the LXX. When a phrase occurs in the LXX, knowledge of the Septuagint suffices to demonstrate why the author might have chosen a particular construction and need not require that the author is "thinking in Hebrew."²⁵ Finally, one might ask if the overall picture Charles paints of John as an inept second-language speaker making numerous accidental slips while composing the book in haste without subsequent revision coheres with the reality of the book as an incredibly complex work and the author's general aptitude in Greek. Nevertheless, Charles's investigation has remained quite influential.

In 1965, Nigel Turner identified John's use of the future tense where the past tense is required as a solecism. He believed the author was either inexpert in Greek or deliberately provocative in his choice of Semitic constructions.²⁶ He notes that some of the translators of the Septuagint demonstrate a confusion over how to consistently render Hebrew verbs into Greek. "His book abounds in grammatical solecisms which are clearly Hebraic."²⁷ According to Turner, this does not necessitate a Hebrew *Vorlage* or a redaction of Hebrew sources, but opines, "Although for some reason he wrote in Greek, the author believed that Hebrew was the language of inspiration and symbolism, and so he deliberately imitated its thought-forms in every way which came to his mind."²⁸ Turner argues the style is imitative although he seems unsure why the author would imitate a Hebrew linguistic feature in Greek. This topic will be taken up in chapters 3 and 4 by demonstrating how ancients understood and practiced imitation.

²⁵ See Callahan's critique, "Language of Apocalypse", 455.

²⁶ Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (London: Bloomsbury, 1965), 159.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 159–60.

In a 1965 article, C. G. Ozanne addresses the frequent “ungrammatical and unlexical usages” of Greek in the Apocalypse.²⁹ Ozanne does not believe these abnormalities to be due to ignorance of Greek. He dismisses Torrey’s thesis that the Apocalypse was translated from Aramaic citing G. R. Driver’s critique of Torrey that nearly all the Aramaisms are better explained as Hebraisms.³⁰ Thus, Scott’s hypothesis that the Apocalypse was translated from Hebrew has more to commend it, but it fails to take into account the seemingly deliberate character of the solecisms: “it [the Hebraism theory] does not explain why most of the grammatical rules violated are faithfully observed elsewhere in the book, and thus shown to be perfectly familiar to the author.”³¹ Charles’s theory that the author writes in Greek while thinking in Hebrew is subject to the same criticism. Thus, Ozanne opines, “The explanation which the present writer believes to be correct is that the author deliberately modelled his grammar on the pattern of the classical Hebrew of the Old Testament.”³² This is due to the fact that the author wished to present himself as one of the OT prophets speaking as authoritatively as the Scriptures. The author then proceeds to give examples. In 6:8, for example, the four plagues are allusions to Ezek 14:21. The third plague “pestilence” (θανάτω) renders the Hebrew דָּבָר (LXX θάνατος). Ozanne curiously notes, “It is often supposed that the author in this instance quoted from the Septuagint, but septuagintal influence is practically nonexistent in the book of Revelation.”³³ The author probably had in mind the Hebrew word מָוֹת, which usually means ‘death’ in the OT, but in Jeremiah 15:2, 18:21, and 43:11 can only mean ‘pestilence.’

²⁹ C. G. Ozanne, “The Language of the Apocalypse,” *Tyndale House Bulletin* 16 (1965): 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 5.

Ozanne says that the largest group of grammatical anomalies are in the misuse of case or gender. The greatest example is in 1:4, but this is because the author, like Exod 3:14, refuses to inflect the divine name. Similarly, in the two incorrect cases following the adjective in 1:13 and 14:14 (ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου), Ozanne surmises this must be intentional since the author uses the preposition correctly 19 times elsewhere. Torrey had explained this as a case of the author representing in Greek the Hebrew idiom known as *kap̄ Veritatis*. Since the phrase is an allusion to Dan 7:13 and since a Christian apostle could not speak so vaguely of the risen Christ, the author “reinterpreted the preposition *kap̄* in Daniel in the light of the *kap̄ Veritatis* construction.”³⁴ Ozanne concludes:

These few examples constitute some of the more significant Hebraisms in the book of Revelation. Many of them could equally well be explained as Aramaisms or Septuagintisms, but at the same time many of them could not. The only source from which every one can be paralleled is the classical Hebrew of the Old Testament. Also evidence from the above examples is their deliberate character.³⁵

The author uses these abnormalities deliberately to signify solidarity with the writings of the OT which is consistent with the author’s overall programme in Revelation. Ozanne provides no substantiation for why John would have deliberately modelled his style on the classical Hebrew prophets. However, in chapter 3 I will build on this thesis by providing the foundation for the impulse to imitate authoritative figures of the past.

Since Charles, the most comprehensive attempt to account for the Semitic influence on John’s Greek was Mussies’s *The Morphology of Koine Greek: As Used in the Apocalypse of St. John: A Study in Bilingualism* (1971). He attempts a comprehensive morphology of verb tenses and syntax used in the Apocalypse. In his section “Confusion with other Cases?” Mussies addresses case disagreements in Revelation. For example, he discusses 1:10–11 where λεγούσης

³⁴ Ibid., 7–8.

³⁵ Ibid., 8.

has been attracted to σάλπιγγος and should read λέγουσαν.³⁶ He gives 19:20 as a “very curious” example where the participle καιομένης is in line with πρὸς in case and with λίμνην in gender.³⁷ He concludes, “We think all these instances are proof of the author’s uncertainty in using categories alien to his own language.”³⁸ After analyzing adjectives, Mussies notes that incongruities in case, number, and gender normally are to be explained as constructions *ad sensum* (cf. 5:6, 12; 9:5; 11:4; 13:8, 14; 17:3, 11, 16).³⁹

In his discussion of verbs, Mussies notes the irregular use of middle perfect verbs (11 of which are ἐστώς or ἐστηκώς) for which the perfective value is doubtful: “In our opinion it can easily be explained if we assume that in the Apocalypse of which the Jewish background is evident, the Greek language has been in contact with Hebrew and/or Aramaic.”⁴⁰ He suggests two ways that John’s Hebrew/Aramaic came in contact with his Greek. First, John was multilingual and his use of Greek was influenced by his mother tongue (Hebrew/Aramaic). Second, John had no mastery of Greek, and composes the book in Hebrew or Aramaic, and then it was later translated into Greek by another person. It is unlikely the translator knew either of the Semitic languages unless he was a Christian of Jewish origin. Mussies is hesitant to choose between these two options since the question ultimately remains the same—whether John or his translator brought the Greek in contact with the Semitic language.⁴¹

One of Mussies most provocative claims is that Mishnaic Hebrew, rather than classic Hebrew, is the best comparison with the Greek in the Apocalypse since it is roughly contemporaneous and reveals development of Hebrew after the composition of the OT.⁴²

³⁶ Mussies, *Morphology*, 97–98.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 312.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 314.

However, Mussies notes this conclusion does not ignore influence from the OT or LXX.⁴³ When discussing John's frequent shifting of time, Mussies does not see John's inability to handle Greek, but rather the author's reliance on the timelessness of biblical Hebrew indicatives. He assumes this reflects a development in Hebrew towards Mishnaic Hebrew.⁴⁴ Mussies takes up Lancellotti's work on the future tenses in 9:9–10. Lancellotti (and Charles later) thought that these futures reflected biblical Hebrew *yiqṭōl* tenses having a past-iterative value making these futures equivalent to the imperfect.⁴⁵ Mussies objects that appealing to biblical Hebrew is unnecessary since John's verbal tenses convey the visionary experience. The author begins in past tense recounting the vision but moves to more vivid present indicatives and participles, and ends with futures indicating that what he sees is still to come.⁴⁶ In his conclusion, Mussies is unable to discern whether the author's primary language was Hebrew or Aramaic. He says, "It is even highly probable that our phrase 'Hebrew *or* Aramaic' suggests a problem which does not exist: both languages most likely influenced an author who was so well versed in Ezekiel *and* Daniel, and who lived in a period when both languages were used by each other's side."⁴⁷

Another important work is Steven Thompson, *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax* (1985). Thompson focuses on Hebraic influence on the verbs of the Apocalypse. In chapter two, he surveys Greek verbs with Hebrew meanings. In chapter three, he analyzes Semitic influence on verbal syntax, and in chapter four, Semitic influence on clauses. In one example, Thompson addresses Laughlin's thesis that present tense verbs are often used with a future sense. He cites 1:7; 2:5, 22f.; 3:9; and 17:12–14 as examples. He notes the occurrence of this phenomenon in

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 336.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 343.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 344, 349.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 352–53.

Zech 2:13–14 (LXX) and concludes this is how Semitic Greek renders a Hebrew participle of *futurum instans*.⁴⁸ In one section, Thompson addresses “The problem of shifting tenses” where there are seemingly inexplicable shifts among Greek verb tenses without a corresponding shift in time.⁴⁹ Thompson maintains that this phenomenon is easily understood in light of Semitic influence, especially the use of aorist for the prophetic perfect.⁵⁰ Thompson believes that his study leads to new exegetical possibilities: “It could lead to a new era in the exegesis of the Apc., with more attention being given to the contributions of OT Hebrew/Aramaic syntax, and fuller awareness of the Seer’s indebtedness to the OT not only for symbols and metaphors but for his very language.”⁵¹ Thompson thinks it unfounded to hold that the author knew only Hebrew or Aramaic, but opines the author was probably familiar with both biblical Hebrew and Aramaic.⁵² He believes that the language of Revelation can be categorized as “Jewish Greek” for which “the Greek language was little more than a membrane, stretched tightly over a Semitic framework, showing many essential contours from beneath.”⁵³

Various commentators also appeal to Semitic language transfer to explain the irregular constructions in Revelation.⁵⁴ In his landmark commentary on Revelation, Aune comments on the solecisms in Revelation. For example, in his discussion of the nominative of apposition, he notes that the nominative is used as a solecism to oblique cases in eight instances (1:5; 2:20; 3:12; 9:11, 14; 14:12; 19:16; 20:2). To account for the Semitic interference of the Greek, Aune gives four possibilities: (1) Revelation was originally written in Hebrew (Scott) or Aramaic (Torrey); (2) the author wrote in Greek, but thought in Hebrew (Charles, Mussies); (3) biblical

⁴⁸ Thompson, *Semitic Syntax*, 34–35.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 47.

⁵⁰ Thompson cites as examples Daniel (Theod.) 4:31, 35; 7:26f; Hos. 4:10; 9:3b (p. 48).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 107.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁵⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 24–25.

Hebrew served as the model for the language (Thompson); or (4) the author was secondarily bilingual (i.e. he had no formal instruction in Greek).⁵⁵ Aune then helpfully asserts that one should distinguish Semitisms methodologically—whether they are (1) semantic Semitisms; (2) lexical Semitisms; (3) phraseological Semitisms; (4) syntactic Semitisms; or (5) stylistic Semitisms.⁵⁶

Aune also maintains that there are constructions which cannot be accounted for through Semitic interference. Under the heading “Special problems”, he discusses several solecisms.⁵⁷ For example, in 1:11 λεγούσης should be in the accusative case, but has been attracted to the genitive of the immediately preceding word σάλπιγγος.⁵⁸ In 13:14 the masculine singular participle λέγων modifies the neuter singular noun θηρίον, but this is due to the author’s use of the masculine for neuter nouns that symbolize men.⁵⁹ In 19:20, the articular participle τῆς καιομένης “appears to be a solecism that is congruent with the case of τοῦ πυρός (a neuter noun) rather than with τῆν λίμνην (a feminine noun), i.e., with the word the author considered the most important of the two nouns.”⁶⁰ In his grammatical comments *in situ*, he consistently notes syntactically incongruous constructions, sometimes simply noting their presence and other times providing explanations for the solecisms. For example, commenting on the incongruous use of the participial form of λέγω in 4:1, Aune notes:

The ptcp. λέγων, “saying,” is frequently used redundantly in Revelation following other verbs of saying, and not in congruence with the case of the noun it should modify; i.e., syntactically it is an anacolouthon or solecism (see Rev. 4:8; 5:12; 11:15). Since λέγων modifies ἡ φωνή, “the voice,” it should be expressed as the fem. nom. form λέγουσα, “saying.” These two features indicate that this is an intentional Hebraism on the part of

⁵⁵ See David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5* WBC 52a (Dallas: Word, 1997), 1:xcix.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 1:cc.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 1:cciii–cciv.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 1:cciii.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 1:cciv.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the author in which the term לאמר *lē'mōr*, “so as to say,” is used to introduce direct speech corresponding to the more conventional Gk. use of ὅτι, “that”....⁶¹

Aune then provides examples from the LXX which illustrate a similar incongruity.⁶² It is unclear whether Aune believes this solecism to be caused by the author directly thinking in Hebrew while writing Greek (Charles) or imitating a construction from the LXX. In commenting on the similar occurrence in 11:15, Aune directs to his previous comments at 4:1 and 11:4, 15; however, here, he adds, “Occasionally in Heb. the masc. gender is used to refer back to females or to fem. nouns in instances where no stress is placed on gender.”⁶³ He then provides multiple examples of masculine pronouns referring to females and feminine nouns in the MT.⁶⁴ Where Aune provides rationale for solecisms, Semitic interference is the most common explanation, although it often remains unclear exactly how the Semitic language is interfering. In chapter 4, I will argue that John was influenced (maybe primarily) by the Hebrew text of the OT without excluding the influence of Greek versions. Per the suggestions of Ozanne, Turner, et al., the Semitic nature of some of the solecisms is not surprising if John were imitating Hebrew texts.

Greek Idiolect

The most serious challenge to the dominant Semitic language interference theory has been posed by a number of scholars arguing that Revelation’s grammar (including the syntactical idiosyncrasies) should be studied against the background of Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic. In 1869, Georg Benedikt Winer sought to explain the solecisms of Revelation from a “Greek point

⁶¹ Ibid., 1:269.

⁶² Aune gives Gen 15:1, 4; 22:20; 38:13, 24; Exod. 18:6; 45:16; Lev. 8:31; 2 Kgdms. 15:31; 3 Kgdms 1:51; 20:9 (MT: 21:9) [*Revelation 1–5*, 1:269–70].

⁶³ Ibid., 2:489.

⁶⁴ For masculine pronouns referring to females, he gives Exod. 1:21; 2:17; Num. 36:6; Judg. 11:34; 21:12; 19:24; 1 Sam. 6:7; 2 Sam. 6:22; Ezek. 23:49; Ruth 1:8. For masculine pronouns referring to feminine nouns, he gives Exod. 11:6; 22:25; Lev. 6:8; 27:9; Num. 3:27, 33; Deut. 27:5; 1 Sam. 10:18; Isa. 34:17.

of view.”⁶⁵ Winer maintained the irregularities are better explained as instances of anacoluthon, blending of two constructions, *constructio ad sensum*, and *varatio structurae*.⁶⁶ He did not believe the irregularities were “Hebraisms” since some would be irregular in Hebrew. Generally, the author exhibits a thorough knowledge of Greek syntax. Many of the irregularities found in Revelation can be found in the Septuagint and other Greek writers.⁶⁷

In 1906, J. H. Moulton expressed his view that unlike the cultured writers of the NT, Revelation was more akin to the writers of the papyri and had “very imperfect ideas of the use of cases and genders.”⁶⁸ Moulton expressly rejects attributing the blunders of Revelation to “Hebraism.” In that same year, he wrote:

We find him perpetually indifferent to concord. But the less educated papyri give us plentiful parallels from a field where Semitism cannot be suspected.... Apart from the place where he may be definitely translating a Semitic document, there is no reason to believe that his grammar would have been materially different had he been a native of Oxyrhynchus, assuming the extent of Greek education the same.⁶⁹

In Swete’s 1907 commentary, he responded to Moulton’s comparison of Revelation to the papyri:

But the facts seem at present insufficient to warrant this conclusion. It is precarious to compare a literary document with a collection of personal and business letters, accounts, and other ephemeral writings; slips in word-formation or in syntax which are to be expected in the latter, are phenomenal in the former, and if they find a place there, can only be attributed to the lifelong habits of thought.⁷⁰

Interestingly, Moulton changed his view after the publication of Charles’s commentary which he believed demonstrated that many of the constructions “are due to the literal transference of

⁶⁵ Georg Benedikt Winer, *Grammar of the Idiom of the New Testament*, 535.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.; Moses Stuart often appeals to Winer’s arguments in his *Commentary on The Apocalypse*, vol. 2 (New York: M. H. Newman, 1845).

⁶⁸ James Hope Moulton, *The Science of Language and the Study of the New Testament* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1906), 21.

⁶⁹ James Hope Moulton, *Prolegomena*, vol. 1 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* by James Hope Moulton, Wilbert Francis Howard, and Nigel Turner, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), 8–9.

⁷⁰ Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxxv.

Semitic idioms” and that the author might be a man who used Greek as a second language.⁷¹

While the author has an extensive vocabulary, he apparently never bothered “to cure himself of some grammatical faults which persisted easily when affecting categories not present in his own native language.”⁷²

Stanley Porter wrote an article in 1989 challenging the arguments above that Revelation should be considered “Jewish Greek” reflecting Semitic syntax:

The burden of proof must rest upon those arguing for a Semitic source to prove that a particular construction is impossible in the NT or at least highly unlikely to occur as it does. Since the NT documents are extant Greek documents in a Greek linguistic milieu (see below), the burden of proof must lie with those who argue for Semitic influence.⁷³

One of Porter’s most important contributions is the call for methodological clarity from those arguing for Semitic interference since there are various levels of Semitic influence: (a) direct translation; (b) intervention, when a form that cannot reasonably be formed or paralleled in Greek must be attributed to the influence of a Semitic construction; and (c) enhancement, when a rare construction that can be paralleled in Greek has its frequency of occurrence greatly increased due to associations with Semitic literature.⁷⁴ Only those linguistic elements which cannot be accounted for within the parameters of the Greek language should be labeled “Semitism”; thus only intervention can be properly labeled “Semitism.”⁷⁵

Porter challenges Thompson’s view that the John’s use of the perfect is irregular. While he regards it as legitimate to examine John’s use of the perfect, Porter maintains that all examples of irregular uses of the perfect and the mixing of perfects and presents may be

⁷¹ Moulton, “Language of the New Testament” in *A Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Arthur S. Peake (New York: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1920), 592.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Stanley E. Porter, “The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion,” *NTS* 35 (1989): 587.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

understood as legitimate uses in Greek. Thompson worked from a questionable temporal perspective of Greek tenses.⁷⁶ In another example, Thompson argued that the irregular use of λέγων as an example of the Semitic infinitive construct; however, Porter shows that λέγων with the meaning “to say” and as an introductory formula is used in extra-biblical Greek usage from Thucydides, Plato, Herodotus, Epictetus, et al. Porter faults Thompson for not fully exploring extra-biblical Greek before resorting to Semitic interference.⁷⁷

Porter raises sociolinguistic questions regarding the use of Greek. Hellenistic Greek is part of a long history of developments in the Greek language. It took on characteristics both progressive and retrogressive. “Proper Greek” is often compared to the written texts of classical Greek; however, no one language-period is the standard of perfect Greek. Porter calls for a distinction between grammar which is the range of meanings that a person can express and the way these meanings are realized in specific formal features while style describes the possible manifestations of codes (registers).⁷⁸ The most that can be argued is for Semitic enhancement at certain points, but macro-level Semitic interference cannot be proved. Porter says, “There is no compelling reason to believe that even if there is a particularly large number of linguistically odd examples that this points to Semitic influence, especially since so many can be paralleled in extra-biblical Greek.”⁷⁹ There are also other possibilities that explain the irregularities of Revelation—the author may not have been competent in Greek and because of his situation as a prisoner, lacked adequate secretarial assistance.⁸⁰ Thus, for Porter, “There appears to be no

⁷⁶ Ibid., 588–89.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 590.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 597.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 599–600.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 600.

compelling reason to see the language of the Apocalypse as anything other than in many places vulgar Greek of the 1st century.”⁸¹

In his *Revelation: A Handbook on the Greek Text*, Mathewson reviews the major proposals for Semitic interference and agrees with Porter’s critique that labeling something as “Semitism” does not actually say much about the level of influence of Hebrew or Aramaic.⁸² He argues, “Very often what is deemed a ‘Semitism’ turns out to be an acceptable (even if uncommon) Greek construction, the frequency of which has been enhanced by Semitic influence.”⁸³ Since John is writing in Greek to churches in Asia Minor in Greek culture, Mathewson’s methodology throughout the book is only to appeal to Semitic interference if a construction cannot be accounted for in Greek. His most important contribution in the handbook is to incorporate insights of verbal aspect to the use of verbs in Revelation. Previous identifications of solecistic use of verb tenses and moods in Revelation relied too heavily on a time-based perspective of Greek verbs.

The most comprehensive attempt to explain the irregular grammatical constructions in Revelation is Moṭ’s *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities in the Book of Revelation: A Greek Hypothesis* (2015). In his revised dissertation, Moṭ provides a fresh analysis of the proposed solecisms and barbarisms in the book of Revelation and seeks to explain these irregularities by Greek language conventions rather than relying on Hebrew/Aramaic transfer theories. In chapter one, Moṭ provides five research questions his study addresses: (1) How many grammatical anomalies does the Apocalypse of John contain? (2) How could these peculiar structures be classified in such a way so as to enhance their evaluation? (3) Are they intentional

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Mathewson, *Handbook*, xxiv.

⁸³ Ibid., xxv.

or not intentional? (4) What is their explanation? (5) Do they hamper the message of the text or how do they affect that message?⁸⁴

In chapter two, Moṭ makes one of his most significant contributions. He analyzes the distinction ancient Greek and Latin authors such as Quintilian, Herodianus, Lucian, et al. made between solecisms and barbarisms. Using those distinctions, he defines a barbarism as the deviation of a single word component from the lexical form and a solecism as an irregularity in morpho-semantic features such as case, gender, or number.⁸⁵ These authors developed taxonomies for identifying barbarisms and solecisms.⁸⁶ Moṭ demonstrates that lexical and morpho-syntactical irregularities could be tolerated as metaplasm or figure if they were due to the intentional poetic or stylistic license of the author.⁸⁷ This insight I will further develop in chapter 3. For Moṭ, if the proposed solecism could be shown to have some reasonable explanation (i.e. *constructio ad sensum*, anacoluthon, ellipsis, etc.), then the occurrence should not be considered solecism. He then turns to discuss the idea of correctness in grammar. Traditional grammars, Moṭ states, used a prescriptive approach to grammar; yet, with the onset of descriptive-functional approaches to grammar, the focus has shifted from viewing language as a set of grammatical rules to viewing language as communicative convention. Moṭ favors the descriptive-functional approach.⁸⁸

In chapter three, Moṭ analyzes and categorizes the 232 solecisms in Revelation that have been proposed by scholars. His methodology throughout is that, “As long as one usage is attested to in other [Greek] sources, rare as it may be, it should not be considered irregular, but probably

⁸⁴ Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 30.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 46–47.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 48–64.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 67–73.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 74–80.

different or infrequent.”⁸⁹ He concludes that there are no barbarisms in the Apocalypse.⁹⁰ He divides the remaining irregularities into five groups: (1) disagreements in case, gender, and number; (2) verbal incongruences; (3) prepositional irregularities; (4) omissions; and (5) additions or redundancies. Throughout his analysis of each proposed solecism, Mot uses text critical, diachronic, and synchronic insights to support his exegetical analysis of the text. In each section, he categorizes all proposed solecisms into three groups: alleged, explicable, and actual.⁹¹

While a thorough examination of Mot’s analysis of individual passages is outside the purview of this review, a few brief examples of his analysis are instructive. In his section on discords of case, Mot gives the phrase τὴν λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς τῆς καιομένης in 19:20 as an example of an actual solecism where the participle καιομένης agrees in gender with λίμνην and in case with πυρὸς. Later scribal emendations suggest the problem lay with the case, not the gender. He points to a number of cursives which contain the accusative τὴν καιομένην.⁹² Mot conjectures John’s mental process: “John started the accord with the correct gender, thinking of τὴν λίμνην, and ended up with an unexpected case, thinking of τοῦ πυρὸς.”⁹³ Another example of Mot’s method is in his discussion of the use in 17:4 of the accusative noun τὰ ἀκάθαρτα following γέμον βδελυγμάτων καὶ where the genitive following καὶ is expected. However, the versions are almost virtually unanimous on this reading which indicates it might not be as erroneous as it appears.⁹⁴ Scholars favoring Semitic transfer have imagined the underlying conception of the Hebrew מִלֵּא. In Hebrew, when one fills something, the Hebrew verb will be active, and Greek will render it actively and put the object that receives the filling in the

⁸⁹ Ibid., 169.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 107.

⁹¹ cf. Ibid., 132, 145–46, 158, 181.

⁹² e.g., 051, 424, 1006, 1773, 1854, 1957, 2494, and 2845. The same is true of the versions GOC, BYZ, STE, RPT, TBT, SCR, and MGK.

⁹³ Ibid., 140–41.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 154–55.

accusative; however, when the object is filled with something, Hebrew will render it passively, and Greek will translate it passively with a genitive of content. The reason for the transition from genitive to accusative may be accounted for in Greek without appealing to Semitic transfer. Although γέμον is active, the meaning of the verb is passive (“be full”); thus, the verb oscillates between the accusative and genitive because it contains in it both the active voice and the attraction to the genitive due to its meaning.⁹⁵ One explanation might be that John intends τὰ ἀκάθαρτα as the object of ἔχουσα meaning John saw the woman holding two things: a golden cup filled with abominations and the unclean things of her fornication. Finally, in a diachronic perspective, Modern Greek uses γέμειν with an accusative frequently. “This would prove that Revelation contains seeds of this transition as it combines the genitive and the accusative with the said verb.”⁹⁶ After analyzing all 232 proposed solecisms in this manner, he concludes many are alleged solecisms, the majority are explicable by a Greek language convention (anacoluthon, *constructio ad sensum*, etc.), and concludes that there are only 45 actual solecisms in Revelation.⁹⁷

In chapter four, Moṭ offers his assessment and draws implications from his findings. He concludes further that the 45 actual solecisms represent 9 types of solecisms, with 5 of them recurring more than once.⁹⁸ Of the 9 types of solecisms, only 2 are attributed to Semitic transfer (i.e. Semitic resumptive pronouns and the idiom “to fight against” using μετά).⁹⁹ According to Moṭ, this means the Greek of Revelation is not inferior to that of other NT books, and that the Greek of Revelation is quite at home within registers of Koine Greek.¹⁰⁰ Overall, Moṭ’s work is

⁹⁵ Ibid., 155.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 156.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 217–18.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 218.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 222.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 234–36.

helpful for situating John's linguistic abilities within Greek registers. He shows that numerous constructions which were previously identified as solecism or Semitism are plausibly explained as Greek language phenomena. His work helpfully demonstrates cases where scholars arguing for Semitic interference have overplayed their hand. These insights suggest that the author is writing in Greek to audiences in major urban centers that would have understood the work from a Greek cultural and linguistic framework.

LITERARY, RHETORICAL, AND THEOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Jean-Pierre Ruiz commented on the solecisms in his 1989 *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*.

Without further substantiation, Ruiz claims:

The idiosyncratic Greek of Revelation often serves precisely this function: it stops the reader in mid-course with a signal that the familiar conventions of ordinary discourse are suspended. It is not simply a matter of inelegant composition or incompetence in Greek on the author's part, but of conscious and intentional difficulties placed before the reader as obstacles to confound an ordinary reading of the text.¹⁰¹

According to Ruiz, this is part of John's larger purpose of inviting readers into active reading which he does through other devices like hermeneutical imperatives. When the reader realizes an unordinary construction, one must involve himself or herself actively to understand the meaning of the text.

In 1995, Allen Callahan proposed that the idiolectal language is both intentional and insurgent. Callahan rejects Semitic transfer theory (mainly interacting with Charles) which he says views the style of Revelation as "unsuccessful bilingualism." For many of Charles's proposed solecisms, the attestation of certain constructions in the Septuagint would negate the

¹⁰¹ Jean-Pierre Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16,17–19,10* (Paris: Peter Lang, 1989), 220.

necessity that the author is “thinking in Hebrew.”¹⁰² Where oblique participles or articular infinitives are resolved into a finite verbs, Callahan suggests this construction is found frequently in the Septuagint, and thus is better explained, not by Semitism, but by the influence of the Greek Bible.¹⁰³ Regarding the stark solecism in 1:4, Callahan noted that at first glance, “This verse seems to require emergency remedial grammar,” but the rest of Revelation reveals the author knows that ἀπό requires the genitive.¹⁰⁴ Thus, the style and diction of the author is not due to blunders in a second language (*pace* Charles) but has been significantly influenced by the style and diction of the LXX.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, Callahan disagrees with Thompson’s suggestion that Revelation is composed in “Jewish Greek.”¹⁰⁶ There is no evidence that such a creolized dialect existed in the eastern empire. It is not the language of a community, but the idiolect of a single author.

Callahan maintains that the task of determining what the texts mean is abortive, and thus he turns to ask how this text might have affected its hearers.¹⁰⁷ Revelation was designed to be read. Like the Rastafarians in Jamaica, “The seer, with strategy and premeditation, transgressed grammatical norms as an exercise of his own discursive power.”¹⁰⁸ The LXX functioned for John as the King James Bible did for the Rastafarians—as the nonrepresentational glossary of reality: “The Rastafarians have pressed the Bible, the book brought to them by British imperial hegemony, into service as counterhegemonic lexicon.”¹⁰⁹ John, writing in the language of the hegemonic Roman Empire (Babylon), has carefully chosen calques from the Septuagint to

¹⁰² Callahan, “The Language of Apocalypse,” 455.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 456.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 457.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 457–58.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 459.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 464–65.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 464.

constitute his idiolect. The language does not reflect John’s struggle with diabolical forces—the language is the struggle, the terrain of contestation.¹¹⁰ Although the Greek of Revelation was probably understood by the audience, “he had to coin an idiolect sufficiently deviant to privilege effectively the subaltern voice” in the shadow of the oppressive Roman Empire.¹¹¹ Thus, the grammatical irregularities are intentionally part of the “decolonizing discourse” of the book.¹¹² “To change even one jarring solecism is to compromise the integrity of the discourse, to make a concession to the very hegemony that the text itself opposes.”¹¹³

Gregory K. Beale revises Moses Stuart’s thesis that the irregular grammatical constructions occur to force the reader to focus closely on the clause.¹¹⁴ Beale furthers Stuart’s thesis by arguing extensively that John uses solecisms as an intentional device to create “syntactical dissonance” which forces the reader to slow down in order to focus on the OT allusion.¹¹⁵ There are two main reasons the solecisms occur. First, often John is carrying over the form directly from its original OT context thus making it ungrammatical in its new context in the Apocalypse.¹¹⁶ In its new context, the ungrammatical expression “sticks out like a sore thumb.”¹¹⁷ Second, Beale says, “Just as often, the precise grammar of the OT passage is not retained, but stylistic Semitisms or Septuagintalisms are incorporated in order to create the

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 465.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 466.

¹¹² Ibid., 468; see also Robert Maier who follows Callahan (*Apocalypse Recalled: The Book of Revelation After Christendom* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002], 110–16).

¹¹³ Callahan, “Language of Apocalypse,” 469.

¹¹⁴ He lists 1:4, 5, 10–11, 12, 15; 2:13, 20; 3:12; 4:1; 5:6a, 12; 7:4, 8, 9b; 8:9; 9:14; 10:2, 8; 11:4, 15; 12:5, 7; 14:7, 19; 19:6, 20; 20:2.

¹¹⁵ Gregory K. Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999); idem, “Solecisms in the Apocalypse as Signals for the Presence of Old Testament Allusions: A Selective Analysis of Revelation 1–22,” in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel*, ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders. JSNTSup 148 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 421–46; idem, “The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation,” in *It is Written: Scripture Citing Scripture*, ed. Donald A. Carson and H. G. M. Williamson (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1988), 318–36.

¹¹⁶ Gregory K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGCT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 101.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

dissonance.”¹¹⁸ Since John usually keeps the rules of standard Hellenistic Greek most of the time, the irregularities are best explained as stylistic Septuagintalisms and Hebraisms, and grammatically awkward markers of OT allusions. The purpose of this technique “was probably to create a ‘biblical’ effect in the hearer and, hence, to show the solidarity of the writing with that of the OT.”¹¹⁹ I will argue later in chapter 4, similar to Beale, that the unusual style looks backward to Israel’s Scriptures in order to create a ‘biblical’ effect. *Pace* Beale, I do not see the solecisms as being due to specific textual allusions in each instance but due to the author’s imitation of Ezekiel’s visionary style.

While Beale’s thesis is helpful to explain certain occurrences, it does not meet the burden of a comprehensive and sufficient explanation. First, in his own commentary, Beale is unable at several points to determine to what text a particular solecism might be alluding. For example, when attempting to explain the presence of the appositional ἡ καταβαίνουσα in 3:12, he notes the parallel construction rendered in the expected form in 21:2. Beale writes, “Could Isa. 64:1 have influenced the nominative construction (“Oh, that you would tear the heavens [and] *come down*”)?”¹²⁰ It is unclear whether John could have intended such an obscure allusion and secondarily, whether readers would have recognized it. Second, many of the constructions that Beale maintains function as allusions to the OT occur elsewhere in Revelation without irregularity when an allusion is clearly intended. Like in 3:12, Beale notes the parallel construction in 21:2, but makes no comment as to why John uses solecism in 3:12 to allude to the OT, but not in 21:2. Third, since Revelation is saturated in allusions to the OT, it is not surprising to find overlap between the solecisms and the OT. Similarly, why are the hundreds of

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 295–96.

other allusions not marked by intentional solecisms? While certain constructions (cf. 1:4–5, 13; 14:14) clearly allude to the OT and exhibit grammatical irregularity, Beale has apparently taken a partial truth and attempted to convert it into a comprehensive explanation which cannot bear such weight.¹²¹

Three scholars—Traugott Holtz, Paulsen, and Verheyden—have argued the idiosyncratic Greek was a device John used to convey his theology. In a 2005 article, Holtz says that the “grammatischen Monstrositäten” are not due to linguistic inability, but like the author’s advanced use of Scripture, the solecisms are often used in relation to God and Christ to convey the author’s theology.¹²² He begins with construction in 1:4 of ἀπὸ followed by the nominative which is “gegen jede Regel der gewohnten Sprache.”¹²³ Holtz maintains that through the irregular case, John expresses the “Unmanipulierbarkeit Gottes.”¹²⁴ Following also from 1:4, Holtz analyzes more than ten references to “the one seated on the throne” which, with two exceptions (7:15 and 21:5), appear in the expected cases. This phenomenon indicates:

Durch ein besonderes sprachliches Signal hebt John mit der Gottesbezeichnung „der auf dem Thron sitzt“ Gott als den (All-)Herrscher und Richter hervor. Dass das mit solcher sprachlichen Figur in geradezu elegant zu nennender Manier geschieht, zeigt, dass er trotz ebenfalls von ihm in ähnlicher Absicht benutzter Solözismen die griechische Sprache beherrscht und unterstreicht damit die sematische Relevanz der formalen Handhabung der Sprache durch ihn.¹²⁵

His final example is the occurrence of the unexpected phrase ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου in 1:13 and 14:14 which refer to Christ. Holtz’s main thesis is that John sees language as metaphorical and

¹²¹ For example, Martin Karrer accepts Beale’s thesis as one of several components of an explanation for the phenomenon (*Johannesoffenbarung (Offb 1,1–5,14)*, EKKNT 24 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017], 91, 94).

¹²² Traugott Holtz, “Sprache als Metaphor: Erwägungen zur Sprache der Johannesapokalypse,” in *Studien zur Johannesoffenbarung und ihrer Auslegung: Festschrift für Otto Böcher zum 70. Geburtstag*, ed. Friedrich Wilhelm Horn and Michael Wolter (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2005), 14.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 15.

uses the traditional language of the OT because within it contained a message of God's previous actions in the world with his people. Similarly, the solecisms are used in reference to God and Christ to indicate through metaphorical language that God is the "Ganz Andere."¹²⁶

In a 2015 article, Paulsen builds on Holtz's thesis. Paulsen maintains that John's language is extreme in two respects: the violence of its images and the violence of its Greek language.¹²⁷ Paulsen boldly proclaims that the idea that John's irregular constructions are due to limited proficiency in a second language "wird, soweit ich sehe, nicht mehr ernsthaft vertreten und ist auch mühelos zu widerlegen."¹²⁸ He maintains that every aspect of John's language is intentional. Paulsen begins by demonstrating on a small scale how consciously and intentionally John deals with the Greek language. For example, in 9:7–11 Paulsen traces how John's style brings vividness to the presentation. The style is characteristically paratactic which lends a certain abruptness to the vision while avoiding monotony by varying the verb tenses. In 9:10, the "historical present" replaces the imperfect which dominates in 9:8–9. After a long polysyndetic chain of descriptions, in the conclusion in 9:11, the author introduces the evil leader without a connecting *καί* creating the effect of abruptness. The name Abaddon is also introduced asyndetically. This helps to express the anxiety generated by the introduction of the angel of the abyss. John translates the name into Hebrew in order to convey the calamity communicated through the name. The last word in the paragraph is ominous—Apollyon, the destroyer.¹²⁹

Paulsen builds on Holtz's examination of the twelve occurrences of "the one who sits on the throne" as periphrasis for God. In nine cases, the participial form of *κάθημαι* matches the case of *θρόνος* merging the one seated and the throne as a unity (4:9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13; 6:16; 7:10;

¹²⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹²⁷ Paulsen, "Zu Sprache und Stil," 3–4.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 9.

19:4; 20:11); however, as Holtz noted, the author strayed from this pattern in three places (4:2; 7:15; 21:5). In each occurrence, the author uses the nominative participle (καθήμενος) with three different cases following the preposition ἐπί: accusative (τὸν θρόνον; 4:2); genitive (τοῦ θρόνου; 7:15); and dative (τῷ θρόνῳ; 21:5). Paulsen speculates that it is not accidental that in the three irregular instances of the phrase, the one who sits traverses each of the three oblique cases.¹³⁰ He agrees with Holtz that this demonstrates the author is using a virtuoso linguistic device that demonstrates he has mastered the Greek language.

A good example of Paulsen’s theory regarding solecisms occurs in his discussion of 6:2 where εἶδον appears as a subject with no predicate. The unexpected syntax displays the shocking effect of the appearance of the white horse on the linguistic level.¹³¹ In less than three lines, there are four subjects: horse, rider, divine passive, and rider. Since the last two subjects receive predicates, Paulsen states that the syntax creates the impression that the horse and the one on it, appeared suddenly out of thin air: “Wir können also als Zwischenergebnis festhalten, dass Johannes Inkonzinnitäten und ihre schärfste Form, das Anakoluth, einsetzt, um Überraschung oder gar Schockeffekte zu erzeugen, sei es bei dem majestätischen Schrecken, den die Epiphanie Jesu Christi verbreitet, oder bei dem Grauen, das die Apokalyptischen Reiter hervorrufen.“¹³²

Paulsen concludes by examining the “heftigsten, berühmtesten und wahrscheinlich meistdiskutierten” solecism in 1:4–6. The author creates linguistic shock with the use of the preposition ἀπό with the nominative phrase containing the irregular tripartite description of God as ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.¹³³ Paulsen notes that had the author wished to express this

¹³⁰ Ibid., 15.

¹³¹ Ibid., 17.

¹³² Ibid., 19.

¹³³ Ibid., 21–22.

phrase in grammatically expected forms, there were ways to do so; however, “Diese sprachlich korrekte Version wirkt freilich recht fad im Vergleich zu der lapidaren Wucht der johannesischen Formulierung.”¹³⁴ Paulsen agrees with Holtz that the intended effect of this dissonant grammar is to indicate that God stands above human rules so that even his majesty cannot be contained by grammatical rules that require a certain case. Paulsen speculates the reason John does not use dissonant grammar at every mention of God is because stylistic effect is most potent when used sparingly. His investigation reveals that the solecisms serve two purposes. First, they are used in reference to God or Christ to express their sovereignty over all human rules. Second, they are used in other cases, such as the four horsemen or the angel Abaddon, to express shock. This virtuoso use of language points to a mastery of the Greek language, whatever his mother tongue, which communicates a sophisticated theological message to the audience of God’s and Christ’s power as well as the reality of impending judgment.¹³⁵

Verheyden expanded Paulsen’s thesis. He finds the purely grammatical approaches of Charles, Thompson, Mussies, et al. picturing John as a struggling second language speaker inadequate.¹³⁶ He uses the solecism in 9:12 as an example. Previous explanations have seen the feminine plural subject followed by a singular verb as a Hebraism or that the interjection οὐαί should be taken as neuter which happens in Hebrew.¹³⁷ He finds all of the grammatical explanations wanting. While it is possible this solecism is caused by Hebraism, this *ad hoc* solution does not work in every case, and it is unclear why the author would consider οὐαί neuter when it was defined as feminine and singular in v. 12a. John uses οὐαί fourteen times in seven

¹³⁴ Ibid., 22.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 24–25.

¹³⁶ Verheyden, “Strange and Unexpected,” 161–64.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 163–64.

verses, each time in a unique way not attested elsewhere in the NT.¹³⁸ The asyndetic use of triple (8:13) and double (18:10, 16, 19) οὐαί; the use of articular οὐαί (9:12; 11:14); and the combination with the accusative (8:13; 12:12) are not attested elsewhere. According to Verheyden, “John seems to enjoy his idiosyncratic use of the interjection.... [I]t is his way to express confusion and great drama.”¹³⁹ This observation opens the door for looking at the language of Revelation differently. He says:

The rule that lies beneath it seems to be that the divine is not bound to grammar, that the seer is of necessity overwhelmed by his encounter with this other world, and that the events to be told are so dramatic and so unique that it affects the way they are told.... The grammar is awful, but so are the events that are related.¹⁴⁰

He finds the explanation of Paulsen following Holtz persuasive and seeks to build on the approach. Within this approach, one must distinguish between what is syntactically difficult and syntactically incorrect. This is especially difficult since rhetorical figures are the result of stretching the rules of grammar beyond the norm.¹⁴¹ For Verheyden, the most significant indicator that this approach is correct is that for most of the “mistakes”, one can demonstrate the author’s aptitude elsewhere. His basic assumption is that while it is possible the errors were caused by sloppiness, the material has clearly been shaped by the author, thus making comparison with parallel or similar passages necessary.

Expanding on Paulsen’s study, Verheyden explores John’s use of the participle ἔχων which provides significant data since John frequently employs it. In most of the uses of articular ἔχων, the participle agrees with its antecedent.¹⁴² There is a misfit in case, but not in gender, in

¹³⁸ Ibid., 164.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 165.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 166.

¹⁴² Cf. 2:7, 11, 12, 17, 18, 29; 3:1, 6, 7, 13, 22; 8:6, 9; 9:14; 13:17, 18; 14:18; 15:6; 16:2, 9; 17:1, 7; 9:18; 18:19; 19:10; 20:6; 21:9.

8:9. He notes that the expression τὰ ἔχοντα ψυχὰς is unnecessary and other expressions could have been employed. This irregular use seems intentional. The same phenomenon occurs in 9:14 where ὁ ἔχων τὴν σάλπιγγα is superfluous. In both instances, the author is trying to be too specific and for no apparent reason, ignores the grammar.¹⁴³ Next, Verheyden looks at John's non-articular use of ἔχων.¹⁴⁴ John uses ἔχων incongruently three times in a row (4:7, 8; 5:6), but then follows these three uses with a series of grammatically correct uses (5:8; 6:2, 5; 7:2; 8:3; 9:17, 19), and then returns to an incongruent use in 10:2. Verheyden can find no reasonable explanation for this mistake. The scroll is prominent in what follows, but it is unclear how ignoring the rules of grammar would somehow mark this. He also finds it implausible that this is supposed to allude to 1:15–16 or to an OT allusion.¹⁴⁵ Verheyden finds the absence of evidence to also be significant. There is no grammatical irregularity in the descriptions of the woman and the dragon (12:2–3), the devil (12:12), the offspring of the woman (12:12), or the beast from the sea (13:1–2). Another angel keeps the rules of grammar in 14:6 when delivering a message. The pattern continues with an incongruous use in 14:17 followed by correct uses (15:1–2; 17:4; 18:1; 19:11–16). In 21:10–14, there is a string of participial ἔχω. It is correct in 21:11, but the two instances in v. 12 are correct for the case, but not the gender, followed by an incorrect use in 21:14.¹⁴⁶

This brief survey allows Verheyden to make some preliminary conclusions. John is well aware of the rules of grammar. In a few cases, he uses ἔχων incongruently to describe a remarkable aspect such as the horns and eyes of the Lamb (5:6) and the heads and horns of the

¹⁴³ Verheyden, "Strange and Unexpected," 168–69.

¹⁴⁴ Cf. 1:16; 4:7, 8; 5:6, 8; 6:2, 5; 7:2; 8:3; 9:17, 19; 10:2; 12:2, 3, 12, 17; 13:1; 14:6, 14, 17; 15:1, 2; 17:3, 4; 18:1; 19:12; 20:1; 21:11, 12, 14.

¹⁴⁵ Verheyden, "Strange and Unexpected," 172.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 175–76.

beast (17:3), but these same features also occur elsewhere in the expected form (12:7; 13:1). The uses in remarkable descriptions often do not refer to the most bizarre aspect of the description (cf. 21:14). Irregular uses of ἔχων are also found close to their antecedents as well as at some distance from their antecedents. “It seems that it was not always used with a particular intention, or at least not one that we are still able to detect, but that John introduced it rather randomly.”¹⁴⁷ Verheyden then surveys both modern and ancient rhetorical devices used to create strange style which trains readers to “expect the unexpected,” the most important of which is paraprosochian.¹⁴⁸ In the conclusion of his investigation, he acknowledges the impossibility of knowing exactly what was going on in the author’s mind at the time of writing; however, Verheyden believes John’s use of language is intentional and brings a rhetorical “light-footedness”—he uses grammatical idiosyncrasy in cases when the images described are weird and frightening, and “one cannot escape the impression that it perhaps also contains a certain dose of entertainment.”¹⁴⁹

The final interpreter whose approach considers John’s solecisms under the category of rhetoric is Martin Karrer. After examining John’s vocabulary, Karrer excludes any explanation that views John as linguistically incapable since he finds the vocabulary to show an advanced knowledge of Greek.¹⁵⁰ The author of the Apocalypse was situated in the Roman Empire and was familiar with the Greek language.¹⁵¹ Alternately, Karrer believes the solecisms are intentionally used by the author to create a conspicuous style. In the *Testament of Naphtali*, the Hebrew language is viewed as a “holy language”; similarly, John uses the Semitic solecisms to

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 176.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 177–205.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 205–6.

¹⁵⁰ Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 91; Idem., “Sprache und Identität- Beobachtungen an der Apokalypse,” in *Identität und Sprache: Prozesse jüdischer und christlicher Identitätsbildung im Rahmen der Antike*, ed. Florian Wilk, *Biblische-theologische Studien* 174 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 186–87.

¹⁵¹ Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 94.

speak in the language of the prophets. Karrer maintains that some solecisms point to OT allusions.¹⁵² Other peculiarities are explained by developments within the Greek language. He summarizes, “Im Ganzen ist der Soziolekt der Apk jüdisch-griechisch und sind die Semitismen und Septuagintismen am besten als eine bewusste rhetorische Stilwahl zu erklären. Als solche wurden sie in den Handschriften überliefert, ja manchmal sogar vermehrt.”¹⁵³

Karrer then turns to examine this phenomenon in light of ancient rhetoric. Ancient rhetoric prepared the way for the idea that the speech of the gods should have its own sublime style.¹⁵⁴ Drawing on ps.–Longinus’s *On the Sublime*, Karrer maintains that the grand style was used “um Hörerinnen und Hörer durch stärkste Effekete aus ihrem jetzigen Dasein heraus zu reißen (in die ἔχστασις/ »Ekstase «), sie zu erschüttern und zu überwältigen (vgl. Ps.-Long. subl. 1,4).”¹⁵⁵ The deviation from everyday language gives the style *gravis* and *vehemens* and is used to express the extraordinary. Drawing on ancient rhetorical devices, Karrer provides no less than 15 rhetorical techniques used in Revelation.¹⁵⁶ John’s use of rhetoric effects Revelation in other ways. Since rhetoric was primarily used in courts, Revelation includes a leitmotif of testimony and focuses on presenting God’s uprightness to humans (forensic rhetoric).¹⁵⁷ The focus on hymns and worship reflect epideictic rhetoric. Since Quintilian maintained that grammatical solecisms were only mistakes if accidental, John’s grammatical peculiarities should not be considered solecisms.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Karrer notes the importance of this for text critical work on Revelation: “Das ist für die Arbeit an der künftigen Editio critica maior der Apk nicht ohne Belang. Denn die Forschung neigt herkömmlich dazu, Semitismen als ältesten Text anzusehen, selbst wenn sie erst jung belegt sind. Neueste Literatur rät differenzierterer Betrachtung” (*Johannesoffenbarung*, 95).

¹⁵⁴ Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 95.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 96–97.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 98.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 99.

Karrer places the idiolect sociologically in the larger Mediterranean East which had been conquered by Alexander the Great. While Revelation does not criticize the Greek language, the author does not view the Greek language as sufficient to communicate the grandeur of the God of Israel.¹⁵⁹ The solecisms are theologically significant since they urge the readers to listen to the one God over against the religious-cultural traditions of the Greek-speaking pagan rulers.¹⁶⁰ Karrer argues this peculiar language was created to promote the identity of the social group of Christians in Asia.¹⁶¹ Karrer's arguments are provocative and similar to the conclusions reached in this dissertation.

EXPERIENTIAL APPROACHES

Several scholars have made tantalizing suggestions that something of the nature of John's composition or his experience of prophetic ecstasy resulted in irregular grammar. As already discussed, Swete listed "the circumstances in which the book was written" as one of the possible causes of the "idiotisms."¹⁶² Although Swete does not elaborate, one might speculate he refers to the situation of the author in exile on the island of Patmos. Earlier, Porter noted the possibility that John's situation in exile and lack of access to a secretary might have contributed to the solecisms.¹⁶³ Ignaz Rohr stated his belief that the grammatical peculiarities of Revelation are due to two features: John's conscious drawing on the prophets and Semitisms. However, he acknowledges the experience of the Seer when he adds, "Im Evangelium spricht die ruhige Ueberlegung, in der Apocalypse zittert die Erregung der Ekstase des Sehers und seiner

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 100.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 101.

¹⁶¹ Karrer, "Sprache und Identität," 190–91.

¹⁶² Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxxv.

¹⁶³ Porter, "Language of the Apocalypse," 600.

Erschuetterung durch das Geschaute nach, und in dieser Erregung sprengt das heimisch aramaeische Idiom die Regeln des Angelernten, des Grieschischen.”¹⁶⁴

David Barr favors the Semitic transfer theory (the author seems to be thinking in a Semitic language and transposing his thoughts into Greek); however, he suggests, “There is another possibility also, namely that the author consciously employed a diction that sounded ‘biblical’ on the one hand and ‘ecstatic’ on the other.”¹⁶⁵ According to Barr, this would have given the audience the impression John’s visions came to him “in the spirit.” Barr offers no support for this intriguing suggestion. Similarly, Bill Mounce writes, “Revelation is full of anacoluthon, but that is because John is in an ecstatic state and partial sentences and other incongruities help convey the sense of his ecstasy.”¹⁶⁶ Finally, Theodore Zahn argued that the unpolished form of the text reflects the actual visionary experience:

Then it must be remembered that in the nature of the case the relation of the prophetic writer to his subject is one of much less freedom than in any other form of composition. Particularly when his prophecy is based upon visions, received in an ecstatic state, everything is received, not only the material, but also the form. All that he has to do is put what he has seen into words, and for this reason he is much less inclined than is the historian and the teacher to polish or to permit to be polished for him the style of his first draft. The original account, written under the immediate impression of the vision beheld, is the best, because the most faithful. The more important the contents, the less important the form.¹⁶⁷

While these kinds of appeals to the experience of John appear, albeit infrequently, in the literature, there is no substantiation provided by any author. Is there evidence that ecstatic experiences result in less grammatically correct language? Are there comparable texts (prophetic

¹⁶⁴ Ignaz Rohr, *Der Hebraerbrief und die Geheime Offenbarung des heiligen Johannes* (Bonn: Hanstein, 1932) 67–69.

¹⁶⁵ David L. Barr, “The Apocalypse of John,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 640.

¹⁶⁶ “Anacoluthon,” Bill Mounce, 28 Feb 2010, <https://billmounce.com/monday-with-mounce/whats-anacoluthon>.

¹⁶⁷ Theodor Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. from 3rd German ed. John Moore Trout, William Arnot Mather, Louis Hodous, Edward Strong Worcester, William Hoyt Worrel, and Rowland Backus Dodge (1909; repr; Minneapolis: Klock & Klock, 1977), 3:432–33.

or apocalyptic) which exhibit the extent of irregularity found in Revelation? In this study, I intend to contribute to the discussion by taking the issue of John's claim to visionary experience seriously. In chapter 5, I attempt to situate the irregular grammar of Revelation within the phenomenology of visionary experience and the texts which purport to record similar experiences.

A Note on Methodology

The dominant method employed in this dissertation is the historical-critical method that focuses on the author of the work and the historical context in which the work originated. This umbrella method will involve the insights of several forms of analysis such as philology, cultural analysis, and history-of-religions. This method has the dual benefit of attempting to reconstruct historical insights both in the mind of the author and the text's intended audience. One of the primary concerns of the historical-critical method is the origins of a text. This will be a primary concern of this investigation—to reevaluate the cause of the irregular grammar of the Apocalypse. This method recognizes the distance between the author, text, and modern interpreter. It is impossible to know with certainty what was in the author's mind; however, historical inquiry is not based on certainty, but on levels of probability. To increase the probability of an interpretation, multiple lines of evidence are marshalled which point to a particular conclusion while also taking into consideration arguments to the contrary.¹⁶⁸ As Richard Hays notes, what is necessary for historical exegesis is authentic analogy between what the text meant and what it means.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984), 15–20.

¹⁶⁹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 27.

In recent decades, one of the major critiques of the historical-critical method has been its supposed objectivity. While the text does have an element of objectivity, the interpreter cannot be fully objective. Recognizing that everyone interprets the text through a particular point-of-view, it is paramount to construct the original situation of the readers and author as much as possible so that to the extent possible, the point-of-view of the interpreter is shaped by reconstructed ancient, rather than modern, worldviews. My presupposition is that a real person in history (John) was influenced by his own cultural context (late first century CE) and communicated a message to people embedded within a historical context. Historical criticism provides insights into the author's and audiences' thought patterns, motivations, interests, and worldviews.

With Margaret M. Mitchell, I consider rhetorical criticism to be a sub-discipline of historical-critical analysis.¹⁷⁰ Rhetorical education was an important facet of Greek education, and rhetoric pervaded the first-century Greco-Roman world. Rhetoric not only impacted speech, but the patterns of thought which produced speech; thus, rhetorical analysis is a means to reach the author's thinking and the reception of the text on the part of the audience. The rhetorical method employed in this study is also literary in that what remains is textualized rhetoric that must be compared with other ancient texts. Biblical scholars use "rhetoric" in different ways.¹⁷¹ The rhetorical method used in this study analyzes texts on the basis of ancient Greco-Roman rhetorical practices, particularly as systematized in the roughly contemporary rhetorical

¹⁷⁰ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation of the Language of Composition of 1 Corinthians* (Louisville: Westminster, 1991), 6.

¹⁷¹ The method reflected in this dissertation is exemplified by the stream represented by George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) and Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988). The so-called method "socio-rhetorical criticism" which draws on ancient and modern rhetoric will not be used in this dissertation and is exemplified by Vernon Robbins, *Exploring the Texture of Texts: A Guide to Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996).

handbooks (Cicero, Quintilian, et al.). The goal of the rhetorical investigation is to discover the persuasive techniques of the author. Rhetoric has certainly not been a major approach to analyze Revelation, but there has been some interest in recent decades.¹⁷²

Finally, this dissertation will draw upon insights yielded by the explosion of research in the field of intertextuality. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, many scholars have examined Revelation's complex use of the Jewish Scriptures.¹⁷³ An exhaustive survey of intertextual analysis as it relates to biblical studies is outside the scope of this study.¹⁷⁴ The primary purpose of intertextual investigation has been to delineate one author's use of a source text. Scholars have sought to identify when authors are alluding to other texts which involves

¹⁷² Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "The Followers of the Lamb: Visionary Rhetoric and Socio-Political Situation" *Semeia* 36 (1986): 123–46; Idem., *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Idem., *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998); Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis*, 144; John Kirby, "The Rhetorical Situations of Revelation 1–3," *NTS* 34 (1988); David deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009); Peter Perry, *The Rhetoric of Digressions: Revelation 7:1–17 and 10:1–11:13 and Ancient Communication*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009); Robyn Whitaker, *Ekphrasis, Vision, and Persuasion in the Book of Revelation*, WUNT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015).

¹⁷³ Swete, *Apocalypse*, cxi–clviii; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:lxv–lxxxii; A. Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre d'Ezechiel dans l'Apocalypse," *Bib* 43 (1962): 436–76; Leonhard P. Trudinger, "The Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation" (ThD diss., Boston University, 1963); Ozanne, "The Influence of the Text and Language of the Old Testament on the Book of Revelation" (PhD diss., University of Manchester, 1964); H. Lancellotti, "L'Antico Testamento nell'Apocalisse," *RivB* 14 (1966): 369–84; Gregory K. Beale, *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and the Revelation of St. John* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984); Idem., *John's Use of the Old Testament*; Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretation of Revelation 8:7–12* AUSDDS 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987); Idem., "Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *BR* (1988): 37–53; Ibid., "Criteria and 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); Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*; John T. Willis, "The Old Testament and the Book of Revelation," in *Johannine Studies: Essays in Honor of Frank Pack*, ed. James E. Priest (Malibu, CA: Pepperdine University Press, 1989), 231–39; Jan Fekkes III, *Isaiah and the Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and their Developments*, JSNTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Mark Jauhiainen, *The Use of Zechariah in Revelation* WUNT 199 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); David E Aune, "Apocalypse Renewed: An Intertextual Reading of the Apocalypse of John," in *The Reality of Apocalypse: Rhetoric and Politics in the Book of Revelation*, ed. David Barr, SBLSymS 39 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006); Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation* LNTS (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

¹⁷⁴ See Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament*, 13–59; Fekkes, *Isaiah and the Prophetic Traditions*, 59–63.

corresponding words, concepts, and structures with another text and when authors are echoing other texts which are similar to allusions but less identifiable than allusions.

Two realities are firmly established in scholarship on John's use of the Scriptures. First, John uses the Jewish Scriptures extensively. Second, John never quotes the Jewish Scriptures directly. Thus, the entire enterprise of detecting allusions and echoes is difficult. Further, since John never quotes a source text, there is no way to know whether John alludes to texts from memories of encounters with Jewish Scriptures, or whether he is drawing directly upon the texts themselves. If John does draw directly from texts, it is difficult to know whether John is drawing upon the Hebrew or Greek translations, and even further complicated by the variegated textual history of some ancient works.¹⁷⁵ These challenges point to the necessity of using some kind of criteria to determine whether an allusion is present.¹⁷⁶ The employment of criteria allows the interpreter to have various levels of certainty regarding the identification of a particular allusion or echo. Those proposed allusions that agree with multiple criteria are deemed certain, while those exhibiting less criteria are deemed probable or possible.

In chapter three, I will propose a refined methodology for identifying John's intertextual use of previous sources by drawing on insights from scholars employing mimetic criticism. Typically, criteria are employed to determine when and how an author is alluding to the content of a specific biblical passage. It is important to press these observations even further. The

¹⁷⁵ For example, the OG and Theodotion translations of Daniel are divergent.

¹⁷⁶ Several scholars have undertaken to provide criteria for determining when an allusion is present. Richard Hays suggests seven criteria for determining an echo: (1) availability to the author and/or original readers, (2) volume, primarily based on verbal repetition and syntactical patterns, (3) recurrence, (4) thematic coherence, (5) historical plausibility, (6) history of interpretation, and (7) satisfaction (*Echoes of Scripture*, 29–32); Dennis MacDonald proposes six criteria: (1) accessibility (availability of the text); (2) analogy (other authors' imitation of the same story); (3) density (volume of parallels); (4) order (similar sequences); (5) distinctive traits (unusual characteristics in both texts); and (6) interpretability (reasons for the author's use of the source text) ("Introduction," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Dennis R. MacDonald, SAC (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 2–3.

purpose of examining John's use of Israel's Scriptures here is not only to determine how John uses *what* the source text said (content) but also to see if John's use of sources affects *how* John presents his own work (style). I will now turn to analyze the insights offered by ancient rhetorical theory.

CHAPTER THREE
RHETORICAL CRITICISM, SOLECISMS, AND MIMESIS

Preliminary Remarks

Rhetoric was defined by Aristotle as “the ability in each case to see the available means of persuasion.”¹ Quintilian, a contemporary of John, defined rhetoric as “the knowledge of speaking well.”² Rhetoric supplied ancient communicators with the most persuasive arguments and styles. Because Revelation was written with aural intent and because the solecisms in Revelation are part of the style of the book, rhetoric serves as a natural starting point for investigation. Rhetoric provides modern interpreters a window to better understand the thought patterns and persuasive techniques used by the ancients. In this chapter, I argue that rhetoric is pertinent in at least two significant ways. First, rhetoricians—like Quintilian—discussed in detail the use of irregular (apparently solecistic) constructions in writing and speaking. The discussions in the rhetorical handbooks suggest that writers and speakers might use an irregular style for rhetorical and artistic purposes. Alternatively, the pertinent sources indicate that accidental and unintentional solecisms in writing and speaking were deplored and liable to public shame. Second, the rhetorical handbooks suggest that grammatical irregularity could be artistically powerful if an author is imitating the style of an ancient authoritative figure. This refers to the ubiquitous impulse of *μίμησις/imitatio* in rhetoric, literature, art, and ethics. After exploring the ancient conception and practice of *imitatio*, I argue this is a helpful way to conceive of John’s interaction with his prophetic predecessors in the Scriptures of Israel. I conclude this chapter by proposing a method for identifying literary *imitatio*.

¹ *Rhet.* 1:2:1355b25–26 (Freese, LCL).

² *Inst.* 2.15.34 (Russell, LCL).

Locating Revelation In Its Historical Context

The author of Revelation identifies himself simply as “John” (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8) and understands himself to be a Christian prophet writing to congregations in major Hellenistic urban cities in Asia Minor.³ The name John is a Grecized form of the Hebrew name Yohanan, and there are several indications that the author had a Palestinian background including his use of the Hebrew Scriptures, use of the genre of apocalypse which was familiar in Palestinian Judaism and not in the Diaspora, familiarity with the Jewish cult and temple in Jerusalem, etc.⁴ The author may have fled the Roman onslaught following the Jewish revolt of 66–73 CE. John stands with one foot firmly in Judaism demonstrated by his extensive and complex use of Israel’s Scriptures and the other foot firmly planted in Greco-Roman culture demonstrated by his familiarity with the imperial cult and Roman mythology. The author uses the Greek alphabet (1:8; 21:6; 22:13) and a Latin loan word (“ῥεδῶν”; 18:13) and in chapter 18 demonstrates knowledge of the luxury goods shipped in Roman commerce.⁵ Scholars have proposed that Revelation was written as early as 64–70 CE and as late as the reign of Hadrian (132–35 CE).⁶ The majority of commentators, along with the testimony of Irenaeus, has located the book somewhere near the end of Domitian’s reign (ca. 95).⁷ The book was almost certainly written sometime in the second

³ Justin Martyr (d. 165 CE) identified the John of Revelation with the Apostle, the son of Zebedee (*Dial. Tryph.* 81.4). Irenaeus also passes on this tradition (*Adv. Haer.* 5.30). The majority of the church fathers followed suit. Dionysius of Alexandria, in the third century, objects to this view. He maintained that the author of Revelation was not an apostle because of the different writing style from the John who wrote the Fourth Gospel and because of the unintelligibility and logic of Revelation (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39; 7.25). With Yarbrow Collins (*Crisis*, 27–44), it is best to understand John as the name of a prophet known to the readers.

⁴ See Charles, *Revelation*, 1:xxxix; Aune, *Revelation*, 1:1.

⁵ Martin Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 94.

⁶ For the former, see Albert A. Bell, “Date of John’s Apocalypse: The Evidence of Some Roman Historians Reconsidered,” *NTS* 25 (1978): 93–102; Thomas B. Slater, “Dating the Apocalypse of John,” *Bib* 84 (2003): 252–58; Stephen S. Smalley, *Thunder and Love: John’s Revelation and John’s Community* (Milton Keynes: Word, 1994), 40–49. For the latter, see Thomas Witulski, *Die Johannesoffenbarung und Kaiser Hadrian: Studien zur Datierung der neutestamentlichen Apokalypse*, FRLANT 221 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 346–50.

⁷ *Haer.* 5.30.3; See also Yarbrow Collins, *Crisis*, 55–56; Colin Hemer, *The Letters to the Seven Churches of Asia in Their Local Setting*, JSNTSup 11 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1986), 2–5.

half of the first century CE, most likely in the last quarter (ca 75–95 CE).⁸ The association of Rome with Babylon favors a post-70 CE date. Further, the description of the Twelve as being foundational for the New Jerusalem (21:14) suggests the perspective of someone postdating the age of the apostles. A more precise date is not required for the present thesis since this approximation places Revelation in its historical context. Thus, the historical context of the book points to the relevance of both Jewish Scriptural antecedent texts as well as Greco-Roman literary traditions and cultural phenomena.

RHETORIC AND REVELATION

After the seminal call to rhetorical criticism by James Muilenburg and the pioneering application of Hans Dieter Betz on Galatians, George Kennedy published *New Testament Interpretation Through Rhetorical Criticism* in which he attempted to provide a methodology for engaging rhetoric in biblical studies.⁹ In this brief book, Kennedy demonstrated how rhetoric might provide insight into the narratives and speeches in the Gospels and Acts as well as for the arrangement and persuasive techniques in Paul's Epistles. With the exception of a brief note that, "Ecphrasis, a vivid portrayal of a scene, well describes some of the visions in the Apocalypse", Revelation is not mentioned.¹⁰ In the early years of rhetorical criticism, scholars showed little interest in applying rhetorical critical insights to the book of Revelation; however, within the last few decades, several studies have reversed this trend.

⁸ Although his source critical theories have not been accepted by many, Aune argues that the books contains material that predates and postdates 70 CE which was finally edited together sometime at the end of Domitian's reign (*Revelation*, 1:lvii–lxx).

⁹ James Muilenburg's SBL presidential address in 1968 is credited with being the launching point of rhetorical criticism in biblical studies. This paper was published the following year: "Form Criticism and Beyond," *JBL* 88 (1969): 1–19. See Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979). Betz demonstrated that Paul's letters show influence from the Greco-Roman rhetorical tradition in their style and argumentative logic but even in their arrangement.

¹⁰ Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation*, 23.

In 1985, Schüssler Fiorenza was the first to attempt rhetorical criticism of Revelation.¹¹ She drew upon ancient rhetorical handbooks dating from the fourth century BCE (Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*) to Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (first century CE) as "tools for analyzing the persuasive power of a text" in order to uncover how textual arguments inscribe power within a rhetorical and sociopolitical situation.¹² Schüssler Fiorenza's method draws heavily on contemporary ideologies to show how the text appeals to *pathos*. It would be another decade before studies appeared which viewed Revelation primarily through the lens of ancient rhetorical theory.

The most thoroughly studied rhetorical aspect of Revelation is John's construction of *ethos*. The publication of Greg Carey's dissertation *Elusive Apocalypse* in 1999 was an exhaustive attempt to address how John constructed his own rhetorical authority. In Revelation, John struggles to legitimate his voice over the voices of Empire, culture, Jewish communities, and other Christian prophets.¹³ Carey seeks to merge insights gained from Cicero, Aristotle, and Quintilian to show how John constructs his own *ethos* as well as deconstructs his rhetorical rivals. Drawing on Carey's work on *ethos*, Paul Duff focused on John's attacks on 'Jezebel', whom Duff takes to be the primary opponent throughout Revelation.¹⁴ David deSilva's 2009 book sought to expand the exploration of John's rhetorical argumentation from previous studies that focused on *ethos* to also consider how the book incorporates *pathos* and *logos*. One of his primary goals is to consider John's rhetorical goals and the communicative strategy he employs to accomplish those goals.¹⁵ Peter Perry's 2009 dissertation "The Rhetoric of Digressions"

¹¹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Book of Revelation: Justice and Judgment*, 181–204; see also *Ibid.*, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*.

¹² *Ibid.*, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 22.

¹³ Greg Carey, *Elusive Apocalypse*, 43.

¹⁴ Paul B. Duff, *Who Rides the Beast? Prophetic Rivalry and the Rhetoric of Crisis in the Churches of the Apocalypse* (New York: Oxford University Press).

¹⁵ deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*.

studied Rev 7:1–17 and 10:1–11:13 through Greco-Roman rhetorical theory on digression as an appeal to *pathos*.¹⁶ In her 2014 dissertation “Seeing God: Ekphrasis, Vision, and Persuasion in the Book of Revelation,” Robyn Whitaker focuses on descriptions of the divine through the lens of rhetorical ekphrasis as a way to show how John’s vivid visions critiqued the plastic arts of the imperial cult. Whitaker argues the initial audiences would have understood the visions as ekphrases which were intended to give them an epiphanic experience of God.¹⁷ These works demonstrate that rhetorical criticism yields fruit in understanding Revelation, in particular, the persuasive strategy employed in the Apocalypse.

Although numerous scholars since the rhetorical turn of the 1970s have applied rhetorical criticism to biblical texts, there has been no universal method. Mitchell writes:

It is in my view more illuminating to view historical-rhetorical criticism not as a set of formulaic procedures, but rather, first and foremost, as *a sensibility and set of resources* that skilled readers may wish to bring to a study of early Christian texts, composed in Greek, which contain argumentation and small narrative forms (*chreiai*).¹⁸

Mitchell advocates that this rhetorical critical “sensibility” is cultivated by familiarity with ancient *paideia* informing everyone literate in Greek and Latin. The primary sources are the ancient rhetorical handbooks, especially those preceding the first century that laid the groundwork for the rhetorical culture of Greco-Roman Asia Minor as well as the works that are roughly contemporaneous to Revelation. These works include Aristotle’s *Ars Rhetorica* (fourth century BCE), Anaximenes’s *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, *Rhetorica ad Herennium* (first century BCE), Cicero’s treatises (*De inventione rhetorica*, *Brutus*, *De optimo genere oratorum*,

¹⁶ Dissertation submitted to the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (Whitaker, *The Rhetoric of Digressions: Revelation 7:1–17 and 10:1–11:13 and Ancient Communication* [Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014]).

¹⁷ Dissertation was later published (Whitaker, *Ekphrasis, Vision, and Persuasion in the Book of Revelation*, WUNT 410 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015]).

¹⁸ Margaret M. Mitchell, “Rhetorical and New Literary Criticism” in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Studies*, ed. J. W. Rogerson and Judith Lieu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 622.

Partitiones oratoriae; first century BCE), Dionysius of Halicarnassus's treatises (*De antiquis oratoribus*, *De Demosthene*, *Ars rhetorica*, *De Thucydide*; first century BCE); Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria* (first century CE). Similarly, the elementary rhetorical exercises are preserved in the progymnasmata of Aelius Theon of Alexandria (second century CE) and Hermogenes of Tarsus (second century CE). Additionally, there other works from the ancient world not designated as rhetorical handbooks but show the pervasiveness of rhetoric in multiple genres—Seneca and Cicero's epistles, ps.—Longinus's *De sublimitate* (first century CE), Demetrius's *De elocutione* (fourth–third centuries BCE), etc. Rhetorical “sensitivity” is cultivated by saturation with the literature and rhetorical culture of the first-century world in which Revelation is situated. In contrast to other ways in which the term “rhetorical” might be marshalled in other methodologies, in this dissertation, rhetoric refers to the range of persuasive techniques with which the author John and his inaugural audience(s) would have been familiar as discussed and/or demonstrated in the works described above.

APPROPRIATENESS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM FOR REVELATION

Drawing upon the insights of rhetorical criticism for Revelation naturally raises two questions: Is it appropriate to use rhetoric for a work in the apocalyptic genre?¹⁹ Was John trained in (or at least familiar with) rhetorical theory? During the 1960s–70s, scholars such as D.

¹⁹ For example, “How does one adapt the known canons of Greco-Roman rhetoric to the interpretation of such a book as Revelation, with its interwoven apocalyptic, prophetic, and epistolary textures?” (Greg Carey, “Moving an Audience: One Aspect of Pathos in the Book of Revelation” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy's Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008], 164).

S. Russell,²⁰ Klaus Koch,²¹ and Philipp Vielhauer²² sought to ground the genre of apocalyptic according to common characteristics such as pseudonymity, symbolism, surveys of history, etc.; however, the critical response was that none of the apocalypses contained all of these characteristics. In the 1970s the Society of Biblical Literature formed a section to define the genre of apocalyptic. The results were published in 1979 in *Semeia* by John J. Collins:

An apocalypse is a genre of revelatory literature within 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.²³

Since its publication, this definition has been mostly accepted with a few suggested emendations. For example, David Hellholm suggested the definition should include a statement about an apocalypse's function "for a group in crisis with the purpose of exhortation and/or consolation by means of divine authority."²⁴ Similarly, Adela Yarbro Collins proposes the following might be added to the definition to address the function: "[An apocalypse 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."²⁵ Both Hellholm and Yarbro Collins maintain that a definition that simply addresses the form of the apocalyptic genre without addressing its function is inadequate to capture the complexity of apocalyptic texts. Their proposed additions to the definition seek to move scholars

²⁰ D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic 100 BC–AD 100*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 104ff.

²¹ Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic: A Polemic Work on a Neglected Area of Biblical Studies and Its Damaging Effects on Theology and Philosophy* (London: SCM Press, 1972), 23ff.

²² Philipp Vielhauer, "Apocalyptic in Early Christianity" in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Edgar Hennecke, Wilhelm Schneemelcher, R. McL Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 582ff.

²³ J. J. Collins, "Towards the Morphology of a Genre," *Semeia* 14 (1979): 9.

²⁴ David Hellholm, "The Problem of Apocalyptic Genre," *Semeia* 36:13–64 (Decatur, GA: Scholars Press, 1986): 27.

²⁵ Adela Yarbro Collins, "Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism," in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, *Semeia* 36 (1986): 7.

to note how the text impacts its audience—in other words—to acknowledge its rhetorical function.

Revelation defies a single generic labeling since it presents itself as at once letter, prophecy, and apocalypse. The opening words define the document as an Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, although the use of Ἀποκάλυψις is most certainly not being used as a technical term. While the term “apocalypse” was not used to categorize a literary corpus until the nineteenth century, apocalypse is an appropriate label for the book given that it shares so many literary features with the apocalyptic family. Revelation is also presented as a letter framed by a salutation and conclusion which resembles other ancient letters (1:46; 22:16–21). Further, there are seven individual letters to the seven churches in chs. 2–3. Finally, John repeatedly refers to his work as a prophecy (1:3; 22:7, 10, 18–19). In 10:11, John is told to prophesy, and in 22:9, he considers himself to be among the circle of prophets. Similarly, Revelation significantly draws on Israel’s prophetic tradition by alluding heavily to prophetic texts. It is best then to regard Revelation as a *mixtum compositum*, a complex literary work employing several genres to persuade the audience.²⁶

In his *Rhet.*, Aristotle defined rhetoric as “the faculty of considering what may be persuasive in reference to any subject whatever.”²⁷ By the Hellenistic and imperial periods, rhetoric was the central feature of education. In his *Inst.*, Quintilian provides the ideal

²⁶ “Authorial experimentation and multiple participation across genres disrupt the idea of clear reader expectations or authorial norms, making it difficult to speak of *the* purpose of a genre and how a work must look in order to be classified properly in one specific category. This inherent flexibility should not be considered a detriment, a flaw preventing scholars from creating perfectly neat and discrete categories. Rather, compositional plasticity is one of the remarkable features of literature, allowing for fresh and novel works, new literary expressions, and the inclusion of previously foreign material and formal features. Indeed, authors, both modern and ancient, took delight in transgressing boundaries, bending genres, and experimenting with different compositional arrangements” (Sean A. Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors: Negotiating Literary Culture in the Greco-Roman Era* [Waco: Baylor University Press, 2020], 10).

²⁷ *Rhet.* 1.2.1 (Freese, LCL).

educational path for boys.²⁸ Preparation for rhetorical education began at birth and parents should wisely choose a *paedagogus* who will teach the child to speak properly (1.1.12–37). The second level of education proper is studying under a *grammaticus* where the student learns grammar, style, spelling, and learns to read out loud as well as create various forms of literary compositions (1.2–8). The student also learns subjects such as music, mathematics, and geometry (1.10). During this second stage, students were introduced to the progymnasmata, early exercises geared towards composition and declamation. After completing this stage, the student progresses to the third and final stage of education: the advanced study of rhetoric and philosophy. The *rhetor* is selected to guide the student through how to compose, deliver, and memorize epideictic, deliberative, and forensic rhetoric for any number of occasions. A key feature of rhetorical education was its thoroughgoing conservatism which sought to ground rhetorical theory in the prestigious past through imitation of the greats. Sean Michael Ryan has shown that a few core texts functioned as the basis of Greek education: Homer’s *Iliad*, Euripides’ *Phoenissae*, and Menander’s *Misoumenos*.²⁹ As Kennedy notes, “Greek rhetorical schools existed throughout Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, the birthplace of Christianity.”³⁰

Rhetoric pervaded the culture in which John wrote. The employment of the art of persuasion was not limited to a particular genre; in fact, it was ubiquitous. Persuasive techniques are found in poetry, prose, historiography, philosophical essays, letters, political speeches, and

²⁸ See also the seminal works by Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); S. F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956); Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco-Roman Education* (Morningside Heights, NY: Columbia University Press, 1957); H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, trans. George Lamb (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1956).

²⁹ Sean Michael Ryan, *Hearing at the Boundaries of Vision: Education Informing Cosmology in Revelation* 9 (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 10–14, 77–79.

³⁰ George Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 258, cf. 96, 237.

forensic environments.³¹ Since rhetoric is the art of persuasion, any work which seeks to persuade an audience is amenable to rhetorical criticism. It was inevitable that any persuasive literature, apocalyptic genre notwithstanding, would be influenced by rhetorical techniques.

In the oral/aural world of the first century, texts and orality were intrinsically bound together in a dynamic relationship.³² Revelation's introduction indicates that it was meant to be read aloud (1:1–3), and the first makarism is pronounced on the lector (ὁ ἀναγινώσκων) and the hearers (οἱ ἀκούοντες). At the end of the book, John warns of divine punishment for “anyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book” (παντὶ τῷ ἀκούοντι τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας τοῦ βιβλίου τούτου) and fails to do them (22:18). There is a repeated emphasis throughout the book on “hearing” the message (e.g., 2:7, 11, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; 22:17–18). Thus, the book was designed with persuasive aural intent.³³ The goal of rhetorical criticism is to use near contemporary rhetorical theory as a lens through which to view John's intentions and persuasive strategies and how they may have impacted the inaugural audiences.

To analyze Revelation rhetorically is not to suggest that John was officially rhetorically trained at the highest levels, but that ancient rhetorical handbooks and the progymnasmata provide a language for speaking about a text's persuasive techniques and strategies.³⁴ As deSilva notes, “Careful rhetorical analysis seeks to uncover the persuasive strategies that inhere within a particular text, using all near-contemporary works on the art of persuasion heuristically to get at the ‘literary means by which John's ‘ideological practices and persuasive goals ... are

³¹ Galen O. Rowe, “Style,” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 121.

³² David E. Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 50–51.

³³ Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic*, 51; deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 9–18; Schüssler Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World*, 20–22; Callahan, “Language of Apocalypse,” 459.

³⁴ deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 17–18; Carey, “Moving an Audience,” 167.

achieved.”³⁵ Similarly, to analyze Revelation rhetorically is not to suggest that every facet of ancient rhetorical handbooks is applicable to Revelation. Again, deSilva says:

The aim of employing our firsthand knowledge of classical rhetoric is always to lay bare the persuasive techniques and strategies of the author, never to force the text to wear false or misleading labels for the sake of preserving some textbook scheme. The heuristic, rather than normative, quality of the rhetorical handbooks should never be compromised.³⁶

Despite Dennis Stamps’ claim that he finds “little if any discernible correspondence between Graeco-Roman rhetorical practice and the discourse of Revelation,” as demonstrated earlier, several studies have concluded that John’s Revelation seeks to persuade the audience by some of the same methods taught in the rhetorical handbook.³⁷ deSilva has perhaps done the most to demonstrate that Revelation makes significant use of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* to move the audience.³⁸ Scholars have shown that Revelation employs such rhetorical techniques as amplification, ekphrasis, synkrisis, digression, and enthymeme.³⁹ Constantin Nikolakopoulos argues that John exhibits mastery over multiple rhetorical figures of speech including hyperbole, oxymoron, paradox, rhetorical questions, irony, antistrophe, chiasm, pun, and paranomasia.⁴⁰ As Nikolakopoulos notes, „Diese Figuren, von denen einige im grammatischen (Wortfiguren) und andere im gedanklichen Sektor (Dedankenfiguren) wirken, bezeugen alles andere als ein niedriges schriftstellerisches Niveau.“⁴¹ Reaching a similar conclusion, Carey summarizes, “John

³⁵ deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 18; citing Schüssler Fiorenza 1991, 22.

³⁶ deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 25.

³⁷ Dennis Stamps, “The Johannine Writings” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 631.

³⁸ See David deSilva, “What has Athens to Do with Patmos? Rhetorical Criticism of the Revelation of John (1980–2005),” *CurBR* 6 (2008): 257–86; Idem., *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 175–285.

³⁹ deSilva, “What has Athens to Do with Patmos?,” 259; Ben Witherington, *Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 216–17.

⁴⁰ Constantin Nikolakopoulos, “Rhetorische Auslegungsaspekte der Theologie in der Johannesoffenbarung” in “...was ihr auf dem Weg verhandelt habt” *Beiträge zur Exegese und Theologie des Neuen Testaments: Festschrift für Ferdinand Hahn zum 75. Geburtstag*, ed. Peter Müller and Ferdinand Hahn (Neukirchen–Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2001), 171–78.

⁴¹ Nikolakopoulos, “Rhetorische Auslegungsaspekte,” 171.

employs a sophisticated network of rhetorical devices to construct his own authority. The result is impressive in its power.”⁴² Similarly, Karrer has argued the number of *hapax legomena*, trilingual references, and puns point in the direction of educational and rhetorical sophistication.⁴³ Karrer further detects a host of rhetorical techniques in Revelation including metaphor, allegory, ekphrasis, comparisons, numeral symbolism, antithesis, climax, hyperbole, rhetorical questions, anacoluthon, puns, irony, sarcasm, personification, antonomasia, repetition, variation, ellipsis, new word creations, etc.⁴⁴ Whitaker believes John’s sophisticated deployment of rhetoric indicates that he can be assumed to have “a reasonable degree of education by ancient standards” and that “John certainly completed primary education and plausibly participated in the second stage of education under a *grammatikos*.”⁴⁵ Thus, despite Stamps’ negative assessment, studies have convincingly demonstrated that Revelation employs rhetorical devices and strategies to move its audience. Although the evidence does not allow for certainty, several scholars have postulated that John had at least some training in and/or knowledge of rhetoric.

Rhetoric is especially pertinent to the question of the idiosyncratic grammar in Revelation in at least two ways. First, because rhetoric is concerned with correctness of speech, there are in-depth discussions about ungrammaticality by the rhetoricians and in other ancient sources in an aurally-oriented world. In his *Inst.*, Quintilian discusses the difference between accidental grammatical blunders and intentionally artistic ungrammaticality for the creation of rhetorical figures. He goes so far as providing the criteria for determining when a particular instance of idiosyncratic grammar is intentional or accidental. These criteria will be explored in this chapter.

⁴² Greg Carey, “The Apocalypse and Its Ambiguous Ethos” in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. Steve Moyise (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2001), 173.

⁴³ Karrer, “Sprache und Identität,” 186–87.

⁴⁴ Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 96–97

⁴⁵ Whitaker, “Seeing God,” 26.

Further, there are numerous texts which demonstrate how audiences reacted when mistakes were made in public readings by lectors. These resources, largely untapped for understanding the cause and reception of Revelation's irregular grammar, will be explored to provide fresh insights into the cause and reception of Revelation's eccentric syntax. Second, the criteria for delineating artistry from error point to a deeper impulse present in all rhetoric and literary composition—*imitatio*. Rhetoric was essentially conservative in character because of its emphasis on imitating not only living teachers and rhetors, but also the authoritative figures of the past (i.e. Homer, Demosthenes, Cicero, etc.).

RHETORIC AND CORRECT SPEECH

Writing in the first century CE, Quintilian is one of the most helpful resources for rhetorical criticism of NT documents since he synthesizes centuries of Greek and Roman rhetorical traditions for students, and his works have been preserved. Quintilian defines rhetoric as “the art of speaking well.”⁴⁶ Training in this art consisted of five parts: (1) invention—the discovery of the resources for persuasion latent in any given rhetorical problem; (2) arrangement—the ordering of what was accomplished in the process of invention to serve the discursive aims; (3) style—the choice of words and the arrangement into sentences, including the use of tropes and figures; (4) memory—the retention in the mind of the matter, words, and arrangement; (5) delivery—the control of voice, countenance, and gesture. The most pertinent of these for the present discussion is that of style (*λέξις/elocutio*) since it focuses on the techniques used in the verbal expression. Classical rhetoric provided criteria for judging the virtues (*ἀρεταί/virtutes*) of style which included correctness, clarity, ornamentation, and propriety.⁴⁷ The

⁴⁶ *Inst.* 2.17.37 (Russell, LCL).

⁴⁷ See Rowe, “Style,” 121–57.

first virtue of style involved correctness which referred to the correct use of grammar by the speaker. As Catherine Atherton notes, “The standard view was that without purity all other qualities of style—typically lucidity, appropriateness, and ornament—would be pointless...”⁴⁸

At the heart of the effective art of persuasion was the ability to speak free of grammatical errors or vices.

Rhetoricians were concerned with avoiding errors. Atherton says that rhetoricians regarded correctness as a *sine qua non*, not merely a positive merit of speech.⁴⁹ The two types of errors that occupied the attention of both Greek and Latin writers during this period were barbarisms and solecisms. Malcolm Hyman demonstrates there is an essential definitional continuity between various authors concerning what constituted barbarism and solecism. He also demonstrates that the ancients developed specific vocabulary and taxonomies for identifying barbarisms and solecisms. According to the ancients, barbarism was an error at the phonological level where a single word deviated from the correct form. Solecism was an error in the inflected morphosyntax involving the discordant relationship of two or more elements of the sentence.⁵⁰

Ancient authors show a concern for correctness of language (*ἑλληνισμός/latinitas*). They sought to avoid grammatical and syntactical errors (*vitia*). However, the ancient authorities realized there were cases of apparent incorrect grammar or syntax that were intentionally created by the artistry (*ars*) of the author of prose or poetry and thus considered *licentia (virtus)*.⁵¹ An intentional, and thus acceptable, solecism was called *σχῆμα* or *figura*.⁵² Quintilian says,

⁴⁸ Catherine Atherton, “What Every Grammarian Knows?,” *CIQ* 46 (1996): 242.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Malcolm D. Hyman, “Barbarism and Solecism in Ancient Grammatical Thought” (PhD diss., Brown University, 2002), 1–2; See also Raija Vainio, “Latinitas and Barbarisms According to the Roman Grammarians: Attitudes Towards Language in the Light of Grammatical Examples” (Thesis, University of Turku, 1999).

⁵¹ See Heinrich Lausberg, *Handbook of Literary Rhetoric: A Foundation for Literary Study*, eds. David E. Orton and R. Dean Anderson, trans. Matthew T. Bliss, Annemiek Jansen, and David E. Orton (Boston: Brill, 1998), 232–33.

⁵² *Ibid.*

“However, there are expressions which have the appearance of solecism but cannot be treated as faults...”⁵³ Rather, he says, these should be called figures (Greek: σχῆμα). He explains that a *figura* must have some rational grounds (*aliquam rationem*) or else it is to be considered *solecismi*.⁵⁴ However, as Quintilian notes, it was difficult to distinguish between the unintentional barbarism/solecism and the intentional figure.⁵⁵ The key difference between the two was intentionality which Quintilian said could be proved by certain criteria: authority (*auctoritate*), antiquity (*vetustate*), usage (*consuetudine*), and logical principle (*ratione quadam*).⁵⁶ Lucian humorously quipped, “If you commit a solecism or a barbarism, let shamelessness be your sole and only remedy, and be ready at once with the name of someone who is not now alive and never was, either a poet or a historian, saying that he, a learned man, extremely precise in his diction, approved the expression.”⁵⁷ Thus, several ancient Greek and Latin grammarians and rhetoricians noted the distinction between intentional and thus, artistic ungrammaticality (*figura*/σχῆμα) which were *licentia* and unintentional grammatical errors (barbarism, solecism/ βαρβαρισμός, σολοικισμός) which were *vitia*.⁵⁸

REACTING TO BARBARISMS AND SOLECISMS

The extant sources containing reactions to barbarisms and solecisms can be plotted along a sliding scale of obdurate intransigence to judicious permissiveness. On one end of the scale,

⁵³ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.5.52 (Russell, LCL).

⁵⁴ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.5.53 (Russell, LCL); Quintilian thought that the use of figures for variation might “relieve the tedium of everyday stereotyped language and protect us from a commonplace way of speaking” because figures “stimulate the ear by their novelty,” but he warned that hearers become “weary if it used to excess” (*Inst.* 9.3.4–5 [Russell, LCL]).

⁵⁵ Quintilian, *Inst.* 1.5.5 (Russell, LCL).

⁵⁶ *Inst.* 9.3.3 (Russell, LCL).

⁵⁷ Lucian, *Rhet. praec.* 17 (Harmon, LCL).

⁵⁸ The ancients developed elaborate taxonomies for barbarisms and solecism. See Lausberg, *Literary Rhetoric*, 225–40.

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the Atticizing rhetorician, dealt with the irregular syntax he encountered in Thucydides. In his treatise *De Thucydide*, Dionysius criticizes the style of Thucydides in an attempt to keep the historian Quintus Aelius Tubero from imitating Thucydides.⁵⁹ Throughout his discussion of Thucydides, he criticizes his style. For example, after quoting a lengthy passage from Thucydides, he says:

I could supply many more examples to prove that his narratives are more effective when he adheres to the familiar and normal style of speech, and less effective when he forsakes this familiar style and uses strange words and forced figures of speech, some of which have the appearance of solecisms [σολοικισμῶν παρέχεται].⁶⁰

After a lengthy analysis of Thucydides's writings, Dionysius concludes that one could imitate the praiseworthy elements of his style, but mostly one should avoid imitating Thucydides. He says:

They should imitate those specimens of his composition in which his brevity, rhetorical power, force, intensity, impressiveness and other related virtues are plain for all men to see; while those which are allusive and difficult to follow, and require a commentary, and those which are full of tortured and apparently ungrammatical constructions [τὸ σολοικοφανές ἐν τοῖς σχηματισμοῖς ἐχούσας] deserve neither to be admired nor imitated.⁶¹

After reading *De Thucydide*, Ammaeus objected that Dionysius had not provided specific proofs for his indictment that Thucydides wrote in a poor style so Dionysius wrote *Epistula ad Ammaeum II* as an appendix to *De Thucydide*.⁶² Dionysius systematically moves through examples of Thucydides's violation of the natural *accidentia* of tense, mood, case, gender, and number (2 *Amm.* 7–12) which correspond to the grammatical incongruities in the Apocalypse. In each instance, Dionysius points to Thucydides's flawed expression and provides the corrected form. In one example, Thucydides writes: καὶ μὴ τῷ πλῆθει αὐτῶν καταπλαγέντες (“not

⁵⁹ Casper C. de Jonge, “Dionysius of Halicarnassus and the *Scholia* on Thucydides' Syntax,” in *Ancient Scholarship and Grammar: Archetypes, Concepts and Contexts*, ed. Stephanos Matthaios, Franco Montanari, and Antonios Rengakos, Trends in Classics 8 (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 460.

⁶⁰ *Thuc.* 33 (Usher, LCL).

⁶¹ *Thuc.* 55 (Usher, LCL).

⁶² 2 *Amm.* 1 (Usher, LCL).

frightened by their numbers”).⁶³ Dionysius says that the clause written in the dative should have been rendered in the accusative: καὶ μὴ τὸ πλῆθος τῶν πολεμίων καταπλαγέντες. Of this type of grammatical blunder, Dionysius says, “But those authors who construct masculines with feminines, as Thucydides has done, and use genitives instead of accusatives, would be said by us to be committing solecism (σολοικίζειν).”⁶⁴ Throughout, Dionysius is intolerant of any deviation in the expected form of the *accidentia* of speech. The underlying assumption of Dionysius’s concern is that later writers will imitate Thucydides’s (in his view, problematic) style. Stylistic imitation of the canonical works of the classic past (i.e. Thucydides) was the expected norm. Dionysius details for Quintus Aelius Tubero exactly which stylistic features of Thucydides’s writings were appropriate for imitation and which were off-putting.

On the other end of the scale is Galen and Philo. Galen studied the *Corpus Hippocraticum* philologically. His acumen in philology required him to pass judgements on Hippocrates’s literary merits and flaws.⁶⁵ Ineke Sluiter has shown that Galen frequently attempts to defend Hippocrates against the charge of inaccuracy. On several occasions, Galen uses grammatical inaccuracy to suggest that certain passages were not authentically from Hippocrates thus defending him of the charge of solecism.⁶⁶ On other occasions he indicates that Hippocrates intentionally used grammatical inaccuracy to pique the readers’ interest.⁶⁷ Galen is willing to forgive Hippocrates’s solecisms if the meaning of the passage containing the solecism is clear. In one example, Galen says that Hippocrates sometimes uses λίθος in the masculine (i.e. τὸν λίθον)

⁶³ In Thucydides, *Hist.* 4.10.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *2 Amm.* 11 (Usher, LCL).

⁶⁴ Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *2 Amm.* 11 (Usher, LCL).

⁶⁵ I am indebted to Ineke Sluiter’s article for the citations that follow (“The Embarrassment of Imperfection,” in *Ancient Medicine in its Socio-Cultural Context*, Wellcome Institute Series in the History of Medicine, eds. Ph.J. van der Eijk, H. F. J. Horstmannshoff, and P.H. Schrijvers [Atlanta: Rodopi, 1995], 2:522–34).

⁶⁶ In *Hippocratis prorrheticum i commentaria* iii 1.4 (16.511, 514); In *Hippocratis aphorismos commentarii* vii 5.62 (17B.865); 7.69 (18A.183); Sluiter, “Embarrassment,” 522.

⁶⁷ In *Hippocratis De articulis librum commentarii* iv 1.24 (18A.352); In *Hippocratis librum De medici officina commentarii* iii 1.5 (18B.665); Sluiter, “Embarrassment,” 522.

and at other times uses the feminine (i.e. τὴν λίθον). Galen says that masculine gender is the one used in medical practice, but the word is perfectly clear in either gender.⁶⁸ Galen states that he was willing to look past Hippocrates's barbarisms so long as the meaning was clear.⁶⁹ There was a practical purpose for Galen's position on barbarisms: he wanted to use the common vernacular of the patients he was assessing. If the patient's description of his or her symptoms was perfectly understandable, why introduce opaque expressions which could be confusing?⁷⁰ "Galen's permissiveness on the point of grammatical correctness makes the virtue of *Hellênismos* recede into the background. Galen submits that clarity, achieved on the basis of factual accuracy, is the only really important stylistic factor."⁷¹

Philo frequently defends and explains odd expressions in the Septuagint. The most relevant passage for the present discussion occurs in Philo's treatment of Gen 3:15.⁷² Philo says that in the sentence αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν, καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν⁷³, αὐτός is a barbarism (βαρβαρισμός) since the serpent is addressing the woman, thus one expects the feminine αὐτή. Philo remarks that although this is a barbarism, it "has a perfectly correct meaning" (σημαινομένῳ κατόρθωμα). Philo explains, "He has left off speaking about the woman and passed on to her seed and origin; but the mind is the origin of sense; and mind (ὁ νοῦς) is masculine, in speaking of which we should use the pronouns "he" and "his" and so on."⁷⁴ For both Philo and Galen, meaning and intelligibility reigned even if the vehicle of expression appeared flawed.

⁶⁸ *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis ac facultatibus* 9.2 (12.193); Sluiter, "Embarrassment," 523.

⁶⁹ *De De differentia pulsuum libri iv* 2.2 (8.567); Sluiter, "Embarrassment," 528.

⁷⁰ *De locis affectis libri vi* 2.9 (8.116); Sluiter, "Embarrassment," 528.

⁷¹ Sluiter, "Embarrassment," 529.

⁷² *Leg.* 3.67 (Colson and Whitaker, LCL).

⁷³ "he shall watch thy head, and thou shalt watch his heel" (Colson and Whitaker, LCL).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

Along the spectrum, one might plot the views of Demetrius, ps.–Longinus, and Quintilian. Whereas Dionysius faulted Thucydides for interchanging singular and plurals, Quintilian and ps.–Longinus state this interchange can be a stimulating rhetorical device that elicits *pathos*.⁷⁵ In another example, where Dionysius faulted Thucydides for case variation, Demetrius says, “Grandeur in figures is also produced from variety in the use of cases” and praises Thucydides for his case variation.⁷⁶ Ps.–Longinus mentions “changes in case, tense, person, number, or gender” as ornamental and “contributing to sublimity”, but he does not elaborate.⁷⁷ In another passage, ps.–Longinus asks whether works written in grandeur but containing some flaws are worse than moderate works composed in perfect soundness and impeccability?⁷⁸ Ps.–Longinus concludes that the works with the largest number of excellences are the most sublime, even if they are stylistically flawed in some respects. He says, “faults make an ineradicable impression....”⁷⁹ Even Homer made some careless oversights but it does not impinge on his literary genius. In one interesting passage, ps.–Longinus says:

Apollonius, for instance, is an impeccable poet in the *Argonautica*, and Theocritus—except in a few extraneous matters—is supremely successful in his pastorals. Yet would you not rather be Homer than Apollonius? And what of Eratosthenes in his *Erigone*? Wholly blameless as the little poem is, do you therefore think him a greater poet than Archilochus with all his disorganized flood and those outbursts of divine inspiration, which are so troublesome to bring under any rule?⁸⁰

Ps.–Longinus discusses the category of sublimity created as the result of divine inspiration was “troublesome to bring under any rule.” Quintilian models a mediating position. While his entire *Inst.* shows utmost concern for correctness in writing and speaking, he warned, “The reader must

⁷⁵ Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.20 (Russell, LCL); Ps.–Longinus, *Subl.* 1.23 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁷⁶ *Eloc.* 65 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁷⁷ *Subl.* 1.23 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.33 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

not let himself be automatically convinced that everything which the best authors said is necessarily perfect.”⁸¹ Even the greatest of ancients stagger, get tired, and produce work that is flawed. His rule of thumb:

However, we should be modest and circumspect in pronouncing judgement on men of such stature, and avoid the common mistake of condemning what we do not understand. If we must err on one side or the other, I should prefer readers to approve of everything in the masters than to find many things to disapprove.⁸²

The comments by Demetrius, ps.–Longinus, and Quintilian introduce the possibility that variations in case, number, and gender could be viewed as praiseworthy and intentionally created for stylistic grandeur and rhetorical sublimity.

PUBLIC READING AND THE EMBARRASSMENT OF IMPERFECTION

Regarding literacy rates in antiquity, William Harris’s conclusions in his seminal work, *Ancient Literacy*, remain valid although numerous points have been challenged and modified. Although literacy rates varied provincially, literacy remained between 10–20% in the first-century Roman Empire.⁸³ However, despite low literacy rates, vast swaths of the population had access to literature through public reading. Thus, as Lucretia Yaghjian notes, while the majority of the population would not have been oculiterate (able to decode *scriptio continua* with the eye) or scribaliterate (able to read and write for professional purposes), many would have been oraliterate (able to orally recite) and auraliterate (able to understand something read aloud).⁸⁴

⁸¹ *Inst.* 10.1.24 (Russell, LCL)

⁸² *Ibid.*, 10.1.26 (Russell, LCL).

⁸³ William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 323–32.

⁸⁴ Lucretia B. Yaghjian, “Ancient Reading,” in *The Social Sciences and New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Richard L. Rohrbaugh (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 208–9.

Quintilian says that the first basic rule of speaking is that barbarisms and solecisms should be avoided, especially in writing because “bad writing is bound to be bad speaking.”⁸⁵ For a speech to be correct, Quintilian says that it must be written correctly, conforming to the rules of grammar, and then it must be pronounced correctly.⁸⁶ Seneca says that manuscripts that contained errors were simply torn up and thrown away.⁸⁷ Cicero writes to Atticus that if any barbarisms or solecisms should be found in his work which appear “un-Greek or unscholarly”, then these errors will be “unintended and regretted.”⁸⁸ Cicero goes on to describe how poor grammar was received in public oratory:

...for nobody ever admired an orator for correct grammar, they only laugh at him if his grammar is bad, and not only think him no orator but not even a human being; no one ever sang the praises of a speaker whose style succeeded in making his meaning intelligible to his audience, but only despised one deficient in capacity to do so. Who then is the man who gives people a thrill? whom do they stare at in amazement when he speaks?... It is those whose speeches are clear, explicit and full, perspicuous in matter and in language...⁸⁹

In an oral/aural culture, writing was expected to be without error because speech was expected to be without error.

The extant evidence suggests auraliterate audiences were averse to mistakes in public reading and lectors were liable to public humiliation. Lucian’s concern for correctness in public speech borders on paranoia. He devotes two treatises to correct speech. In *The Solecist*, Lucian challenges a sophist to catch the solecisms in his speech. In the satire, Lucian makes repeated grammatical mistakes and the sophist consistently fails to notice them. Lucian ridicules the

⁸⁵ *Inst.* 1.5.6 (Russell, LCL); Quintilian notes that errors in writing are grammatical and result in errors of speech. However, errors of speech are not always due to writing because the error of speech could be caused by a fault of the one speaking; Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge Classical Studies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 174–75.

⁸⁶ Morgan, *Literate Education*, 174.

⁸⁷ *De Ira* 3.2.26 (Basore, LCL).

⁸⁸ Cicero, *Att.* I.19.10 (Bailey, LCL).

⁸⁹ *De. or.* III.52–53 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL).

sophist for missing the solecisms and the sophist replies, “I don’t know what you mean by that. I’ve noticed many people making howlers [σολοικίζοντας] in my time.”⁹⁰ Lucian and the sophist both agree that one should do everything possible to keep a friend from making a grammatical error.⁹¹ Lucian is satirizing those who claimed to be perfect in language, probably the purist Atticists. The solecisms in Lucian’s satire would not have been frowned upon in a public reading since they were clearly intentionally created by the artistry of the author. Indeed, the solecisms are an integral and artistic component in Lucian’s *The Solecist*. Another work, *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting*, is an apology to a patron for a mistaken utterance in a greeting. When Lucian accidentally uttered “Health to you” (ὕγιαίνειν σε) instead of “Joy to you” (χαίρειν), he began to sweat and his color changed. Some near him thought he was a fool or that he was hungover.⁹² Again, the issue of intentionality versus accident is central to this scene. Lucian appeals to an instance which supposedly occurred in the presence of Augustus when a man was pardoned for a crime he did not commit and uttered, “Thank you, Emperor, for your bad and unjust judgment!” (Χάριν οἶδά σοι, ἔφη, ὃ αὐτοκράτορ, ὅτι κακῶς καὶ ἀδίκως ἐδίκασας). Augustus’s courtiers were furious but the Emperor said, “Calm your anger. It is his meaning, not his words, that you must consider.”⁹³ Lucian concludes, “That was his answer, but if you look at my meaning, the intention, you’ll see, was good; if at my words, they too were auspicious.”⁹⁴ Although Lucian appealed to a historical precedent to ask for pardon, the sting of embarrassment over the accidental slip still hangs over the text.

⁹⁰ *Sol.* 4 (MacLeod, LCL).

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 9 (MacLeod, LCL).

⁹² *A Slip of the Tongue in Greeting* 1 (Kilburn, LCL).

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Other examples attest to the embarrassment of imperfection. At a dinner party, a slave incorrectly declaimed in sing-song a line from Virgil's *Aen.* Trimalchio says, "No sharper sound ever pierced my ears; for besides his making barbarous mistakes in raising or lowering his voice, he mixed up Atellane verses with it, so that even Virgil jarred on me for the first time in my life."⁹⁵ In a letter to Baebius Macer, Pliny the Younger described how his uncle, Pliny the Elder, once had a dinner guest who made a lector stop and go back because he had mispronounced a word. Pliny the Elder complained to his guest that making the lector go back and reread the line caused them to lose ten lines worth of time.⁹⁶ In a letter to Suetonius, Pliny the Younger admits that he read poetry badly and asks Suetonius if it would be better for him to have one of the freedmen read to an informal gathering of his friends. "The man I have chosen is not really a good reader, but I think he will do better than I can as long as he is not nervous."⁹⁷

Gellius relates three stories that illustrate the risk of reading aloud. In the first story, a number of young men were in Puteoli with a rhetorician Antonius Julianus. They were informed that a reader (ἀναγνώστην) was reading the *Annals* of Ennius in a theater. They heard him wrongly recite *quadrupes equus* instead of *quadrupes eques*. Julianus remarks, "Do you think that, if he had had a master and instructor worth a penny, he would have said *quadrupes equus* and not *quadrupes eques*?"⁹⁸ When challenged afterward by Julianus, Apollinaris, the reader, defended himself by appealing to a copy of Ennius's *Annals* he had seen with his own eyes that contained the reading *equus* instead of *equus*.⁹⁹ In another story, Gellius had recently disembarked from a ship and went to hear a man who was "reading in a barbarous and ignorant

⁹⁵ Petronius, *Satyr.* 68 (Rouse, LCL).

⁹⁶ *Ep.* 3.5.12–13 (Radic, LCL).

⁹⁷ *Ep.* 2.34.1–2 (Radice, LCL).

⁹⁸ *Noct. att.* 18.5.1–7 (Rolfe, LCL).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 18.5.11.

manner from the seventh book of Virgil.”¹⁰⁰ He challenged the reader on why he called sheep *bidentes*. The reader became angry with Gellius. Gellius “laughed at the wit of the blockhead and left him.”¹⁰¹ In a final story, he narrates about a conceited gentleman in a bookshop who was boasting that only he was capable of interpreting the *Satires* of Varro. By happenstance, Gellius had a book of those *Satires* with him, Ὑδροκύων (Water Dog). He asked the gentleman to give an impromptu reading of the book aloud with an accompanying explanation of the satire to those who had gathered around. “‘Do you rather,’ he replied, ‘read me what you do not understand, in order that I may interpret it for you.’ ‘How on earth can I read,’ I replied, ‘what I cannot understand? Surely my reading will be indistinct and confused, and will even distract your attention.’”¹⁰² Gellius handed the man the book that was “of tested correctness and clearly written.”¹⁰³ Gellius reports that he was incredulous at what followed:

Ignorant schoolboys, if they had taken up that book, could not have read more laughably, so wretchedly did he pronounce the words and murder the thought. Then, since many were beginning to laugh, he returned the book to me, saying, “You see that my eyes are weak and almost ruined by constant night work; I could barely make out even the forms of the letters. When my eyes have recovered, come to me and I will read the whole of that book to you.” “Master,” said I, “I hope your eyes may improve; but I pray you, tell me this, for which you will have no need of your eyes; what does *caninum prandium* mean in the passage which you read?” And that egregious blockhead, as if alarmed by the difficulty of the question, at once got up and made off, saying: “You ask no small matter; I do not give such instruction for nothing.”¹⁰⁴

This account demonstrates the difficulty involved in public reading without preparation. It also shows that even in informal settings, misreadings and mispronunciations caused by incompetence or ignorance invited laughter from the audience resulting in the shame of the one reading. In two of these instances, Gellius notes the correctness of the manuscript which was

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 16.6.2.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 16.6.1–12.

¹⁰² Ibid., 13.31.5.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 13.31.6–7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 13.31.9–13.

being read. In the first story, after being challenged by Apollinaris over his reading, Julianus pointed him to that reading found in a copy of Ennius's *Annals* which he had seen with his own eyes. Thus, the reader avoids the charge of error and embarrassment by pointing away from accidental pronunciation to the reading found in an existing manuscript. Similarly, when Gellius says he handed a copy of Varro's *Satires* to the arrogant man, he notes that the manuscript was "of tested correctness and clearly written." This notice sets the stage for the embarrassment of the following scene by ensuring the audience knows that when the man makes the mistakes in his reading, they are not due to the nature of the text, but caused by the ignorance and incompetence of the reader.

Imperfection was also a major concern for the Qumran covenanters as well as early Christians because erroneous reading could lead to erroneous belief. The Damascus Document warns: "And anyone who is not quick to under]stand, and anyone w[ho speaks weakly or staccato], [with]out separating his words to make [his voice] heard, [such men should not read in the book of][the Torah], so that he will not lead to error in a capital matter [...]." ¹⁰⁵ Irenaeus, the second century apologist, was concerned with how Paul's letters were read aloud. He demonstrates this by pointing to Paul's quick writing style in passages like 2 Cor 4:4; Gal 3:19; and 2 Thess 2:8. Since Paul writes rapidly and frequently transposes the order of the sentences and uses hyperbaton, if one does not read correctly, it could lead to mistaken and even heretical interpretations. He says, "If one does not attend to the proper reading, and if he does not exhibit the intervals of breathing as they occur, there shall be not only incongruities, but also, when

¹⁰⁵ 4Q267fr5iii.

reading, he will utter blasphemy...”¹⁰⁶ This concern for accurate reading in early Christianity developed into a minor order for the lector by the end of the second century.¹⁰⁷

The foregoing examples suggest that reading aloud was a highly specialized enterprise which required training, and each individual reading act required preparation and practice.¹⁰⁸ Greek education emphasized memorization and recitation, not impromptu public reading. Thus, very few were capable of reading literary works aloud, and even fewer could read a work unrehearsed.¹⁰⁹ Petronius, the first-century satirist, says that Trimalchio kissed a young slave boy; he explains, “I kissed that excellent boy not because he is beautiful, but because he is excellent: he can do division and read books *at sight* [*librum ab oculo legit*]...”¹¹⁰ The ability to read something “at sight” was rare in the ancient world. Gamble describes the situation:

The act of reading aloud publicly required both skill and preparation. It could not be done, and certainly not well, unless the reader closely familiarized himself with the text in advance, learning how to decode *scriptio continua*: what syllables went together to make a word, what groups of words constituted phrases and sentences, where to pause, where the voice should rise or fall, what to emphasize, and so on. Clearly, reading this sort of text was as much an act of interpretation as of merely decoding.¹¹¹

The foregoing examples suggest that intentionality was key. Mistakes in reading caused by ignorance or ineptitude frequently resulted in public derision and humiliation. Even elite individuals, like Pliny the Younger, expressed hesitation over reading publicly since the

¹⁰⁶ *Haer.* 37.7.1–2 (Roberts and Donaldson, *ANF*).

¹⁰⁷ By the time of Tertullian, this was already the case (*Praescr.* 41); See John Gordon Davies, “Deacons, Deaconesses, and the Minor Orders in the Patristic Period,” *JEH* 14 (1963): 1–15; Valeriy A. Alikin, *The Earliest History of the Christian Gathering: Origin, Development and Content of the Christian Gathering in the First to Third Centuries*. Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 178.

¹⁰⁸ Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church*, 204–05.

¹⁰⁹ Quintilian describes how difficult reading was: “For to look forward to the right (as is universally taught), and so foresee what is coming, is a matter not only of theory but of practice, since we have to keep our eyes on what follows while reading out what precedes, and (most difficult of all) divide the attention of the mind, the voice doing one thing and the eyes another” (*Inst.* 1.1.34 [Russell, LCL]).

¹¹⁰ *Emphasis mine. Sat.* 75 (Rouse, LCL).

¹¹¹ Harry Gamble, “Literacy, Liturgy, and the Shaping of the New Testament Canon,” in *The Earliest Gospels: The Origins and Transmission of the Earliest Christian Gospels—the Contribution of the Chester Beatty Codex P45I*, ed. Charles Horton (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 35; see also Marrou, *A History of Education*, 166.

embarrassment of imperfection was an ever-present possibility. Impromptu readings were especially susceptible to accidental mistakes resulting in public humiliation. Manuscripts were expected to be written correctly, and the public reading of those manuscripts required preparation and practice. The picture painted in these scenes confirms Quintilian's instruction noted above. Intentionality was key. Accidental mistakes in public readings were frowned upon by ancient audiences.

UNINTENTIONAL SOLECISM VERSUS INTENTIONAL FIGURE

The rhetorical handbooks demonstrate that not all deviations from the expected grammar are vices due to incompetence. The line between solecism and figure was not always clear. For example, Dionysius, although finding elements of Thucydides's style and grammar unworthy of imitation, never labels them "solecism." He mitigates his language by saying some of his constructions "have the appearance of solecisms [σολοικισμῶν παρέχεται]."¹¹² Dionysius seems reluctant to critique the style of a classical author like Thucydides, while at the same time suggesting this style should not be imitated by his students. Dionysius shows the boundary between figures and solecisms was often difficult to discern.¹¹³ Quintilian famously said, "there is a figure corresponding to every kind of solecism."¹¹⁴ Again:

The first disfigurement to be avoided is that of Barbarism and Solecism. But as these faults are sometimes excused on grounds of Usage or Authority or Antiquity or (finally) closeness to some Virtue (for it is often difficult to distinguish them from Figures), the teacher, to avoid being mistaken in so ticklish a decision, must pay close attention to this fine distinction, on which I shall say more when I come to Figures of Speech.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Thuc.* 33 (Usher, LCL).

¹¹³ De Jonge, *Between Grammar and Rhetoric: Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Language, Linguistics, and Literature*, *Mnemosyne* 301 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 230–31.

¹¹⁴ *Inst.* 9.3.11 (Russell, LCL).

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.5.5–6 (Russell, LCL)

The ancient rhetoricians and philologists sought to clarify what made the “fine distinction” between the two. The difficulty in inferring intentionality is that it requires knowledge of the author’s mental state which is most often, especially for works in antiquity, only accessible through the medium of the text.¹¹⁶ The Greek grammarian Tryphon sought to differentiate between figure and solecism in *De Tropis*. The main distinction between the two is that σχῆμα is an intentional error. Intentionality is demonstrated by visible “art [τέχνη] or originality [ξενοφωνία] or embellishment [καλλωπισμόν].”¹¹⁷ He says that solecism is an involuntary offence (ἀμάρτημα ἐκούσιον) which is committed through ignorance and a figure is the use of an intentional, artistic σχῆμα (ἀμάρτημα ἀκούσιον).

As noted previously, Quintilian maintained that correct language (intentionality) was determined on the basis of four criteria: authority (*auctoritate*), antiquity (*vetustate*), usage (*consuetudine*), and logical principle (*ratione quadam*).¹¹⁸ He has a brief discussion of these criteria in *Inst.* 1.6. By logical principle, Quintilian draws upon the principle of analogy which focuses on the comparison of similar words in the hope of clarifying the use uncertain words with other more established uses.¹¹⁹ He also says that etymology, the origin and development of a word, could be appealed to for a logical principle.¹²⁰ Antiquity is the use of archaic words and constructions which causes the style to have a “certain majesty and, I might almost say, religious awe [*religio commendat*].”¹²¹ Again, he says, “Words taken from past ages not only have great men to urge their claims but also give the style a certain grandeur, not unmixed with charm; they have both the authority of age and, because they have fallen into disuse, an attraction like that of

¹¹⁶ Malcolm D. Hyman, “Barbarism and Solecism,” 151.

¹¹⁷ *De Tropis* 26.1.12–16

¹¹⁸ *Inst.* 9.3.3 (Russell, LCL).

¹¹⁹ See Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 76.

¹²⁰ *Inst.* 1.6.26–39 (Russell, LCL).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 1.6.1.

novelty.”¹²² Quintilian advises that archaic phrases should be used in moderation. He provides the examples from ages past of archaic terms like “*topper, antegerio, exanclare, prosapiai* and the hymns of the Salii which their own priests now hardly understand.”¹²³ He says, “These indeed religion forbids us to change; what is sacred must be kept in use... So, as the best new words will be the oldest, so the best old words will be the newest.”¹²⁴ Regarding authority, Quintilian says, “Authority is generally sought from orators and historians... This is because the judgement of the supreme orators replaces Reason, and even error is honourable if it comes from following such great guides.”¹²⁵ The best authors make certain constructions acceptable.¹²⁶ Of the four criteria, he refers to usage as “the surest teacher of speaking.”¹²⁷ By usage, he does not refer to the practice of the majority since most people say things which might be censorious, but it refers to the “consensus of the educated.”¹²⁸ Quintilian argues that usage is the basis of and gives rise to analogy:

Analogy was not sent down from heaven to frame the rules of language when men were first created, but was discovered only when they were already using language and note was taken of the way in which particular words ended in speech. It rests therefore not upon Reason but upon Precedent; it is not a law of speech, but an observed practice, Analogy itself being merely the product of Usage.¹²⁹

Thus, the literary practice of the authorities takes precedence over the other three criteria. This perspective can be summarized in the dictum: “It is better to err with the eloquent than keep to the straight and narrow with the grammarian.”¹³⁰ Quintilian shows that usage has the power to overcome linguistic law. Atherton explains that the grammarian, on the one hand, is only able to

¹²² Ibid., 1.6.39.

¹²³ Ibid., 1.6.40–41.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 1.6.41.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 1.6.2.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1.6.42.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 1.6.3.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 1.6.45.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 1.6.16.

¹³⁰ Atherton, “What Every Grammarian Knows,” 245.

show that a bit of language is *possibly* correct or incorrect; on the other hand, the rhetorician has at his disposal ordinary speech, the canon of classical works, and rhetorical figures and tropes which might be employed to have a desired effect on the audience.¹³¹

While many scholars have opined as to whether John's grammar is intentional or unintentional, most have not grounded these decisions in the categories provided by rhetorical handbooks. One exception is Moṭ who in his section "Barbarism and Solecism in Rhetorical Context," draws upon these rhetorical criteria which differentiate solecism and figure. He brings these criteria to bear on the proposed solecisms of Revelation.¹³² He rightly draws from this material that "attention should be given to the issue of intentionality... To be catalogued as purposeful, a deviant grammatical structure should have practical or artistic/rhetorical evidences."¹³³ This observation informs his methodology. If a particular construction can be shown to have a reasonable explanation (e.g. *constructio ad sensum*) or if one can show that an ancient authority employed the same departure from regularity, then the offence is pardonable. He thus employs a diachronic perspective looking for similar constructions for each proposed solecism. He contrasts this ancient rhetorical sensibility with modern day prescriptive-formalist approaches to grammar preferring a descriptive-functional approach instead. The descriptive, rather than prescriptive approach, allows authors to have a greater freedom in producing language which may result in irregular constructions, which are not necessarily to be considered grammatical errors. In his final chapter, he returns to the issue of intentionality and concludes that to apply ancient rhetorical criteria to Revelation's grammatical irregularities "...would presuppose that the text is poetic, or, at least, that John had some formal education and used

¹³¹ Ibid., 258–59.

¹³² Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 64–73; Karrer briefly notes Quintilian's view (*Johannesoffenbarung*, 99).

¹³³ Moṭ, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 73.

rhetorical techniques. However, all these assumptions are doubtful and any endeavor to find out how intentional John was in his linguistic deviations seems hopeless and fruitless.”¹³⁴ Moṭ calls for a methodological distinction between two domains of intentionality: rhetoric and grammar. He maintains that “the writer is always grammatically intentional” while every instance of grammatical irregularity is not always rhetorically intentional.¹³⁵ He concludes:

When it comes to syntax, John is always intentional in his choices. It is not that he wants to err (volitionally), but the instances of irregularity display his efforts to (intentionally) make sense in the SL [Second Language]. And the truth is that the final product is meaningful to the writer, being a result of his linguistic limitations.¹³⁶

Moṭ excuses John of the charge of solecism and embarrassment by maintaining that even in John’s irregular grammar, his grammatical decisions are intentional. Even if they are due to linguistic limitations, the author is not erring volitionally. He is grammatically but not rhetorically intentional. However, it is difficult to see how Moṭ’s identification of 45 actual solecisms would have been excused simply because the author did not intend to err. Moṭ’s use of Quintilian’s criteria led him to investigate diachronically for examples of parallel or similar constructions for each occurrence. His important contribution exhibits a sound methodology which emerges from his interaction with Quintilian’s rhetorical theory. However, his distinction that each construction is grammatically intentional but not rhetorically intentional fails to accomplish what it promises. If the nine types of solecisms (representing 45 individual occurrences according to Moṭ) are due to the author making his best effort to communicate grammatically in Greek as a second language, it is difficult to conclude from the rhetorical evidence that ancients would have simply overlooked those 45 instances, especially when the rest of the work demonstrates the author’s aptitude in Greek. Labeling occurrences of

¹³⁴ Ibid., 219.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 221.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

grammatical irregularity as lacking any discernible logical principle, usage, authority, or antiquity violates Quintilian's rhetorical theory and should be labeled as solecism which was frowned upon in speaking and writing. While Moṭ is able to rescue John from dozens of alleged solecisms in the history of interpretation, it is difficult to see how his conclusions absolve John from producing a work with rhetorically jolting solecisms.¹³⁷

Like Moṭ, I draw on the near-contemporary handbooks to provide a vocabulary to understand ancient, rather than modern, modes of thinking and argumentation. The purpose of drawing upon Quintilian's criteria is not in a prescriptive or normative fashion, but rather heuristically. These rhetorical criteria provide new research questions which pave the way for fresh exploration of the grammatical irregularity in Revelation; namely, is it possible the grammatical irregularity in Revelation is due to the conscious employment of an artistic rhetorical figure? Is there an ancient authoritative work which employs an irregular style which provided a model for John? Is there an analogous ancient text from which John may be drawing this idiosyncratic syntax? While Moṭ seems skeptical of these questions as hopeless and fruitless, I find them to hold promise for opening new ways of examining this curious feature of the book. Moṭ's reliance on Quintilian's criteria lead him (laudably) to search for parallel constructions and linguistic phenomena. In addition to looking for specific parallel constructions in Greek, it is worth considering whether John was imitating an idiosyncratic style encountered in an authoritative source.

¹³⁷ Moṭ says, "Related to the explanations of the peculiar Greek is the fourth finding that John's grammar is always intentional. This should not be understood as an apology for a mistake. John was not volitional about his deviations, he wanted to write the best Greek he could. But it was pointed out that any rendition, including the peculiar, is a result of intention, that is, the writer wanted to express his thought with that very deviant syntax, because that was what he could linguistically perform. If one wants to understand John's thought, he or she needs to assume intentionality in the appraisal of irregularities" (246).

THE CONSERVATIVE CHARACTER OF RHETORIC

The criteria for distinguishing an unintentional solecism and intentional figure provided by Quintilian and others points to a central feature of rhetoric, namely, its conservative character. Opposite a modern ethos, the ancients were less inclined to approve of innovation, newness, and creativity.¹³⁸ As Tim Whitmarsh has shown, the one constant in all Greco-Roman *paideia* was “the attempt to root all forms of status and identity in the prestigious past.”¹³⁹ In fact, Quintilian says that the ability to imitate models is one of the principal signs of a prospective student of rhetoric.¹⁴⁰ Greco-Roman education proceeded on the rules learned from the precedents set by the canonical authors and rhetors. The primary means of rhetorical education was through imitation which provided students with models to follow.¹⁴¹ Imitation was present in formal education from the first phase to the last and everywhere in between.¹⁴²

After learning to imitate Greek letters and glosses, the student was required to rewrite the works of poets.¹⁴³ Homer was the primary exemplar for elementary exercises.¹⁴⁴ In later stages of education, the *grammaticus* focused on elementary rhetoric and composition. The progymnasmata served as curriculum for students. The composition exercises of the

¹³⁸ Donald Lemen Clark “Imitation: Theory and Practice in Roman Rhetoric,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 37 (1951): 11; Donald Lemen Clark *Rhetoric in Greco—Roman Education* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1957), 144; Casper J. Kraemer, “On Imitation and Originality,” *The Classical Weekly* 20 (1927): 135; Thomas L. Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 3.

¹³⁹ Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 6.

¹⁴⁰ *Inst.* 1.3.1 (Russell, LCL).

¹⁴¹ George Kennedy, “Historical Survey of Rhetoric” in *Handbook of Classical Rhetoric in the Hellenistic Period, 330 B.C.–A.D. 400*, ed. Stanley Porter (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 15.

¹⁴² Andrew Pitts, “The Origins of Greek Mimesis and the Gospel of Mark: Genre as a Potential Constraint in Assessing Markan Imitation,” in *Ancient Education and Early Christianity*, ed. Matthew Ryan Hauge, Andrew Pitts (London: T&T Clark, 2016), 109.

¹⁴³ *Inst.* 1.1.35; 1.8.8–9 (Russell, LCL).

¹⁴⁴ *Inst.* 1.8.5 (Russell, LCL); Lucian, *Men.* 3–4 (Harmon, LCL).

progymnasmata were meant to teach the student to “imitate the finest” authors of the past.¹⁴⁵ The student was expected to practice oratory every day by studying and duplicating the great writers of the past.

It was the job of Greek and Roman teachers to provide students with the best models for imitation, pointing out their merits as well as their faults. Quintilian recommended as one of the “first rudiments of rhetoric” to have young pupils read history and even more, oratory.¹⁴⁶

Although he acknowledges that there might be some contemporary orators that are worthy of imitation, “It is safer to stick with the earlier writers, even at the price of errors” because “It is not in natural talent that the ancients are better than we are, but in their aims.”¹⁴⁷ In *On Training for Public Speaking*, Dio Chrysostom did not think it wise to write invented school exercises; rather, he advised taking up the speeches that one finds powerful in order to “advance the same arguments in a different way.”¹⁴⁸

The exercises for students to engage with past works included paraphrase, translation, and memorization. Memorization of ancient works allowed the student to be intimately familiar with the model. Quintilian provides four benefits of having students memorize passages from speeches in histories:

For (1) it is a better exercise for the memory to take in other people’s words than one’s own; (2) those who are trained in this more difficult task will easily fix their own compositions in their mind, because these are already familiar; (3) they will get used to the best models and always have objects of imitation in their minds; (4) they will now unconsciously reproduce the style of the speech which they have so thoroughly absorbed.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁵ Theon, *Progymn.* 1.82–83 trans. George Kennedy *Progymnasmata: Greek Textbooks of Prose Composition and Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

¹⁴⁶ *Inst.* 2.5.1 (Russell, LCL).

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.5.24–26.

¹⁴⁸ *Dic. exercit.* 18.18–19 (Cohoon, LCL).

¹⁴⁹ *Inst.* 2.7.2–3 (Russell, LCL).

Memorization, according to Quintilian, provides a “hoarded treasure” from which the student can draw for vocabulary, composition, and figures.¹⁵⁰ In Roman education, translation from Greek into Latin was a beneficial exercise since it involved the creative art of rendering the words of another into a different language. The resulting product is clearly the translator’s own words (in Latin) although the content and style proceeds from a prestigious Greek past. Quintilian saw this exercise as a microcosm of rhetoric—recognizing the voice of ancient authorities behind one’s own words.¹⁵¹ Similarly, for paraphrase, Quintilian expected his students to write on the same subject as an ancient author. They were to say the same thing that the model author said but change the style and the words. In *Inst.* 2.5.18–20, Quintilian recommends literary models for beginners. These models served as a foretaste of the more developed list in Book 10. There, Quintilian includes an extensive survey of the classical authors of Greek and Roman literature which should serve as models for would-be orators.¹⁵²

This conservatism was not limited to the realm of rhetoric and literature; it was also found in Roman art. As Ellen Perry argues, “A guiding aesthetic of appropriateness is bound to create a corpus of art that approves of tradition rather than seeking to reject it. And the fact that patrons were held to account for the appropriateness of their art objects will have served as further encouragement to traditionalism.”¹⁵³ Similar to orators and authors, the best artists were expected to blend the influences of several of their various predecessors.¹⁵⁴ In art, Romans did not value novelty unmoored from its past; “Rather, real failure was characterized by lack of

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.7.4.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 10.5.2–3.

¹⁵² James J. Murphy, “Quintilian’s Advice on the Continuing Self—Education of the Adult Orator: Book X of His *Institutio Oratoria*” in *Quintilian and the Law: The Art of Persuasion in Law and Political Aspects* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2003), 250f.

¹⁵³ Ellen Perry, “Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, and the Roman Aesthetics of Artistic Imitation,” *MAAR* (2002): 157.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 161.

interest even attempting to meet the standards of ‘the ancients’.”¹⁵⁵ In fact, rhetorical handbooks often draw an analogy from the visual arts. For example, Quintilian compares singers and painters to the practice of imitation in rhetoric:

Moreover, it is a principle of life in general that we want to do for ourselves what we approve in others. Children follow the outlines of letters so as to become accustomed to writing; singers find their model in their teacher’s voice, painters in the works of their predecessors [sic], and farmers in methods of cultivation which have been tested by experience. In a word, we see the rudiments of every branch of learning shaped by standards prescribed for it. We obviously cannot help being either like the good or unlike them. Nature rarely makes us like them; imitation often does.¹⁵⁶

The most frequently cited example of literary imitation was the story of the painter, Zeuxis, who was tasked with producing an image of the beautiful Helen and completed the task by using multiple beautiful women as his models. Dionysius uses this example from the arts to inform his literary-rhetorical theory of imitation.¹⁵⁷ In Plato’s *Republic*, Socrates thought artistic imitation was tantamount to “wizardry” since it gives the effect of something being present that is not.¹⁵⁸

This conservatism is perhaps best illustrated by the so-called Second Sophistic, a movement in late first to early third centuries CE that idealized an Athenian classical past and sought to impose a purity of language that imitated archaic Atticism. Atticism was focused on reproducing the Attic dialect of the fifth and fourth centuries BCE.¹⁵⁹ The cultural roots of Atticism extend back to the calls to imitate the classical Athenian authors made in the first century BCE, exemplified by Dionysius of Halicarnassus.¹⁶⁰ W. Martin Bloomer describes a successful Roman author of the Second Sophistic like a cook searching the ancient literature for

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁵⁶ *Inst.* 10.2.2–3 (Russell, LCL).

¹⁵⁷ *De Imitatione*, frag 6.

¹⁵⁸ *Resp.* 598c; 602d (Emlyn-Johns and Preddy, LCL).

¹⁵⁹ Claudia Strobel, “The Lexica of the Second Sophistic: Safeguarding Atticism” in *Standard Languages and Language Standards: Greek, Past and Present*, ed. Alexandra Georgakopoulou, M. S. Silk (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 93–96.

¹⁶⁰ Simon Swain, *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World, AD 50–250* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 19–20.

a secret ingredient, but the secret ingredient is only to be found in the old cookbooks and the resulting composition must be new and tasty so that the author can “have his reader know that his diction is the result of long scholarship and selective taste...”¹⁶¹ The correct use of Attic was one of the obvious markers of elite status. A related phenomenon to Atticism is the so-called Asiatic style which was a stylistic phenomenon based on imitating the style of canonical Greek authors. Many, although not all, of the authors of Asianism originate from Asia Minor.¹⁶²

Romans felt no misgivings about “submerging their individualities” in the works of authoritative predecessors.¹⁶³ According to the dictum of Horace: *vos exemplaria Graeca nocturna versate manu, versate diurna*.¹⁶⁴ This conservative impulse penetrated every area of life—rhetoric, oratory, poetry, historiography, prose, and even the arts. The underlying principle is that there is a certain authority and majesty that comes from the classical and canonical authors of the past. To add authority and majesty to one’s own work comes not from pure innovation, but from a creative interaction with and reframing of the great works of the past. Perhaps John Marincola summarizes this traditionalism best when he says: “Thus the goal of ancient composition was not to strike out boldly in a radical departure from one’s predecessors, but rather to be incrementally innovative within a tradition, by embracing the best in previous performers and adding something of one’s own marked with an individual stamp.”¹⁶⁵ Given the universality of the conservative impulse to draw upon the greatest models of the classical past as well as one of the most notable features of Revelation, namely its extensive use of the Scriptures

¹⁶¹ W. Martin Bloomer, “Latinitas” in *Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic*, ed. Daniel S. Richter, William A. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 69.

¹⁶² Lawrence Kim, “Atticism and Asianism,” in *Oxford Handbook of the Second Sophistic*, ed. Daniel S. Richter, William A. Johnson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 55.

¹⁶³ Kraemer, “On Imitation and Originality,” 135.

¹⁶⁴ “For yourselves, handle Greek models by night, handle them by day.” *Ars* 265.

¹⁶⁵ Marincola, *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 14.

of Israel, it is *a priori* possible that a thorough analysis of Greco-Roman *imitatio* may yield fresh insights into John's use of the OT.

Μίμησις/Imitatio¹⁶⁶

Although used in multiple disciplines and genres by both Greek and Latin writers, the practice of imitation (Greek: μίμησις/ Latin: *imitatio*) refers to the intentional use of earlier works. D. A. Russell summarizes the pervasiveness of imitation by Greco-Roman authors:

One of the inescapable features of Latin literature is that almost every author, in almost everything he writes, acknowledges his antecedents, his predecessors—in a word, the tradition in which he was bred. This phenomenon, for which the technical terms are imitation or (in Greek) mimesis, is not peculiar to Latin; the statement I have just made about Latin writers would also be true very generally of Greek. In fact, the relationship between the Latin genres and their Greek exemplars may best be seen as a special case of a general Greco-Roman acceptance of imitation as an essential element in all literary composition.¹⁶⁷

As noted earlier, imitation was central to Greco-Roman *paideia*. It occurred at every stage.

Rafaella Criboire explains that once a student was able to use a pen, he composed his first

¹⁶⁶ For this section, I am indebted to several authors who have surveyed the history and practice of mimesis/*imitatio* in Greco-Roman literature and rhetoric. See Brad McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis and the Mitigation of Early Christian Conflicts: Examining the Influence that Greco-Roman Mimesis May Have in the Composition of Matthew, Luke, and Acts* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2018), 17–33; Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 3–22; Vivienne Gray, “Mimesis in Greek Historical Theory,” *The American Journal of Philology* 108 (1987): 467–86; Richard McKeon, “Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity,” *Modern Philology* 34 (1936): 3–28; Edward P. J. Corbett, “The Theory and Practice of Imitation in Classical Rhetoric,” *College Composition and Communication* 22 (1971): 243–50; John Muckelbauer, “Imitation and Invention in Antiquity: An Historical—Theoretical Revision,” *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 21 (2003): 61–88; Pitts, “Origins of Greek Mimesis,” 107–29; Elaine Fantham, “Imitation and Decline: Rhetorical Theory and Practice in the First Century after Christ,” *CP* 73 (1978): 102–15; Ellen Perry, “Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, and the Roman Aesthetics of Artistic Imitation,” 153–71; Donald Lemen Clark, *Rhetoric in Greco—Roman Education*, 144–76; *Ibid.*, “Imitation: Theory and Practice in Roman Rhetoric,” 11–21; Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 1–94; D. A. Russell, “De Imitatione” in *Creative Imitation and Latin Literature*, ed. David West, A. J. Woodman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 1–16.

¹⁶⁷ Russell, “De Imitatione,” 1.

declamations based upon models and was taught to measure himself against an exemplar which was in front of him or in his memory.¹⁶⁸

The word imitation was used by a variety of writers extending back to Plato in various ways including the imitation of men of valor in war or imitation of an ideal truth. However, with regard to literature and rhetoric, it involves the manner of speaking or writing influenced by the models one selects. Discussion of imitation extends back to Plato's philosophical account of image-making in art. Plato found every instance of imitation to be counterfeit since all art is by nature a representation of the true form; thus, the representation could never be equal to the true form.¹⁶⁹ For him, mimesis consisted in the attempt to represent reality which would inevitably be distorted. Because of this, Plato's view of mimesis was essentially negative. This negative view is connected to his philosophical view of the cosmos that the natural world is but a shadow and imitation of the world of ideas.

In his *Poetics*, Aristotle sought to give an alternative, more positive account of mimesis.¹⁷⁰ He thought imitation was a natural part of human development, particularly in the arts. For Aristotle, imitation is not merely the imitation of ideas or appearances, but an imitation of a particular thing. He focused on poetry as an "art which imitates."¹⁷¹ In addition to poetry, Aristotle saw other kinds of arts as involving imitation such as music, dance, and dialogue. He maintained that these were imitative arts insofar as they drew upon the language, rhythm, and harmony of preceding works. Aristotle does little to explain his understanding of the process of imitation.

¹⁶⁸ Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 132.

¹⁶⁹ *Resp.* 497e (Emlyn-Johns and Preddy, LCL).

¹⁷⁰ Plutarch of Chaironeia provided the most thorough response to Plato's negative assessment of mimesis; see Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 48–57.

¹⁷¹ *Poet.* 1.1 (Russell, LCL).

However, it is with Aristotle's contemporary Isocrates that mimesis comes to be associated with education, literature, rhetoric, and composition. After Isocrates, *imitatio* is discussed by ps.–Longinus, Demetrius, the author of *Rhet. Her.*, Horace, Cicero, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Seneca the Elder, Seneca the Younger, Quintilian, Pliny the Younger, and Lucian. Thomas Brodie catalogs the widespread practice of imitation in every genre of literature in the ancient world.¹⁷² In lyric poetry, Catallus and Horace made use of their ancient Greek heritage. The poetry of Vergil is patterned after the pioneering work of Theocritus. The didactic poetry of Lucretius is a synthesis of several works, and Vergil's *Georgics* reacts to Lucretius. The Roman comedians Plautus and Terence are indebted to the Roman comedic tradition established by Menander. The satires of Horace were influenced by Lucilius, and Horace, in turn, influenced Persius, who in turn influenced Juvenal. In Seneca's tragic drama, he systematically reshapes the works of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. In epic poetry, Vergil's *Aeneid* is the apex of Roman imitative literary achievement. The *Aeneid* reshapes and Romanizes the paramount work of Homer. In historiography, Herodotus was regarded as the father of history and used profusely by subsequent historians like Dionysius of Halicarnassus. The theory of mimesis is the foundation of Dionysius's rhetorical and historical works. His rhetorical works sought to provide students with the best classical models to imitate while his historical works provided the lives of early Romans for imitation. Livy drew on Cicero, Polybius, and Valerius Antias for his historiography. Brad McAdon summarizes:

...the textual evidence supports the claim that the practice of μίμησις/imitation was probably the most central and fundamental component for preparing students to speak and write in all fields of study in Greco-Roman culture and that its prevalence and importance cannot be overstated.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 9–17.

¹⁷³ McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 20.

Whom To Imitate

At the most fundamental level, students were expected to imitate their teachers. Isocrates says the teacher “must in himself set out such an example that the students who have taken form under his instruction and are able to imitate him...”¹⁷⁴ Quintilian, more than any other, develops the importance of imitation in the formation and education of children. A family should choose carefully a nurse who speaks correctly since children begin learning the moment they are born. The child will imitate the first person he or she hears.¹⁷⁵ When the child begins his education, Quintilian says the two most important indicators of his ability and character are his memory and ability to imitate.¹⁷⁶ Theon’s *Progymnasmata* contains thorough instructions regarding the students’ use of ancient exemplars in education. The elementary exercises involved the paraphrasing of earlier authors.¹⁷⁷ In the second section, Theon recommends the teacher assign examples from ancient prose works for students to commit to memory.¹⁷⁸ Lucian took for granted that the role of any good teacher is to provide students with models to imitate.¹⁷⁹ Cicero said, “Let this then be my first counsel, that we show the student whom to copy, and to copy in such a way as to strive with all possible care to attain the most excellent qualities of his model.”¹⁸⁰ The author of *Rhet. Her.* states that it was the customary practice of the Greeks to imitate the “prestige of the ancients.”¹⁸¹ The author advises that teachers should not only serve as examples themselves but should also craft examples for the students to imitate.

¹⁷⁴ *Soph.* 17–18 (Norlin, LCL).

¹⁷⁵ *Inst.* 1.1.5 (Russell, LCL).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.3.1.

¹⁷⁷ Theon, *Progymn.* 5–7 (Kennedy).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁷⁹ *Rhet. praec.*, 9 (Harmon, LCL).

¹⁸⁰ *De or.* 2.22.90 (Sutton and Rauckham, LCL).

¹⁸¹ *Rhet. Her.* 4.3.5 (Caplan, LCL).

Literary criticism in Greece and Rome was essentially an effort to determine which were the best models for imitation. One of the foundational decisions was whether students should imitate the ancients or moderns? In the preface to his *De antiquis oratoribus*, Dionysius of Halicarnassus defines his task as answering these questions: “Who are the most important of the ancient orators and historians? What manner of life and style of writing did they adopt? Which characteristics of each of them should we imitate, and which of these should we avoid?”¹⁸² Since there have been many good orators and historians, Dionysius confines himself to select the most elegant of them from earlier generations including Lysias, Isocrates, Isaeus, Demosthenes, Hyperides, and Aeschines.¹⁸³ Seneca maintained that since the days of Cicero, Roman oratory had declined.¹⁸⁴ Tacitus has Messalla summarize this general tendency to view the oratory of the Empire as in a state of decline: “[Aper] may call them ‘ancients’ or ‘ancestors,’ or anything else he likes, so long as it is admitted that the eloquence of those days stood higher than ours.”¹⁸⁵ Tacitus saw many of the contemporary orators as complicit in the decline. This sense of despair is one of the factors driving the nostalgic impulse to return to the prestigious past.

Quintilian saw the advantage of imitating both the ancients and the moderns. The ancients, according to Quintilian, possessed a stronger genius in the art of rhetoric.¹⁸⁶

Quintilian’s mediating advice is worth quoting at length:

Once tastes have been formed and are secure from danger, I should recommend reading both the older orators (because, if the solid, masculine force of their genius can be acquired, but without the layer of uncouthness incident to that primitive age, our own more polished product will shine with extra brilliance) and the moderns, who also have many good qualities. Nature has not condemned us to be slow-witted; but we have

¹⁸² *Ant. or.* Preface 4 (Usher, LCL).

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁴ *Controversiae* I. Preface 7 (Winterbottom, LCL).

¹⁸⁵ *Dial.* 25.2 (Warmington and Winterbottom, LCL); The extant portions of *Dialogus de oratoribus* contain a debate between several characters about whether to imitate the style of contemporary or ancients. Aper speaks in defense of imitation of the present while Messalla advances the position that the old style of the ancients is better than modern smartness.

¹⁸⁶ *Inst.* 1.8.8–9 (Russell, LCL).

changed our style and indulged ourselves more than we ought. It is not in natural talent that the ancients are better than we are, but in their aims. There are thus many texts which can well be chosen, but we shall have to take care that they are not contaminated by the contexts in which they are embedded. I am of course happy to admit—indeed, I should positively contend—that there have been in recent times, and still are, orators who ought to be imitated in all their features. But who they are, it is not in everyone’s power to decide. It is safer to stick with the earlier writers, even at the price of error, and I have therefore set the reading of the moderns for a later stage, lest imitation should run ahead of judgement.¹⁸⁷

His Book 10, dedicated to providing the lists of recommended works which students should read and imitate, points the students toward the best ancient orators (10.1.27–10.1.130). Homer is the most important to whom Vergil ranks second. Pindar and Horace are models of Greek lyric poets. Euripides was a model for the Greek tragedians. Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Sallust, Livy, and Cicero all had elements of style worth imitating. The most important principles undergirding Quintilian’s method was that the orators must be the best, whether near contemporary or ancient; however, as his list shows, he believed that most of the best and authoritative works came from the past.

Despite the general despair over the state of oratory, there were other calls to imitate contemporaries as well. Cicero shows that Sulpicius Rufus had learned eloquence by imitating his older contemporary Lucius Crassus. Cicero says that if the student desires to improve his delivery, he must imitate living speakers, even including actors.¹⁸⁸ On the other hand, in *De Oratore*, Cicero has Antonius say that the successive schools of Greek oratory were each characterized by imitation of earlier flourishing speakers.¹⁸⁹ In his letter to Brutus, Cicero compares the selection of models to the selection of wine. He advises avoiding the wine from the fresh vat as well as the wine that is too old choosing instead “a wine of moderate age.”¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 2.5.23–26.

¹⁸⁸ *De or.* 1.34.156 (Sutton and Rauckham, LCL).

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 2.22–23.92–96.

¹⁹⁰ *Brut.* 287–88 (Hendrickson and Hubbell, LCL).

A second question that arose was whether the student should imitate a single model or many models. The author of *Rhet. Her.* critiques the typical Greek practice of drawing examples for rhetoric from a variety of passages in multiple authors.¹⁹¹ He says, “Indeed, if the ancient orators and poets should take the books of these rhetoricians and each remove therefrom what belongs to himself, the rhetoricians would have nothing left to claim as their own.”¹⁹² The author considered it pedagogically discouraging for students to believe that no one author can possess all good qualities.¹⁹³ He gives an example from the arts. When Chares learned from Lysippus how to sculpt, Lysippus did not teach him by showing him the head of Myron, the arms of Praxiteles, and a chest of Polycleitus; rather, Chares saw Lysippus fashioning every aspect of the sculpture.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, the author concludes, it is better for the teacher to provide one model for the students to confidently imitate. However, as Perry notes, the author is solely advocating that students should imitate teachers in the process of learning rhetoric. This passage, in other words, should not be used to describe the works of a sophisticated artistic imitation whereby one was encouraged to consult multiple models.¹⁹⁵

In his younger works, Cicero advocated the imitation of many models. His own method for his rhetorical handbook was to “cull the flower of many minds” and draw upon many works.¹⁹⁶ No single writer was able to claim pre-eminence in every respect. He said:

And it is also true of other pursuits that if men would choose the most appropriate contributions from many sources rather than devote themselves unreservedly to one leader only, they would offend less by arrogance, they would not be so obstinate in wrong courses, and would suffer somewhat less from ignorance.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹¹ *Rhet. Her.* 4.2.3; 4.5.7 (Caplan, LCL).

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 4.3.5.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 4.5.8.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.6.9.

¹⁹⁵ Perry, “Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, and the Roman Aesthetics of Artistic Imitation,” 161.

¹⁹⁶ *Inv.* 2.2.4 (Hubbell, LCL).

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, II.II.5.

Nearly thirty years later, the mature Cicero advised that the young student should imitate one man.¹⁹⁸ His most thorough account occurs in *De Or.* II.21.88–98 where Antonius clearly represents Cicero’s own view. Antonius says Sulpicius improved by successfully imitating Crassus as an example. Cicero argues his case for one model for imitation by appealing to the history of oratory. Pericles, Alcibiades, and Thucydides were all of the same generation followed by the next generation—Critias, Theramenes, and Lysias. In their own generations, these writers had a similarity of style. “Their uniformity of style could never have come about, had they not kept before them some single model for imitation...”¹⁹⁹ Cicero’s view is based upon loyalty to a tradition. However, even later in a dialogue with Brutus during the Atticist controversy, Cicero advocates taking multiple authors as models for producing good Attic style.²⁰⁰ Thus, one does not find in Cicero’s rhetorical work a consistent theory of imitation.

Despite these calls to imitate one model, the majority recommended imitating the best from multiple models. Quintilian summarizes:

...since it is scarcely given to man to produce a complete reproduction of a chosen author, let us keep the excellences of a number of authors before our eyes, so that one thing stays in our minds from one of them, and another from another, and we can use each in the appropriate place.²⁰¹

Quintilian argues that imitating a single model violates the criterion of appropriateness since no single style would be appropriate in every context; thus, multiple exemplars are needed.²⁰²

Further, recommending a single model, even if it is Cicero who Quintilian thought most closely approached being the perfect orator, the only possible result is failure for the student to

¹⁹⁸ *De or.* II.90–92 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL).

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, II.93.

²⁰⁰ *Brut.* 285–88 (Hendrickson and Hubbell, LCL).

²⁰¹ *Inst.* 10.2.26 (Russell, LCL).

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 10.2.23–24.

reproduce that model. The resulting imitation of the single model will always be inferior. Thus, it is better to imitate the merits of multiple models. Similarly, Seneca recommended to his sons:

Well, my dear young men, you are doing something necessary and useful in refusing to be satisfied with the models provided by your own day and wanting to get to know those of the preceding generation too. For one thing, the more patterns one examines, the greater advantage to one's eloquence.²⁰³

Dionysius of Halicarnassus likened this process of imitation to the convergence of many small streams into one larger tributary whereby the rhetor was able to draw upon the best from many authors.²⁰⁴

How to Imitate

After the models for imitation have been carefully chosen, the next question was *how* to imitate those models. No single ancient figure provides a comprehensive and stable theory of how to imitate.²⁰⁵ To understand thoroughly how authors practiced imitation, one would need to investigate the procedure of each author in a particular work, which is outside the scope of this present work. Despite lacking a stable and comprehensive system, there is a constellation of recurring metaphors, principles, and practices comprising the ancient practice of imitation. The author of *Rhet. Her.* says that imitation must be practiced “in accordance with a studied method” of certain models; thus, it was not an aimless endeavor.²⁰⁶

Three metaphors provide context for how ancients thought about the practice and product of rhetorical, artistic, and literary imitation. Both Dionysius and Cicero use the metaphor of the

²⁰³ *Controversiae* I. Preface 6 (Winterbottom, LCL); See also Seneca, *Ep.* 84.6–8 (Gummere, LCL).

²⁰⁴ *De Imitatione*, Frag. 6.

²⁰⁵ Thomas Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 60; Brodie, *The Birthing of the New Testament*, 6.

²⁰⁶ *Rhet. Her.* 1.2.3 (Caplan, LCL).

painter, Zeuxis, who was tasked with producing an image of the beautiful Helen.²⁰⁷ In order to do this, he chose the most beautiful women of Croton and painted a composite of the most attractive features of each of his models. Zeuxis was imitating the appearance of the beautiful women while also imitating the ideal of Greco-Roman feminine beauty. Cicero viewed his rhetorical efforts as imitating the artistic methods of Zeuxis.²⁰⁸ As Perry notes, “The overall implication is that, through the careful selection and use of the best qualities from the several prototypes, one can produce a work that far surpasses any single exemplum.”²⁰⁹

In his 84th epistle, Seneca the Younger provides two vivid metaphors. First, Seneca recommended constantly reading other authors to improve one’s own writing. He uses the metaphor of mollification:

We should follow, men say, the example of the bees, who flit about and cull the flowers that are suitable for producing honey, and then arrange and assort in their cells all that they have brought in; these bees, as our Vergil says, ‘pack close the flowing honey.’ And swell their cells with nectar sweet.²¹⁰

He continues that it was not known whether the juice the bees gathers from the flowers immediately turns to honey or whether there is some property in the breath of bees that turns the juice into honey. Some authorities believed bees had no part in making honey—they only gather it and the juice ferments on its own after a period of time. He adds,

Certain others maintain that the materials which the bees have culled from the most delicate of blooming and flowering plants is transformed into this peculiar substance by a process of preserving and careful storing away, aided by what might be called fermentation,—whereby separate elements are united into one substance.²¹¹

Seneca is unwilling to choose a certain theory of how bees make honey, but he concludes,

²⁰⁷ Dionysius, *De Imitatione*, frag. 6.

²⁰⁸ *Inv.* 2.1.4 (Hubbell, LCL).

²⁰⁹ Perry, “Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, and the Roman Aesthetics of Artistic Imitation,” 162.

²¹⁰ *Ep.* 84.3 (Gummere, LCL).

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.4.

We also, I say, ought to copy these bees, and sift whatever we have gathered from a varied course of reading, for such things are better preserved if they are kept separate; then, by applying the supervising care with which our nature has endowed us,—in other words, our natural gifts,—we should so blend those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came.²¹²

The metaphor of the bees making honey sparks another metaphor for Seneca—human digestion. In Seneca’s understanding, humans by “nature” consume food which floats around in its original quality in the stomach. Seneca believed that the body converts digested food into tissue and blood from its original form. He gleans from this observation:

So it is with the food which nourishes our higher nature,—we should see to it that whatever we have absorbed should not be allowed to remain unchanged, or it will be no part of us. We must digest it; otherwise it will merely enter the memory and not the reasoning power. Let us loyally welcome such foods and make them our own, so that something that is one may be formed out of many elements, just as one number is formed of several elements whenever, by our reckoning, lesser sums, each different from the others, are brought together. This is what our mind should do: it should hide away all the materials by which it has been aided, and bring to light only what it has made of them.²¹³

Quintilian also uses the digestion metaphor, saying, “We chew our food and almost liquefy it before we swallow, so as to digest it more easily; similarly, let our reading be made available for memory and imitation, not in an undigested form, but, as it were, softened and reduced to pap by frequent repetition.”²¹⁴ The unifying threads weaving together these three metaphors are that one must carefully study several models, thoroughly absorb (and digest) the material, and transform it into something sweeter. The emphasis of these metaphors is the production of sameness through transformation. Invention occurred through imitative eclecticism.

Creative transformation of sources was essential for successful imitation. The ancients unanimously condemned plagiarism or slavish imitation. Ps.–Longinus differentiates eclectic

²¹² *Ibid.*, 84.5.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 84.7–8.

²¹⁴ *Inst.* 10.1.19 (Russell, LCL).

imitation from “theft” (κλοπή).²¹⁵ Horace says that one should avoid the easy path of rendering sources “word for word as a slavish translator.”²¹⁶ Martial claimed that those who passed his work off as their own were “kidnappers” (*plagario*) accused of “theft” (*furto*).²¹⁷ Demetrius says:

Poetic vocabulary in prose adds grandeur, as, in the words of the proverb, even a blind man can see. Still, some writers imitate the poets quite crudely, or rather, they do not imitate but plagiarise them, as Herodotus has done. Contrast Thucydides. Even if he borrows vocabulary from a poet, he uses it in his own way and makes it his own property.²¹⁸

The purpose of using the style of the ancients while saying something different was to indicate a unity with the past. In *Brutus*, Cicero complains that unless one “confess the debt” to another’s work, the product is “stolen” (*surripuisti*).²¹⁹ Thus, acknowledging debt to a source or tradition was expected in successful imitation while word-for-word borrowing, slavish translation, or mere reproduction of another’s work was considered inappropriate.

Brodie helpfully summarizes the six activities that comprised the constellation of imitative activity.²²⁰ The goal of these activities was to move an inexperienced student to mature orator or author. First, students were encouraged to imitate a teacher or living artist.²²¹ Second, students were encouraged to read famous works of the classical past.²²² Third, paraphrase was a common practice. Theon’s *Progymnasmata* includes this exercise for students. Theon maintained that “all ancient writers seem to have used paraphrase in the best possible way, rephrasing not only their own writings but those of each other.”²²³ Quintilian recommended that paraphrase

²¹⁵ *Subl.* 1.13.4 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²¹⁶ *Ars* 132 (Fairclough, LCL).

²¹⁷ *Epigrams* 1.52–53 (Bailey, LCL).

²¹⁸ *Eloc.* 112–13 (Russell, LCL).

²¹⁹ *Brut.* 18.76 (Hendrickson and Hubbell, LCL).

²²⁰ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 6–8.

²²¹ cf. Cicero, *Soph.* 17–18 (Norlin, LCL); *Ibid.*, *De. or.* 2.21.89–90 (Sutton and Rackham, LCL); Isocrates, *Antid.* 301–303 (Norlin, LCL).

²²² Horace, *Ars* 268–69 (Fairclough, LCL); Dionysius, *De Imitatione*, frag. 6; Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.1.19–20 (Russell, LCL).

²²³ Theon, *Progymn.* 6 (Kennedy).

should involve an element of creativity and boldness in compressing and expanding the original with considerable freedom.²²⁴ Isocrates recommended paraphrasing the same texts multiple times and in different ways in order to cultivate the ability “to recount the things of old in a new manner or set forth events of recent date in an old fashion.”²²⁵ A fourth practice primarily of Latin writers was the translation of Greek texts.²²⁶ Pliny the Younger says this exercise “develops in one a precision and richness of vocabulary, a wide range of metaphor and power of exposition...”²²⁷ Further, details missed by the reader will be more easily noticed by a translator which cultivates “perception and critical sense.”²²⁸ Fifth, as demonstrated previously, imitation involved the eclectic fusion of several texts or parts of texts into a new unity. Brodie shows that an author’s adaptation of a source may involve several modes of adaptation including elaboration, compression, fusion, substitution of images, positivization, internalization, and form-change.²²⁹

Sixth, the practice of emulation (ζῆλος/*aemulatio*) often accompanied imitation. Emulation refers to the practice of imitation with a certain spirit of rivalry with the past. The goal was to be as good as or even better than one’s model. Whitmarsh has located this impulse within the larger angst which many Roman writers felt about whether their own literature could rise to the quality of the classic Greek past and the need to form a distinct Roman identity.²³⁰ Isocrates said that it might appear at first that repeating the same material others have already used might appear to be monotonous, but the best orator “must try to speak better than they.”²³¹ Dionysius of

²²⁴ *Inst.* 1.9.2 (Russell, LCL).

²²⁵ *Paneg.* 7–8 (Norlin, LCL).

²²⁶ Cicero, *Fin.* 1.3 (Rackham, LCL); Quintilian, *Inst.* 10.5 (Russell, LCL).

²²⁷ *Ep.* 7.9.2 (Radice, LCL).

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.9.3.

²²⁹ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 9–12.

²³⁰ Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 26–47.

²³¹ *Paneg.* 8–9 (Norlin, LCL).

Halicarnassus evaluates later writers on whether they were as successful as their predecessors. He mostly found the later emulators to be lacking.²³² Phaedrus begins his *Fables* with these words, “Aesop is my source. He invented the substance of these fables, but I have put them into finished form in senarian verse.”²³³ He says, “I shall indeed take every care to preserve the spirit of the famous old man” but makes clear he intends to make changes to improve upon the style.²³⁴ Quintilian held to a progressive view of rhetoric. Without improvement, the art of rhetoric would grow stale: “If we are not allowed to add to previous achievements, how can we hope for our ideal orator?”²³⁵ Further, no orator, even the most supreme, is without deficiency. Quintilian gives the example of running a race. If one attempts to run a race simply following the footsteps of the runner ahead of him, he has no chance to win, not even to catch up equally to the other runner. Without attempting to catch up, and even to run ahead, one accepts always being behind. For Quintilian, the goal is finishing the race evenly with those who ran before, and he holds out the possibility of even being able to finish ahead of prestigious predecessors through striving. He says later:

If we thoroughly grasp all this, we shall be “imitators” in the true sense of the word. But it is the man who also adds his own good qualities to these, making good the deficiencies and cutting out any superfluities, who will be the perfect orator we are seeking; and it would be particularly appropriate that he should come to perfection in our time, when there are so many more models of good oratory to be found than were available to those who were the greatest masters in the past. These masters will acquire another glory too: that of being said to have surpassed their predecessors and taught their successors.²³⁶

²³² cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Lys.* 3–4 (Usher, LCL).

²³³ *Fables* 1. Prologue (Perry, LCL).

²³⁴ *Fables* 2. Epilogue (Perry, LCL).

²³⁵ *Inst.* 10.2.2 (Russell, LCL)

²³⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.2.5.

For Quintilian, the purpose of the exercise of paraphrase was not mere reproduction, “but to rival [*certamen*] and vie with [*aemulationem*] the original in expressing the same thoughts.”²³⁷ Ps.–Longinus celebrates imitative rivalry by praising Plato who “had he not striven, with heart and soul, to contest the prize with Homer” would not have risen to such greatness.²³⁸ In doing so, he became a “a young antagonist” ready to spar. Ps.–Longinus goes on to quote Hesiod’s dictum, “Good is the strife for mankind” and concludes, “Fair indeed is the crown, and the fight for fame well worth the winning, where even to be worsted by our forerunners is not without glory.”²³⁹ When asked by Fuscus Salinator how to improve in oratory, Pliny recommends reading for the purpose of emulation. He says:

When you have read a passage sufficiently to remember the subject-matter and line of thought, there is no harm in your trying to compete with it; then compare your efforts with the original and consider carefully where your version is better or worse. You may well congratulate yourself if yours is sometimes better and feel much ashamed if the other is always superior to yours. You may also sometimes choose a passage you know well and try to improve on it.²⁴⁰

“The writer must appropriate the spirit of his model or models and breathe new life into them, to show how something could be better done, or, if not better done, then well done in a different way.”²⁴¹ These six activities comprise the constellation of practices involved in imitation.

The goal of these activities was to move the would-be imitator from educational exercises to instinctual emulation. Seneca’s metaphor of bees making honey and the body digesting food imply that imitation moves from self-conscious imitation through exercises such as reading, memorizing, paraphrasing, and translating to less self-conscious intuitive imitation. Fantham says, “The self-conscious aspect of imitation—analysis, memorizing, paraphrasing—has to be

²³⁷ Ibid. 10.5.5.

²³⁸ *Subl.* 13 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ *Ep.* 7.9.3–5 (Radice, LCL).

²⁴¹ Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 14.

followed for a time by the less self-conscious activities of the brain before the models will begin to act upon the literary personality of the new artist.”²⁴² Through saturation with a source, as ps.–Longinus describes, it is as if the ancient authorities are standing before one’s eyes. The mature orator is able to ask, “How might Homer have said this same thing?” as if Homer were present.²⁴³

Andrew Pitts describes that rhetors operated along two axes of mimesis—internal and external.²⁴⁴ The external axis involves the imitation of arrangement, diction, style, vocabulary, or syntax while adapting the content to include original content. The internal axis involves preserving the basic content of the work while reworking the style. Marincola demonstrates that as a branch of rhetoric, historiography was quite unoriginal. Historians adopted material from their predecessors (internal mimesis) while also adopting their style, arrangement, and diction.²⁴⁵ Movement along these axes depended on several factors: the ability of the individual, the choice of models, the imitative activities employed, etc.

After analyzing the method proposed by ps.–Longinus, Russell provided five principles which characterizes successful mimesis for this author:²⁴⁶

- (1) The object must be worth imitating.
- (2) The spirit rather than the letter must be reproduced.
- (3) The imitation must be tacitly acknowledged, on the understanding that the informed reader will recognize and approve the borrowing.

²⁴² Fantham, “Imitation and Decline,” 110–11.

²⁴³ *Subl.* 14 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²⁴⁴ Pitts, “Origins of Greek Mimesis,” 117.

²⁴⁵ Marincola, *Authority and Tradition*, 12–17.

²⁴⁶ Russell, “De Imitatione,” 16.

(4) The borrowing must be ‘made one’s own’, by individual treatment and assimilation to its new place and purpose.

(5) The imitator must think of himself as competing with his model, even if he knows he cannot win.

In his *Rhetorical Mimesis and the Mitigation of Early Christian Conflicts*, McAdon conducts a brief analysis of Vergil’s *Aen.* 1.60–310 to serve as an example of ancient imitation. It is worth reproducing the most significant insights from McAdon’s study. Scholars have studied Vergil’s use of sources and his imitative technique.²⁴⁷ McAdon focuses his investigation on Vergil’s “(intentional) use of or borrowing from another writer’s organizational structures, narrative concepts and themes, and specific language (whether it be a word, phrase, sentence, or sentences).” It is widely acknowledged that Vergil borrowed from a number of Greek and Latin writers, although he used the *Il.* and the *Od.* primarily. In one of the most important studies on Vergil’s use of Homer, Georg Knauer identified nearly 4,800 passages in the *Aen.* that were borrowed from Homer.²⁴⁸ Knauer demonstrates that the *Aen.* has been systematically structured on Homer’s epics as illustrated in the following table:²⁴⁹

<i>Aeneid</i>	<i>Iliad and Odyssey</i>
Books 1–8	<i>Od.</i> books 2–15
Books 1–6	<i>Od.</i> books 5–12
Book 1	<i>Od.</i> books 5, 10, 9, 12
Books 2–3	<i>Od.</i> books 9–12
Book 2	<i>Od.</i> 8.499–520
Book 3	<i>Od.</i> books 9–12
Book 4	<i>Od.</i> 5.1–262
Book 5	<i>Od.</i> 8.96–380; 23.226–897; 10.469–574
Book 6	<i>Od.</i> book 11
Books 7–8	<i>Od.</i> books 13–14; 2–4; 15

²⁴⁷ cf. Richard Heinze, *Virgil’s Epic Technique* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 1993).

²⁴⁸ Georg Knauer, *Die Aeneis und Homer: Studien zur poetischen Technik Vergils mit Listen der Homerzitate in der Aeneis* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck et Ruprecht, 1979), 371–431.

²⁴⁹ This table is derived from Knauer, “Vergil and Homer,” *ANRW* II.31.2 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1981), 870–81; see also McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 26–27.

Book 7	<i>Od.</i> 12.1–150; 13.78–119; <i>Il.</i> 2.155–168
Book 8	<i>Od.</i> 13.187–440; 2.407–434; 3.1–403; <i>Il.</i> 18.369–482; 19.1–39; 18.483–617
Book 9	<i>Il.</i> 18.165–202; 8.157–book 12; 10.395–515
Books 10–12	<i>Il.</i> books 16–22
Book 10	<i>Il.</i> 16, 20, 21
Book 11	<i>Il.</i> 7.345–436; 16.783–17.60
Book 12	<i>Il.</i> 22; 3–4

In addition to significantly imitating the structure of Homer, the *Aen.* and the *Od.* are thematically similar in that both stories tell of a hero's wanderings after the Trojan war in the first half and recounting the hero's fight for their homes in the second half. These excursions, in addition to bearing structural similarities to the epics, contain many thematic and verbal similarities to Homer.²⁵⁰ In some passages such as *Aen.* 6.700–703, Vergil appears to be translating into Latin from *Od.* 11.206–207 almost exactly. Vergil depicts Aeneas's travails in the storm narrative (1.93–98a; 102–105) so similarly to those of Odysseus in the *Od.*'s storm narrative (5.297–299; 5.313–317) that dependence cannot be doubted.²⁵¹

After his analysis of Vergil's use of Homer in book 1, McAdon states seven characteristics of Vergil's imitative technique. The first is Vergil's studied and thorough familiarity with the Homeric Epics.²⁵² As Knauer states, Vergil "did not simply imitate sporadic Homeric verses or scenes. On the contrary, he first analyzed the plan of the *Od.*, then transformed it and made it the base of his own poem."²⁵³ Drawing on Seneca and Quintilian's metaphor of thoroughly absorbing and digesting food before imitating, Brodie says, "Virgil did not just allude to Homer; he swallowed him whole."²⁵⁴ Second, Vergil draws conceptually from

²⁵⁰ McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 27–28.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, 32.

²⁵³ Knauer, "Vergil and Homer," 881.

²⁵⁴ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 74.

the Homeric epics for many of the themes, scenes, characters, voyages, and places in the *Aen.*²⁵⁵

A third technique is Vergil's reliance on the organizational structure of the Homeric epics.²⁵⁶

Although Vergil draws on a variety of sources, it is clear that the Homeric epics are the primary sources for the macro-structure of the *Aen.* as well as the micro-structure of other contained passages. McAdon notes that there are sections of the *Aen.* that are not patterned directly on the Homeric epics; yet, these sections in no way diminish the overall impression that Homer has had a significant impact on Vergil's structure.²⁵⁷

A fourth imitative technique is the use of parallel narrative themes—scenes, events, characters, actions, or places.²⁵⁸ However, Vergil, although clearly drawing on the same themes, feels free to alter the narratives by retaining, adding, or omitting material. For example, both stories contain storm narratives. In the source text in *Od.*, it says, “the knees of Odysseus loosened and his heart melted.”²⁵⁹ In the parallel account in the *Aen.*, Vergil says, “Aeneas's limbs weaken with chilling dread.” In the journeys to the underworld, in the *Od.*, Odysseus meets the spirit of his mother (*Od.* 11.84–89) while in the *Aen.*, Aeneas meets the spirit of his father (*Aen.* 6.103–122). Both works depict the hero killing stags—Odysseus kills one in front of his ship which heartens the crew (*Od.* 10.150–174) while Aeneas kills seven, one for each ship in his fleet and by doing so “calms their sorrowing hearts” (*Aen.* 1.180–195). Fifth, Vergil freely incorporates vocabulary, phrases, and even whole sentences from his Homeric sources.²⁶⁰

Although Vergil is writing in Latin, it appears that he very often translates almost verbatim from Homer's Greek. As Knauer states:

²⁵⁵ McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 32–33.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 30, 33.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

[Virgil] very often ‘translates’ or ‘quotes’ one or several Homeric verses with such a degree of exactitude that his listeners [or readers] would at once recognize the passage in the poet’s mind [and that] such *Leitzitate* [citations] were meant to tell the listener that he was now in this or that larger Homeric context.²⁶¹

Thus, imitation was practiced in diglossic contexts.

The sixth compositional technique discerned by McAdon is rivalry (*ζῆλος/aemulatio*).²⁶² As Whitmarsh demonstrated, imitation as practiced by the Romans was political because the Romans had no epics for self-legitimation. The Romans had not been able to conquer or even compete with the literature of the Greeks. Vergil’s *Aen.* sought to fill this gap. As stated earlier, the goal of *aemulatio* was to use the same expression as the source text while saying something equal to or surpassing in greatness. The final technique is that the alterations to the source text should be recognizable by the reader or hearer.²⁶³ It would be impossible to judge the success of an imitative rivalry without being able to recognize how the new work transforms the old. That almost every work on Vergil’s *Aen.* notes the extensive use of Homer demonstrates Virgil’s accomplishment in linking his work to those of Homer. Thus, as shown above, the techniques gleaned from Vergil’s actual practice of Homeric imitation coincide closely to the mimetic theory propounded by ps.–Longinus and others.

The Rhetorical Effect of Imitatio

Although one could speak more generally about the effects of good rhetoric on an audience, the discussion here is limited to the effects of imitation specifically. The employment of imitation was directed toward an audience with the intention of pleasing, teaching, or arousing emotion. Socrates claimed that artistic imitation “falls nothing short of wizardry” since it creates

²⁶¹ Knauer, “Vergil and Homer,” 876.

²⁶² McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 33–34.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, 34.

the effect that an object is present when in reality it is an illusion.²⁶⁴ In his bee metaphor, Seneca describes the result of imitating multiple figures as a sweeter “delicious compound.”²⁶⁵ In the same epistle, Seneca compares the effect of eclectic imitation to listening to a harmonious chorus composed of tenor, bass, and baritone. The result of the combination of disparate parts is a harmony that moves the audience.²⁶⁶

The most thorough discussion of the ability of mimesis to contribute to rhetorical sublimity occurs in ps.–Longinus. The author compares the effect of imitation to the intoxicating transport of inhaling the sacred vapors at Delphi. He says:

Zealous imitation of the great prose writers and poets of the past. That is the aim, dear friend; let us hold to it with all our might. For many are carried away by the inspiration of another, just as the story runs that the Pythian priestess on approaching the tripod where there is, they say, a rift in the earth, exhaling divine vapour, thereby becomes impregnated with the divine power and is at once inspired to utter oracles; so, too, from the natural genius of those old writers there flows into the hearts of their admirers as it were an emanation from those holy mouths. Inspired by this, even those who are not easily moved to prophecy share the enthusiasm of these others’ grandeur. Was Herodotus alone Homeric in the highest degree? No, there was Stesichorus at a still earlier date and Archilochus too, and above all others Plato, who drew off for his own use ten thousand runnels from the great Homeric spring.²⁶⁷

Ps.–Longinus intimates that the effect of imitation borders on the mystical and divine. By drawing on the image of the inspired Pythia, ps.–Longinus maintains that the practitioner of imitation has a direct dependence on the figures of Roman and Greek cultural past. Whitmarsh calls attention to the use of “impregnation” (ἐγκύμωνα) in this passage. This imagery implies paternal authority, a father-text with fecundity dominates the imitator.²⁶⁸ The author is expected to submit to the parent text. This is similar to Seneca who spoke of imitation as “a child

²⁶⁴ *Resp.* 602d (Emlyn-Johns and Preddy, LCL).

²⁶⁵ *Ep.* 84.5 (Gummere, LCL).

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.9–10.

²⁶⁷ *Subl.* 13 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²⁶⁸ Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 59.

resembles a father.”²⁶⁹ Further, for the priestesses at Delphi, the divine vapor did not transmit content, but rather, inspired the priestess to utter oracles. Similarly, says ps.–Longinus, the spirits of the ancient orators flows into the inspired imitator. Inspired imitation has the effect of making it appear as if the ancient figure is present with the imitator in the room. It is as if “the holy mouths” of the “old writers” themselves were speaking through the imitator.

MIMESIS IN NEW TESTAMENT STUDIES

New Testament Studies

Over the past few decades, a major thrust of NT studies has been analyzing biblical authors’ use of source material—intertextuality. Since mimesis was the basic foundation of all ancient education and rhetorical training, it is foundational for all rhetorical and literary invention. Given that imitation played such a crucial role in composition in all genres, both in Greek and Latin, and given the prevalence of the authors of the NT drawing on the Scriptures of Israel, it is *a priori* likely that imitation is at work. Further, Sean A. Adams has demonstrated that Jewish authors were influenced by Greek literary culture and interacted with Greek genres in their own writings.²⁷⁰ The compositional techniques of mimesis may shed light on the use of the Scriptures and other extrabiblical traditions in the NT.

²⁶⁹ *Ep.* 84.8 (Gummere, LCL).

²⁷⁰ Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 298–318; Adams notes the Gospels are an example of this complex interaction of Jewish authors with Greek genres. Prior to the first century, Jewish authors did not write biographies. However, the fact that Jewish production of biographies parallels the rise of *bios* in the Roman era suggests that Jewish authors were influenced by wider literary trends. However, all of the authors added Jewish literary features to their biographies. The Scriptures were authoritative sources and the authors used the Scriptures to compose their own texts. This shows that Jewish authors felt free to interact with Greek genres but also to adapt them for their own needs. Even though the biographies deal with contemporary events and people, they interact with Scriptural themes, motifs, and various elements modeled on their Scriptural predecessors. Jewish authors were more likely to vary from prototypical Greek genres when the author was participating in a genre for which there was a Jewish analogue (*Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 290–91, 303–04).

Mimesis has most often been employed to explain the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels, Luke's use of the OT in Luke–Acts, Paul's use of the OT, and 2 Peter's use of Jude. One of the most thorough treatments to date is Thomas Brodie's 2004 *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings* standing at 600 pages with 50 pages of bibliography. This book is the culmination of thirty years of Brodie's scholarly research on intertextuality. He focuses mostly on Luke–Acts to show that what he regards as “Proto–Luke” (which is comprised of twenty-five chapters of Luke–Acts) is actually an imitation of the Elijah–Elisha narrative (1 Kings 16:29–2 Kings 13). In addition to imitating the Elijah–Elisha narrative, Proto–Luke also makes use of Deuteronomy, Chronicles, and Judges. His project is ambitious in that he seeks to elucidate the origins of many other NT texts. He maintains that a collection of sayings (logia) contained sayings in Matthew 5 and 11 and was used by Paul in 1 Corinthians. The author of Proto–Luke used the logia and 1 Corinthians to construct the Gospel. Mark drew on Proto–Luke, 1 Peter, and the Elijah–Elisha narrative. Matthew used the logia, Proto–Luke, Mark, and Paul's Romans. The canonical Luke–Acts uses Proto–Luke and incorporates material from Mark, Matthew, and John. While many of his conclusions are suspect, his attempt to apply mimesis to understand better how NT texts incorporate old ones is laudable. Similar to Brodie, Adam Winn has analyzed the Greco-Roman literary technique of mimesis and concludes that the Elijah–Elisha narrative was an important literary source for Mark's Gospel.²⁷¹ His method is similar to that of McAdon. First he undertakes an analysis of Vergil's imitation of Homer in order to understand the overarching practices in imitation. Then, he turns to apply these insights to Mark's use of sources.

²⁷¹ Adam Winn, *Mark and the Elijah–Elisha Narrative: Considering the Practice of Greco-Roman Imitation in the Search for Markan Source Material* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2010), 117.

For decades, Dennis MacDonald has argued that mimesis is a significant key to understanding how the Gospels, primarily Mark and Luke–Acts, use one another and how they imitated classical works.²⁷² Similarly, Marianne Palmer Bonz has argued that Luke–Acts makes significant use of Vergil’s *Aen.*²⁷³ Bonz argues that just as Vergil created an identity rooted in epic for the Romans, Luke creates a foundational epic for Christians rooted in the Scriptures of Israel as revealed in the Septuagint.²⁷⁴ She argues that Luke undertakes this ambitious enterprise with Vergil’s *Aen.* as his model. Along the way she cites striking similarities in organizational structure, literary motifs, stylistic and dramatic techniques.

Building on the work of MacDonald, Brodie, and Bonz, McAdon argues that while the authors of Matthew and Luke imitated the Septuagint, Matthew also imitated Mark and Luke also imitated Mark, Matthew, and Paul. McAdon says, “I argue that understanding the Greco-Roman compositional practice of mimesis and the authors of these texts’ mimetic compositional practices can help us to understand better than we do now the composition of, and rivalry between, these authors and their texts.”²⁷⁵ While authors may speak of Matthew or Luke “imitating” Mark, they often do not intend the sense of mimesis as practiced in Greco-Roman rhetoric and literature. To do this, McAdon focuses on two conflicts in early Christianity—the controversy surrounding Jesus’s relationship to his family and closely related issue of his

²⁷² Dennis MacDonald, *Luke and Vergil: Imitations of Classical Greek Literature* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015); Idem., *From the Earliest Gospels (Q+) to the Gospel of Mark: Solving the Synoptic Problem with Mimesis Criticism* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2020); Idem., *Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010); Idem., *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?: Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004); Idem., *Christian Origins and the New Testament in the Greco-Roman Context: Essays in Honor of Dennis R. MacDonald* (Claremont, CA: Claremont Press, 2016); Idem., *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* SAC (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2001); Idem., *My Turn: A Critique of Critics of “Mimesis Criticism”* (Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 2009); Idem., *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke–Acts* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

²⁷³ Marianne Bonz, *The Past as Legacy: Luke–Acts and Ancient Epic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2000).

²⁷⁴ Ibid., 26.

²⁷⁵ McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 4.

(alleged) illegitimate birth—to show how the author employed mimesis to mitigate and transform these conflicts.

In a recent study, Holly Beers argued that Luke modeled his portrayal of Jesus and the disciples in Luke–Acts on the human agent, the servant, of the Isaianic New Exodus in Isaiah 40–66.²⁷⁶ While many others have studied Luke’s use of Isaiah, one of her contributions is to argue that the implied author of Luke–Acts used the practice of imitation. Since the consensus is that Luke was Gentile, and that his formal education and background were Hellenistic, it makes it even more likely the author would have been familiar with the practice of imitation. She provides arguments to support the thesis that Luke imitated texts, especially the OT. In another study, Pitts studies the direct citation of source texts in Greco-Roman mimesis in order to elucidate Luke’s citation of sources.²⁷⁷ Whereas direct citation moves a source to the foreground, Luke’s use of other Gospels or oral and scriptural tradition function in the background through more subtle imitation.

In his highly influential book *Echoes of the Scriptures in the Letters of Paul*, Richard B. Hays studies how Paul uses a complex web of intertextual relations with previous Scripture in his letters. Although not appearing in his earlier chapters on methodology, Hays does briefly mention *imitatio* in his summary conclusions. His analysis of Paul’s use of Scripture found the categories of midrash, typology, and allegory to be insufficient as comprehensive explanations of Paul’s technique. In place of these, Hays recommends his own adaptation of Thomas Greene’s framework in *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry*.²⁷⁸ Although

²⁷⁶ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the ‘Servant’: Luke’s Isaianic Model for the Disciples in Luke–Acts* LNTS (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 1.

²⁷⁷ Andrew Pitts, “Source Citation in Greek Historiography and Luke(–Acts)” in *Christian Origins and Greco–Roman Culture: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Andrew W. Pitts, TENTS 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 349–88.

²⁷⁸ Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 173–78.

Greene's project aims to study the mimetic tradition practiced in the Renaissance era in Italy, France, and England, the book is heavily influenced by Greco-Roman practices of mimesis.²⁷⁹ Greene identifies four types of imitation: sacramental imitation, eclectic imitation, heuristic imitation, and dialectic imitation. Hays finds these categories as fruitful for analyzing Paul's use of echoes; however, he cautions, "Paul, of course, is not writing imitations of scriptural texts. An imitation presumably must remain within the same genre as its original, at least approximately."²⁸⁰ He contends that Ephesians may very well be an imitation of Paul's authentic letters, but his purpose is more to suggest Greene's approach as profitable for analyzing Paul's hermeneutical stance toward Scripture. Hays's work is thus a tease for the possibility of studying Paul's letters through the lens of mimesis.

Gene Green balks at the fact that numerous studies on the author's use of sources in 2 Peter has failed to consider *imitatio*.²⁸¹ He contends that the author of 2 Peter has reworked the material in Jude through the process of imitation in order to make it his own.²⁸² Green finds imitation at work between the two texts at the level of structure and vocabulary; however, it is clear the author of 2 Peter has reworked Jude in order to be rhetorically effective for his situation.²⁸³ Green also extrapolates from his study sociological implications that the author of 2 Peter regarded Jude as worthy of imitation, drawing on the tradition that the author of Jude was the brother of the Lord.²⁸⁴ These studies have been briefly surveyed to demonstrate that mimesis

²⁷⁹ Greene, *The Light in Troy*, 4—80.

²⁸⁰ Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 174.

²⁸¹ Gene Green, "Second Peter's Use of Jude: *Imitatio* and the Sociology of Early Christianity," in *Reading Second Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of Second Peter*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Duane F. Watson, LNTS (London: T & T Clark, 2019), 1–2.

²⁸² Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 161–62.

²⁸³ Green, "Second Peter's Use of Jude," 12–21.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 21–24.

has been a helpful and heuristic lens to study almost all the genres of the NT in regard to their use of previous sources.

Methodology for Identifying Imitatio in New Testament Studies

One of Brodie’s earlier contributions to the study of intertextuality and mimesis was to recognize, “Among all the aids for the study of literature, there has been none that summarizes the criteria for judging literary dependence. The result, especially in biblical studies, is a lack of focus on a basic aspect of method.”²⁸⁵ At that time, Brodie attributed this malaise in biblical scholarship to the infection of post-romanticism and what Harold Bloom called the “anxiety of influence.”²⁸⁶ Since Brodie wrote those words, there has been an explosion in the area of intertextuality, and several scholars have attempted to provide methods for determining when intertextuality is occurring, and more specifically, when intertextuality through mimesis is present. Because Brodie’s, MacDonald’s, McAdon’s, and Winn’s methodological criteria overlap so significantly, they are summarized in the following chart:

Thomas Brodie ²⁸⁷	Dennis MacDonald ²⁸⁸	Brad McAdon ²⁸⁹	Adam Winn ²⁹⁰
1. <i>External Plausibility</i> – The source text must have been available for dependence.	1. <i>Accessibility</i> – Assess the likelihood the author had access to the hypotext.	1. <i>External Plausibility</i> – The imitation must post–date the proposed source text.	1. <i>Plausibility</i> – Does the proposed text precede the imitation?
2. <i>Significant Similarities</i> – Including: theme,	2. <i>Analogy</i> – Place the proposed parallels within the tradition of	2. <i>Significant Similarities</i> – Including: organizations and	2. <i>Similarities in Narrative Structures/Order of</i>

²⁸⁵ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 43.

²⁸⁶ Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

²⁸⁷ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 44–46.

²⁸⁸ MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 8–9; MacDonald writes, “I developed the following criteria from my work on the *Acts of Andrew* and from reading other scholars working on similar problems, including those who investigate allusions to Jewish scriptures in the New Testament and allusions to classical texts in Latin poetry.”

²⁸⁹ McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 46–47.

²⁹⁰ Winn, *Mark and the Elijah–Elisha Narrative*, 46–50.

pivotal leads, action/plot, completeness, order, linguistic details, complex coherence.	imitations of the same model.	conceptual structures, action, theme, plot, order, and linguistic or verbal details.	<i>Events</i> – Does the imitation build around the structure of the original?
3. <i>Intelligibility of Differences</i> – Are the differences in the new reinterpretation of the source text intelligible?	3. <i>Density</i> – Analyze the volume of contacts between the two texts.	3. <i>Evidence of Intimate Familiarity With Source</i> – The evidence the source text has been thoroughly “digested”.	3. <i>Similarities in Specific Narrative Details and Actions</i>
	4. <i>Order</i> – Analyze the sequence of the parallels recognized in density.	4. <i>Intelligibility of Differences</i> – Refers to the indications the imitation seeks to rival, improve upon, or transform the source text.	4. <i>Verbal Agreement</i> – The presence of common words or phrases can be a strong indication of literary dependence.
	5. <i>Distinctiveness</i> – Examine whether the two authors use the same rare word or expression indicating unequivocally that allusion is occurring.	5. <i>Weight of Combined Criteria</i> – If the proposed imitation satisfies multiple criteria, it strengthens the case for mimesis.	5. <i>Weight of Combined Criteria</i> – The satisfaction of multiple criteria strengthens the case for dependence.
	6. <i>Interpretability/Intelligibility</i> – Study whether the proposed hypotext makes sense of the hypertext.		

All four scholars begin with the *external plausibility/ accessibility* criterion. It is self-evident that a text’s dependence on another text necessitates the prior existence of the hypotext. One difficulty here is that dating texts can be quite difficult. Both McAdon’s and Brodie’s second criterion, *significant similarities*, overlaps with MacDonald’s criteria *density*, *order*, and *distinctiveness* as well as Winn’s *similarities in narrative structures/order of events*, *similarities in specific narrative details and actions*, and *verbal agreement*. Brodie includes seven

subcategories under his *significant similarities*. He notes that similarity of theme proves nothing by itself but can be a helpful launching place for more in-depth investigation. Pivotal leads or clues provide insights into the complex relationship between texts—Do similar stories in both texts begin with a similar speech for example? Similarity of action or plot can be a strong indication of intertextuality. The proposed similarity of a particular action in the hypertext to an action in the hypotext is strengthened if the context reveals other similar actions. These may be strong indications the author is linking the text to a preceding text. Next, Brodie includes the subcategory of “completeness.” Brodie says, “But if all the passages of the possible source are reflected in some coherent way in the final text, then the case for direct dependence is strengthened... Such completeness is no accident. It indicates systematic dependence.”²⁹¹

McAdon disagrees with Brodie’s criterion of completeness. Based on McAdon’s own examination of Vergil’s imitation of Homer, it is clear that Vergil omitted more of Homer than he retained, and yet, it is undeniable Vergil imitated Homer. Further, “even for more narrow and specific passages that he transformed, he did not always transform the *complete* passage.”²⁹²

McAdon’s criticism is on target here. Brodie’s subcategory of completeness does not seem necessary for detecting mimesis. Central to mimetic theory was the idea that one should select the best aspects of the best models; thus, selectivity, rather than completeness was the expectation.

Brodie’s fifth subcategory is order which refers to elements within two documents that occur in the same order which does not occur accidentally. The probability of two people ordering stories similarly independently of one another is so low that the only suitable explanation in some cases is literary dependence. Brodie’s sixth subcategory is linguistic details.

²⁹¹ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 45.

²⁹² McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 37.

For example, in the Synoptic Gospels, even when there is a transformation of the source text, there remains a “steady undercurrent” of detailed similarities including linguistic similarities.²⁹³

Brodie’s last subcategory is “complex coherence” by which he means, “Some texts, as well as containing similarity, also contain complexity—not a complexity that is meaningless or confused but one that is coherent.”²⁹⁴

MacDonald’s criteria 3–5 are similar to both Brodie’s and McAdon’s *significant similarities*. *Density* refers to the volume of contacts between two texts. By density, he does not refer to the actual number of parallels, but to the bulk of parallels. Several weighty similarities can suffice to indicate imitation. His fourth criterion is *order* and refers to the sequence of the parallels. The more often one can demonstrate similar order, the stronger the case for literary dependence. His fifth criterion is *distinctiveness* which refers to unique traits shared by the two texts that set them apart. He refers to these unusual details as “intertextual flags” which were often used by ancient writers to indicate the use of models.²⁹⁵

With the exception of Brodie’s sub-criterion of completeness, McAdon’s *significant similarities* mostly agrees with Brodie and MacDonald’s *density* and *order*. McAdon agrees that mimesis involves narrative themes and linguistic features; however, he notes that neither MacDonald nor Brodie explicitly mention similarities in conceptual structure or organizational structure. Since Knauer concluded that these were present in Vergil’s imitation of Homer, McAdon includes them in his own methodology. Relatedly, McAdon’s third criterion, *evidence of intimate familiarity with source*, is unique. He states that while Brodie’s *significant similarities* and MacDonald’s *density* and *order* “give the impression that the imitating author

²⁹³ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 45–46.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

²⁹⁵ MacDonald, “Introduction,” in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, 2–3.

must have had an intimate familiarity with the text he is imitating... neither one states this explicitly.”²⁹⁶ Given that digestion of sources through reading, paraphrase, and memorization was so central to ancient mimesis, thorough familiarity is a necessary criteria. Thus, McAdon’s third criterion is an attempt to make explicit what he finds implicit in the methodologies of Brodie and MacDonald.

MacDonald’s second criterion of *analogy* has been the subject of discussion. MacDonald maintains that “the case for rewriting is weaker if no one else imitated this aspect of the epic.”²⁹⁷ One should seek to place a proposed imitation within the tradition of imitations to discover if other writers imitated the same elements of a particular story, characterization, or plot element. McAdon critiques this criterion. He states that this criterion is applicable for MacDonald’s arguments that Mark imitated Homer because Homer’s writings had been in circulation for hundreds of years providing an ample tradition of imitation. McAdon notes that, for example, if someone were to argue that Luke’s infancy narrative was an imitation of Matthew’s infancy narrative, MacDonald’s criterion of *analogy* might be used to weaken that case since there is no “tradition of imitations” to draw upon.²⁹⁸ Thus, this criterion may be useful in some cases and less useful in others. Overall, then, if an analogous imitation exists, it would strengthen the case for the proposed imitation, but the absence of analogy does not necessarily negate the presence of imitation.

Three authors include the criterion of *intelligibility* with the understanding that imitation involves a significant element of difference.²⁹⁹ As Brodie notes, “The differences between texts

²⁹⁶ McAdon *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 38.

²⁹⁷ MacDonald, *Homeric Epics*, 8.

²⁹⁸ McAdon *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 37.

²⁹⁹ Winn addresses this issue in his methodology in a section entitled “Do Differences Matter?” in *Mark and the Elijah–Elisha Narrative*, 49–50.

may be misleading; they may give the false impression that one text cannot possibly depend on the other.”³⁰⁰ However, as Brodie notes, the purpose of ancient mimesis was to say something similar to another in a different way, which distinguishes mimesis from copying.³⁰¹ How then does one determine whether differences are intelligible without falling into subjectivity? Brodie holds that the key lies in “creative reinterpretation” which at once causes the differences while also making them intelligible. Brodie provides an example from Luke’s use of the Elijah narrative. He says, “Jesus’ refusal to call down destructive fire from heaven (Lk 9.54–55) is in direct contrast to Elijah’s killing of over one hundred soldiers (2 Kgs 1), but the difference fits with Luke’s wider portrayal of Jesus.”³⁰² MacDonald holds that *intelligibility* may help explain hitherto unexplained phenomena in a text and may also involve emulation or transvaluation.³⁰³ For MacDonald’s view that Mark imitated Homer, he holds that Mark often depicts Jesus as exalted in contrast to the imperfections of the heroes in the Homeric models, thus setting Jesus apart. This criterion leaves room for differences caused by improvement and transformation brought about through emulation. MacDonald agrees with this criterion since his own analysis of Vergil’s use of Homer included significant differences with the Homeric stories while undeniably imitating Homer. The transformations of source texts often involved recognizable patterns of alteration (addition, omission, transference, etc.).

The criterion of *intelligibility* has been the most heavily criticized by other scholars. For example Mitchell accuses MacDonald’s method because it:

relies too much on a “have your cake and eat it too” methodology, since in his argument “parallels” between the two narratives support direct influence, but divergences do also, since they demonstrate that Mark was not just imitating, but emulating and transforming

³⁰⁰ Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 46.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.*

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ MacDonald, *Homeric Epics*, 9.

Homer. This means, in essence, that MacDonald's thesis, once propounded, is theoretically incapable of invalidation.³⁰⁴

Similarly, in her review of Brodie's criteria, Margaret Daly-Denton questions what the word "verifiable" might actually mean for this criterion. She says, "Brodie always offers an explanation for whatever does not fit. If, for example, the relationship between a pre-text and a later work can include both continuity and reversal (85), any apparent contradiction can be accommodated within the scheme."³⁰⁵ In another review of Brodie, Tony Chartrand-Burke contends that "Although an intertextual relationship between the NT and OT is impossible to deny, claiming it occurred to this degree stretches credibility."³⁰⁶ Chartrand-Burke gives the example of Brodie's thesis that virtually every line of Proto-Luke imitates the Elijah-Elisha narrative. Notoriously, the Israelite rulers Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:29-34) are absent from Proto-Luke; however, Brodie finds them transformed into the positive figures of Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1:5-25). Thus, similar to Mitchell's and Daly-Denton's criticisms, the criterion of *intelligibility* of differences seems unverifiable and allows scholars to find imitation of sources virtually anywhere chalking significant differences up to the elusive "transformation" of sources.

What then of *intelligibility*? As shown above, digestion, transformation, and emulation (mimetic rivalry) were central to the ancient practice of *imitatio*. This means that Mitchell's characterization of MacDonald's method as "incapable of invalidation" is unwarranted since this is how the ancients spoke of, taught, learned, and practiced imitation (through mimetic rivalry and differentiation). This does not mean that every proposed transformation of a source text is correct. Mitchell cites several of MacDonald's proposed parallels of Homer and finds them far-

³⁰⁴ Margaret M. Mitchell, "Homer in the New Testament?," *JR* 83 (2003): 252.

³⁰⁵ Margaret Daly-Denton, review of *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings*, by Thomas Brodie, *RBL* 8 (2006).

³⁰⁶ Tony Chartrand-Burke, review of *The Birthing of the New Testament: The Intertextual Development of the New Testament Writings*, by Thomas Brodie, *CBQ* 68 (2006): 757.

fetched. These criticisms of particular proposed parallels by Mitchell are reasonable and convincing. Like Chartrand-Burke, I find Brodie's suggestion that Luke has transformed the negative characters Ahab and Jezebel into Zechariah and Elizabeth to strain credibility. Thus, in accusing MacDonald of employing a "have your cake and eat it too" methodology, to employ another proverb, Mitchell has thrown the baby out with the bathwater. McAdon is right to note that while Brodie and MacDonald are rightly criticized for their sometimes overzealous recognition of imitative parallels and transformation of sources, this does not negate that fact that emulation and transformation were central facets of mimesis.³⁰⁷ Winn reasonably concludes:

Regardless of whether or not the differences between two text are explainable, such differences in and of themselves do not undermine a conclusion for literary dependence. A decision for literary dependence needs to be made on the basis of the similarities between two texts, similarities we have outlined above. However, differences can (and perhaps should) be considered as evidence against literary dependence if they outweigh the similarities between two texts in both quantity and significance. A handful of minor similarities between two largely differing texts is clearly not enough to prove literary dependence.³⁰⁸

Following Winn, McAdon also includes the *weight of combined criteria* criterion. While one criterion might suffice to show literary imitation, the case is strengthened by the confluence of multiple criteria being satisfied. Thus, "The weight of combined criteria, therefore, is the most convincing evidence of literary dependence, and it cannot be ignored."³⁰⁹

³⁰⁷ McAdon, *Rhetorical Mimesis*, 40; see the sustained critique of MacDonald's method and application of mimesis by Karl Olav Sandnes in "Mimesis and Criticism," in *New Studies in Textual Interplay*, ed. Craig Evans, B. J. Oropeza, and Paul Sloan (London: T & T Clark, 2021), 55–67. He finds mimesis criticism to hold great potential for seeing texts as "rooted in the wider culture, with its ideals of narrative rhetoric and education," but ultimate finds many difficulties with MacDonald's proposed imitative parallels.

³⁰⁸ Winn, *Mark and the Elijah–Elisha Narrative*, 49–50.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

Methodology for Identifying Imitatio

After analyzing the methodologies of Brodie, MacDonald, McAdon, and Winn, I accept the following criteria for identifying *imitatio*:

1. *External Plausibility*
2. *Significant Similarities*
 - a. *Themes and Content*
 - b. *Details and Actions*
 - c. *Organizational and Conceptual Structures*
 - d. *Verbal and Stylistic*
3. *Evidence of Intimate Familiarity With Source*
4. *Intelligibility of Differences*
5. *Analogy*
6. *Weight of Combined Criteria*

MIMESIS AND REVELATION

No study to date has adequately applied the ancient Greco-Roman practice of mimesis/*imitatio* to study Revelation's use of Israel's Scriptures. This is a curious oversight since the practice of both literary and rhetorical *imitatio* refers to the creative use and reworking of sources (most often several sources) into a new creation stamped with the author's own personality. Revelation is saturated in the language of earlier sacred texts. Swete listed 278 verses or phrases that contained an allusion to a particular OT text.³¹⁰ Steve Moyise has shown that in contrast to Romans, Matthew, and Hebrews which prefer to allude and cite from the

³¹⁰ Swete, *Revelation*, cxl–cliii.

Pentateuch, Revelation prefers the prophetic literature along with the worship language of the Psalms.³¹¹

Several scholars have actually used the description “imitation” to refer to how John alludes to biblical texts, particularly the book of Ezekiel. C. F. Burney described the irregular style of Revelation to be due to John’s “first-hand imitation of Biblical Hebrew style...”³¹² Austin Farrer summarized John’s unusual style: “He was writing a Christian Ezekiel or Zechariah in the phrase of the old.”³¹³ M.-E. Boismard characterized John’s use of Ezekiel as “elle dénote une imitation, unun démarquage si serviles...”³¹⁴ After concluding that Ezekiel was the most important source for John, Frederick Mazzaferri says that John “even archaizes his style to mimic classical biblical Hebrew, often at the expense of the precise rules of Greek expression”³¹⁵ and that John speaks “mindfully archaized Semitic Greek” which “will sound like the ancient prophets.”³¹⁶ Paul Decock, in analyzing Revelation’s use of Jewish Scriptures, sides with Ruiz’s contention that John’s use of the OT material involves creativity over against Boismard’s identification of “slavish imitation.”³¹⁷ Citing Brodie, Decock says, “More attention will have to be given to the phenomenon of imitation, which was appreciated in antiquity.”³¹⁸ Later, he says, “John is indeed imitating Ezekiel (and Isaiah and Daniel) in some way.”³¹⁹ He then turns to mention several Jewish methods for working with sacred texts including inner-biblical exegesis, midrash, targum, and intertextuality; however, he makes no mention of the

³¹¹ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 15.

³¹² C.F. Burney, *The Aramaic Origin of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1922), 16.

³¹³ Austin Farrer, *The Rebirth of Images: The Making of St. John’s Apocalypse* (Westminster: Dacre Press, 1949), 24.

³¹⁴ M.-E. Boismard, “‘L’Apocalypse’, Ou ‘Les Apocalypses’ De S. Jean” *RB* 56: 532.

³¹⁵ Frederick Mazzaferri, *The Genre of the Book of Revelation from a Source-Critical Perspective*, BZNTW 54 (New York: De Gruyter, 1989), 379.

³¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 375.

³¹⁷ Paul Decock, “The Scriptures in the Book of Revelation,” *Neot* 33 (1999): 375.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*

³¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 395.

Greco-Roman practice of imitation. After analyzing Revelation's use of the Scriptures in 21:1–22:9, Decock concludes that it most closely resembles the Jewish procedure of rewritten Scripture.³²⁰

Speaking more generally of Ezekiel's role for apocalyptic literature, Ithamar Gruenwald in *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* summarized, "Ezekiel was for a very long time the model for visionaries to follow and imitate. Various practices were adapted and introduced in order to bring about the realization of mystical experiences like those Ezekiel was thought to have had."³²¹ Christopher Rowland, in his important study *The Open Heaven*, summarizes his view of how (at least some) apocalyptic visions originated:

The visions would have arisen within a situation, where an individual started with the scriptural description of God's glory in Ezekiel 1 and, on the basis of this passage, believed that he saw again the vision which had once appeared to the prophet Ezekiel by the banks of the river Chebar. Thus although the details of Ezekiel's vision marked the launching-pad for this new vision, the imagination of the visionary enabled him to transcend the original, for other elements colour his reflections, notably, of course, relevant scriptural passages, so that an entirely new view of the character of God and his world is produced.³²²

Rowland's thesis that apocalyptic authors, John included, began with a thorough familiarity with the Scriptures, particularly Ezek 1, as a launching pad to "see again" what the prophet saw while also transforming the vision by weaving in details from other texts, resonates strongly with the practice of *imitatio*.³²³ Thus, scholars of mystical phenomenology in apocalyptic and *merkavah* texts have noted the foundational role Ezekiel played as model for transcendent experience.³²⁴ This will be explored more fully in chapter 5.

³²⁰ Ibid., 401.

³²¹ Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 2nd rev. ed., *Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* 90 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 4.

³²² Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (London: SPCK, 1982), 226–27.

³²³ A description like this which so closely aligns with the theory and practice of *imitatio* studied above makes it an *a priori* possibility that *imitatio* might provide significant insight into John's use of sources.

³²⁴ More will be discussed later.

In his dissertation on the interpretation of Ezekiel in Revelation, Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang concludes, “it appears that John, the exiled Christian prophet, modeled his book and message on that of Ezekiel, the great prophet of the Babylonian exile.”³²⁵ Ian Boxall argues that “... John casts his own visions in a mould derived from Ezekiel” and describes Ezekiel as his “major prophetic model.”³²⁶ After Mathewson’s detailed study of the use of the OT in Rev 21:1–22:5, the author concludes that Ezek 40–48 functions as a “structural model” for John’s work as well as his own “visionary experience.”³²⁷ Additionally, he concludes that John has constructed his own “prophetic self-understanding based on scriptural models.”³²⁸ In Moyise’s study of the OT in Revelation, he finds Greene’s typology of imitation helpful (although Greene is addressing Renaissance poetry).³²⁹ In his section “Revelation and Imitation”, Moyise finds the concept of imitation to make sense of Revelation’s complex use of OT. After analyzing John’s significant use of Ezekiel in Revelation, Moyise says, “The most obvious explanation is that John has taken on the ‘persona’ of Ezekiel. Through meditation and study (of which there are ample precedents), John has absorbed something of the character and mind of the prophet.”³³⁰ He notes that several major sections of Revelation are “modelled” on Ezekiel.³³¹ To understand the complex set of interactions between Revelation and Ezekiel, Moyise ends with an appeal to the literary concept of intertextuality, and in the next chapter, moves to analyze the complex uses of

³²⁵ Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, “The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation” (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1985), 11, 72.

³²⁶ Ian K. Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary: Ezekiel’s Influence on the Book of Revelation,” in *The Book of Ezekiel and Its Influence*, ed. Henk Jan de Jonge and Johannes Tromp (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 157, 159. He says, “Yet whether consciously or otherwise, the mould (or mantle) of Ezekiel has left a significant imprint on Revelation’s portrayal of John, as visionary, as prophet, and even ultimately as exile” (163).

³²⁷ David Mathewson, *A New Heaven and a New Earth: The Meaning and Function of the Old Testament in Revelation 21.1–22.5*, JSNTSup 238 (New York: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 230.

³²⁸ Ibid.

³²⁹ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 118–35.

³³⁰ Ibid., 78.

³³¹ Ibid., 81, 83.

Scripture at Qumran. He does not consider the Greco-Roman practice of *imitatio*. Given that multiple scholars studying John's use of the Scriptures frequently find that John uses Ezekiel as "model" for his own work, it makes the absence of mimetic criticism striking.

Finally, Whitaker has noted that imitation was part of the earliest and most advanced stages of education. She draws attention to Atticism which valued reproduction of Attic style and remarked how the progymnasmata were full of imitative exercises. She then suggests, "Such constant looking back and emphasis on mimicry may provide one cultural explanation for why Revelation is full of Old Testament allusions and paraphrases, borrowing heavily from tradition even whilst constructing a new narrative."³³² This tantalizing suggestion is not further discussed however. This brief survey has shown that multiple scholars of Revelation's use of Israel's Scriptures, particularly Ezekiel, at both the literary and phenomenological level have come close to recognizing *imitatio* as a worthwhile means of understanding John's creative use of prior sacred Scriptures. John's style has been described as an "archaizing" "imitation" attempting to speak "in the phrase of the old" classical prophets. His technique has been described with the terms: "mimic", "see again", "model", "mould", and "imitate." His source texts have been described as "structural models" for the author who is described as taking on "the persona" of Ezekiel. Two scholars, Decock and Whitaker, have called for more attention to be given to imitation to understand John's employment of source material.

The suggestion to study Revelation through mimetic criticism undoubtedly raises several hermeneutical and methodological questions. The first is the question of genre—is it appropriate to apply rhetorical and literary mimetic theory to works in the apocalyptic genre? In response, imitation was foundational to rhetoric and every literary genre (poetics, comedy, historiography,

³³² Whitaker, "Seeing God," 24.

et al.). Quintilian recognized that imitation transcends the boundaries of genres, although, each genre follows its own guidelines regarding how to best imitate. He says:

We must also avoid the mistake, into which many fall, of imitating poets and historians in speeches, and orators or declaimers in history and poetry. Each genre has its own law, and its own standard of appropriateness. Comedy does not walk tall in tragedy's high boots, nor tragedy amble on in comedy's slippers. Still, all eloquence has something in common, and it is this common element that we should imitate.³³³

As Russell summarizes, imitation was “an essential element in all literary composition.”³³⁴ We should thus not be surprised *a priori* to find it in the genre of apocalyptic.³³⁵ Two of the hallmarks of the apocalyptic genre are its heavy reliance on previous sources and the identification of many apocalypses with ancient figures (Enoch, Ezra, Abraham, Baruch, etc.) through the use of pseudepigraphy. I argue these central features of apocalyptic works point to the same imitative impulse which was present in works in all other genres.

As noted earlier, ps.–Longinus described “the zealous imitation of the great prose writers and poets of the past” as being “carried away by the inspiration of another” (ἄλλοτρίῳ θεοφοροῦνται πνεύματι).³³⁶ It is similar to the Pythian priestess being empowered by the divine vapors to utter oracles. He says, it is as if “the natural genius of those old writers there flows into the hearts of their admirers as it were an emanation from those old mouths.”³³⁷ He describes it as

³³³ *Inst.* 10.2.22 (Russell, LCL).

³³⁴ Russell, “De Imitatione,” 1.

³³⁵ “The practice of borrowing also fits with the view that an author could have multiple literary models; a text could participate in multiple genres simultaneously, even if that participation is not equally balanced... Each other has their own prototypical models that relate to societal understandings embedded in the education system but are individualized and, therefore, unique. For example, a Jewish author who was educated in both Greek and Hebrew (or Aramaic, Demotic, etc.) would have knowledge of two different genre schemas. The individual would also have expertise in multiple genres, the names and concepts of which might be shared between cultures (e.g., history) or could be distinct. This author would also have prototypical models from both languages that are organized in difference hierarchies... Jewish authors blended features from both Hebrew and Greek models” (Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 14).

³³⁶ *Subl.* 13.2 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

an inspiration (ἐπιπνεόμενοι; φοιβαστικοί).³³⁸ The source text gains renewed authority through its ability to affect hearers in a new context. The description in ps.–Longinus resonates with John’s self-depiction as a prophet speaking ἐν πνεύματι on the Lord’s day (echoing Ezek 3:12; cf. 2:2; 3:14, 24; 8:3; 11:1, 5, 24; 37:1; 43:5).³³⁹ Returning to Rowland’s description of the phenomenology of visions, he suggests Ezekiel was a launching pad for apocalyptic visions and “the imagination of the visionary” enabled the seer to transcend the original in order to create a new work. In his influential work, Collins says, “The composition of highly symbolic literature involves a vivid use of the imagination.”³⁴⁰ John uses the description “in the spirit” to indicate his vision did not occur physically. He is shown images and is taken to heaven through vision, not bodily (cf. Rev. 4:2; 17:3; 21:10). Thus, the imagination is the realm of vision. It is impossible to imagine someone living in Asia Minor familiar with rhetorical techniques able to produce such a complex work having an imagination uncolored by the ubiquitous impulse of mimesis.³⁴¹

A second and related question might be whether it is better to analyze John’s work solely through Jewish techniques (midrash, peshet, rewritten Bible, etc.) than the Greco-Roman practice of *imitatio*. Jewish categories of interpretation and exegesis have proven unable to account for the ways in which Revelation employs the Scriptures. For example, after his study of

³³⁸ ἐπιπνέω was used elsewhere for the inspiration of the muses (cf. Plato, *Phaedr.* 262d). φοιβαίνω and related terms describe enthusiastic inspiration including uttering oracles in verse (cf. Plutarchus, *Rom.* 21).

³³⁹ cf. Ezek. 8:3; 37:1; 43:5.

³⁴⁰ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 50.

³⁴¹ “Jewish authors writing in Greek were strongly influenced by Greek genres and that established literary practices regularly acted as constraints for composition” (Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 18). Again, Adams says, “Pseudepigraphical attribution of a work to Greek authors (e.g., Hecataeus, Phocylides, Orpheus) shows clear intent on behalf of the author a strong understanding of ancient literature and could be viewed through the lens of *prosopopoeia*. Similarly, literary emulation and adoption of particular formal features, such as genre-specific meter (e.g., Philo Epicus, Theodotus, Ezekiel), evidence authorial awareness and intentionality. For these Jewish authors, their model writer becomes the prototype for their composition, which suggests that some Jewish authors looked to Greek literature for genre models and actively sought to craft their work in light of Hellenic traditions” (*Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 294).

John's use of the OT in Rev 21–22, Mathewson concludes, "it is clear that John's work resembles very little the kind of explicit exegetical activity reflected in various Qumran documents, in taking up and appropriating scriptural traditions..."³⁴² After the most thorough study of Revelation's use of Ezekiel to date, Beate Kowalski summarizes:

Die Offb ist keine Interpretation des AT. Sie beansprucht vielmehr, Offenbarung Jesu Christi zu sein. Keine der in der jüdischen Exegese bekannten Formen der Schriftauslegung trifft auf das Rezeptionsverhalten des Johannes zu. Es handelt sich bei seinem Umgang mit dem AT weder um die Form eines Pescher, noch um die Form der Targumim. Keine der bekannten Auslegungsregeln (sieben Regeln des Rabbi Hillel, zweiunddreißig Regeln des Rabbi Eliezer) greift zu einer adäquaten Beschreibung der Schriftrezeption. Die Offb ist daher auch nicht als Midrasch zum Buch Ezekiel zu verstehen.³⁴³

While John is firmly grounded in the Jewish sacred writings, he is equally planted in the world of the province of Asia Minor. Earlier, it was demonstrated that John is at home in the Greco-Roman culture of Asia Minor and that rhetoric and rhetorical schools flourished in the province during this period.³⁴⁴ Further, several scholars have detected John's familiarity with and employment of rhetorical techniques. Whitaker believes this indicates that John can be assumed to have "a reasonable degree of education by ancient standards" and that "John certainly completed primary education and plausibly participated in the second stage of education under a *grammatikos*."³⁴⁵ Since mimesis was the basis of all education, if these assumptions are correct, John would have certainly been familiar with *imitatio* at some level. Whitaker concludes that as a Christ-believing Jew familiar with the writings of the OT immersed in the urbanized province of

³⁴² Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 223.

³⁴³ Beate Kowalski, *Die Rezeption des Propheten Ezechiel in der Offenbarung des Johannes*, SBB 52 (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2004), 474; *pace* Klaus Berger: "Apk nimmt nicht nur mit Anspielungen auf Ez (und viele andere) Bezug, sondern ist in den wesentlichen Elementen seiner Gesamtkonstruktion an Ez orientiert und versteht sich daher als fortlaufender Midrasch zu diesem Buch" (*Theologieggeschichte des Urchristentums: Theologie des Neuen Testaments* [Tübingen: Francke, 1995], 622); J. Nelson Kraybill describes John's use of Old Testament materials in Rev 18:1–24 as a "veritable midrash" (*Imperial Cult and Commerce in John's Apocalypse*, JSNTSup 132 [Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996], 148–49).

³⁴⁴ See above "APPROPRIATENESS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM FOR REVELATION."

³⁴⁵ Whitaker, "Seeing God," 26.

Asia Minor, “the sacred texts of the Jews as well as the literary culture of Hellenism are equally relevant.”³⁴⁶ Thus, neither the genre of apocalyptic nor the use of Greco-Roman literary practices is a barrier to using mimetic analysis.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to apply rhetorical insights to the idiosyncratic grammar of Revelation. After placing Revelation in its historical and rhetorical environment, I demonstrated that numerous studies have been conducted over the past few decades demonstrating that rhetoric has provided valuable insights into better understanding features of Revelation because the book was designed with aural intent. The goal of rhetorical analysis is to better understand the author’s intentions and persuasive strategies. The near-contemporary handbooks and other works on rhetoric provide a vocabulary for understanding ancient persuasive strategies.

Rhetoric provides insights into Revelation’s idiosyncratic grammar in at least two ways. First, because rhetoric is concerned with correctness of speech, there are in-depth discussions by the rhetoricians about ungrammaticality. The works distinguish between an accidental ungrammaticality (solecism) and an ungrammatical artistic effect (figure). The line between the two centered on the issue of intentionality. Quintilian even goes so far as to provide criteria for determining intentionality—authority, antiquity, usage, and logical principle. These criteria show that the literary practices of the authorities, especially from the past, was the primary determining factor. These discussions provide fresh questions for investigation: Could the ungrammaticality of many passages in Revelation be artistic figures (rather than accidental mistakes)? Is there an ancient authority for John who used similar ungrammaticality?

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 12.

Second, rhetoric had a conservative character because nearly all rhetoric and literary production in the ancient world was based on the practice of imitation (μίμησις/*imitatio*). The impulse of Quintilian's criteria for artistic ungrammaticality suggests the usage of ancient authorities was the highest art. *Imitatio* was a pervasive practice discussed in dozens of works. After analyzing multiple works, I established that the most common practice was the imitation of the best features of the best models. There were several common practices associated with imitation including memorization, paraphrase, translation, eclecticism, and emulative rivalry. Ps.–Longinus summarizes the practice of imitation in the dictum—“How might Homer have said this same thing?”³⁴⁷ Ps.–Longinus also shows the powerful rhetorical effect of imitation: it was similar to the divine inspiration of the Pythian priestesses uttering oracles. Mimetic criticism has been applied profitably in NT studies, although curiously not to Revelation. After analyzing the methodologies of Brodie, MacDonald, McAdon, and Winn, I determined six criteria for detecting *imitatio*: external plausibility, significant similarities, evidence of intimate familiarity with source, intelligibility of differences, analogy, and weight of combined criteria. In the next chapter, I will apply the criteria elucidated above for determining the presence of imitation to Revelation's use of prophets with special attention given to the relevance for the irregular Greek of the book.

³⁴⁷ *Subl.* 14 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

CHAPTER FOUR

IMITATIO EZECHIELIS: JOHN'S PROPHETIC EXEMPLAR AND HIS UNUSUAL STYLE

Preliminary Remarks

Having determined criteria for recognizing *imitatio*, in this chapter, I apply those criteria to John's use of Ezekiel. The most relevant observation to the present study is the identification of John's imitation of the irregular style of Ezekiel's inaugural and commissioning vision. The success of my thesis to explain the grammatical irregularity in Revelation depends in large part on showing the multifaceted and thorough-going nature of Revelation's dependence on Ezekiel; hence, this chapter will contain a substantial argument that John imitates his prophetic predecessor. I will argue that John employs Ezekiel significantly in Revelation, even imitating the structure of Ezekiel's prophecy. Further, I will argue that one of the commonplace observations in scholarship on Ezekiel is that the inaugural vision—which was influential for John—contains the most irregular Hebrew in the Hebrew Bible. I demonstrate that John was intimately familiar with the text of the inaugural vision of Ezekiel and that there is significant categorical overlap between the types of grammatical irregularity found in Ezekiel's opening vision and in Revelation. In order to strengthen the plausibility of this claim, I will demonstrate the importance of Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision in rabbinic circles, apocalyptic texts, early Christianity, and developing Jewish mysticism. I will also provide a possible analogous text that uses irregular grammar when it involves significant influence from Ezekiel's inaugural vision.

Revelation and the Scriptures

The Apocalypse is saturated with the language and imagery of Israel's biblical texts.¹ As the inaugural audiences heard it, they would have recognized particular expressions and echoes to other texts. Unlike other NT books from the first century that make extensive, clear, and direct use of Israel's Scriptures, Revelation never uses exact quotations; rather, John has incorporated hundreds of allusions.² The exact number of allusions is difficult to determine. While some allusions are obvious, others are debated. Swete listed 278 verses or phrases which contain an allusion to a particular OT text.³ Charles distinguishes allusions from the Greek, from the Hebrew, and from either Hebrew or Greek and lists approximately 226.⁴ The different revisions of UBS and NA have captured the number of allusions differently. For example, the UBS³ listed 394 allusions while the NA²⁶ listed 635.⁵ In his important study, Jon Paulien looked at the scholarly literature on Revelation 8:7–9:21 and 11:15–18 and determined that various scholars addressing the same material identified allusions differently.⁶ For example, after reviewing the proposals of ten scholars for allusions in the seven trumpets section, he provided the following results:⁷

¹ The term "Old Testament" is not used to refer anachronistically to the idea of a fixed canon of Scriptures. I attempt to use "Scriptures" to refer to the sacred writings of Judaism to indicate the possibility that John knew of and considered other texts such as 1 En. to be authoritative (as the Barn. 16:5 appears to do). Although the boundaries of Scripture were still fluid in the first century, there was an essential core. It is clear that John has drawn primarily upon the books that would eventually be canonized and later referred to as the Old Testament. He draws extensively on Ezekiel, Isaiah, Daniel, the Twelve, Psalms, Genesis, et al. However, I use "Old Testament" when referring to the work of other scholars who use that term in context. Beate Kowalski notes, "Wenn Exegeten heute nach der Rezeption des AT im NT und speziell nach der Rezeption des Ez in der Offb fragen, handelt es sich um eine modern Fragestellung." (*Die Rezeption*, 65).

² There have been numerous attempts to define and differentiate "allusion" and "echo." For example, see Beale, *Revelation*, 78; Paulien, "Elusive Allusions," 45–47; Vanhoye, "L'Utilisation," 473–76.

³ Swete, *Revelation*, cxi–cliii.

⁴ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:lxv–lxxvii.

⁵ UBS³, 901–11; NA²⁶, 739–74.

⁶ Jon Paulien, "Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Literary Allusions and Interpretation of Revelation 8:7–12" (Phd diss, Andrews University, 1987), 161; Idem., "Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *BR* 33 (1988): 37–53.

⁷ Paulien, "Decoding Revelation's Trumpets," 125.

Charles	Dittmar	Msb Ford	Hühn	Kraft	Mounce	Nestle	Prigent	UBS	Westcott
79	25	109	102	51	54	71	74	38	41

After surveying these ten major works, he identified 288 proposed allusions to different OT passages. This confusion over the identification of allusions has led some scholars to adopt descriptors that indicate this uncertainty. For example, Albert Vanhoye adopts the terms “utilisation certaine” and “contacts littéraires” with subcategories of “plus probants” and “moins probants.”⁸ Beale adopts these categories: clear allusion, probable allusion, and possible allusion.⁹ Jan Fekkes categorizes the allusions as: “certain/virtually certain”; “probable/possible”; and “unlikely/doubtful.”¹⁰ Thus, while it is clear that John draws extensively upon the Scriptures, it is not always clear *when* John is alluding or exactly *how* John utilizes previous text traditions. Yarbrow Collins introduces readers to a few of the interpretive quagmires posed by John’s use of Scripture:

Did he use a Greek version or did he himself translate from the Hebrew? A related question is whether John had access to written copies of authoritative sacred books and used them in writing his own work or whether he cited such books from memory. A general issue is what motives John had in his use of such texts. Was he “loyal” to his source texts? Were they “canonical” for him? Did he intend to interpret Scripture? If so, how does the interpretation of Scripture relate to the prophetic character of the book? Or were the older texts merely raw material for his project of moving the audiences to think and act in certain ways?¹¹

In addition to the questions surrounding *how* John uses biblical texts, there are questions related to what this means for our conception of John: “Leitet Johannes seine Identität als Prophet vom atl. Propheten Ezechiel ab? Ist sein Selbstverständnis mit dem des Ezechiel identisch? Gibt es

⁸ Vanhoye, “L’Utilisation,” 473–76.

⁹ G.K. Beale, *Revelation*, 78.

¹⁰ Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions*.

¹¹ Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Use of Scripture in the Book of Revelation,” in *New Perspectives on the Book of Revelation*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, BETL 291 (Bristol, CT: Peeters, 2017), 11–12.

auch eine Beeinflussung auf dieser persönlichen Ebene?“¹² Boxall says that if it can be determined that Ezekiel’s book has exercised a primary influence on John, this has implications on whether “Ezekiel is significant for John as a paradigmatic figure, who enables the seer of Patmos to make sense of his own situation and that of his fellow Christians in Roman proconsular Asia.”¹³ We must remember, as demonstrated in chapter 3, that *imitatio* was the primary means of incorporating older source material taught in all levels of *paideia* and provided the foundation for rhetoric, literature, art, and ethics. Since *imitatio* concerns the rhetorically affective means of incorporating source material in a new work, it holds potential for providing insight into Revelation’s incorporation of textual traditions.

To limit the scope of the study, in this chapter I will apply the criteria determined in the previous one for determining the specific question of whether John is imitating Ezekiel. Over the last several decades, more studies have appeared analyzing allusions to Ezekiel than any other biblical book.¹⁴ Kowalski has determined that of the 405 verses of Revelation, 112 (or 27.65%) contain an allusion to Ezekiel.¹⁵ These allusions are concentrated in chs. 1, 4–5, 10, and 18–22; however, she notes, “Keines der Kapitel in der Offb ist von Anspielungen auf Ez ausgenommen...”¹⁶ She further concludes that about 135 verses from Ezekiel are alluded to in Revelation, of which 50 are alluded to multiple times.¹⁷ The extensive use of Ezekiel in

¹² Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 276.

¹³ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 148.

¹⁴ Vanhoye, “L’Utilisation”; Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*; Idem., “Transformation of Ezekiel in John’s Revelation” in *Transforming Visions: Transformations of Text, Tradition, and Theology in Ezekiel*, ed. William Tooman and Michael Lyons (Cambridge: James Clarke & Co., 2011); Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel”; Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*; Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 64–84; Wei Lo, “Ezekiel in Revelation: Literary and Hermeneutical Aspects,” (PhD diss., The University of Edinburgh, 1999); Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 147–64.

¹⁵ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 264.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 273–74.

Revelation and the numerous recent studies on John's use of Ezekiel make this text an obvious choice for analysis.¹⁸

John's Imitation of Ezekiel

Criterion 1: External Plausibility

This section is essential to my overall thesis because it addresses the language of John's Ezekiel source text. Numerous studies have addressed whether John used Hebrew or Greek texts for his biblical allusions. Because my thesis depends on the supposition that John had an intimate familiarity with a Hebrew text like that preserved in the MT, this investigation is pertinent. This criterion points to the fact that any assertion of imitation must prove the pre-existence of the hypotext. The book opens with Ezekiel, the priest, in Babylon with a group of exiles resulting from the defeat of Jerusalem and deportation of some of her inhabitants circa 597 BCE. Daniel Block notes at least seven discreet phases involved in the composition of a prophetic book like Ezekiel:¹⁹

1. The prophetic event: the prophet receives a message from God.
2. The rhetorical event: the prophet transmits that message to his or her audience.
3. The transcriptional event: the oracle is written down.
4. The narratorial event: the account of the circumstances of the prophetic event are added to the transcribed oracle, creating a complete literary unit.
5. The compilation event: the literary units are gathered.

¹⁸ While John does use other books extensively (Dan, Isa, Zech, et al.), they do not exhibit the comprehensive and structural influence on Revelation that Ezekiel does. Further, as will be explored in this chapter and the next, John's use of Ezekiel's vision as a primary catalyst for his own vision while incorporating elements from other biblical texts is a well-attested apocalyptic phenomenon.

¹⁹ Daniel Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 18.

6. The editorial event: the collection is organized and the individual oracles are stitched together by means of connective and correlative notes, resulting in a more or less coherent book.
7. The nominal event: a formal heading is added to the book, identifying the prophet, the circumstances of ministry, and the genre of the collection.

These discreet phases may have transpired in stages thus making it impossible to date each phase with certainty. Scholars disagree over which sections of the book may be attributed to the historical prophet Ezekiel. There are several indications that major portions of Ezekiel at least date back to the historical sixth century prophet. First, the prophecies are written in a first-person, autobiographical style suggesting the prophecies result from Ezekiel's own experience. Second, Ezekiel is instructed at certain points to record the message he receives (24:1–2; 37:16). Third, the book contains very strange visions as well as Ezekiel's emotional response to those visions. Some scholars have even hypothesized from the erratic shape of the text that Ezekiel was a true psychotic exemplifying characteristics of catatonia, schizophrenia, and delusions of grandeur.²⁰ The preservation of the emotion of the experience is difficult to explain by theories of later reworking. Fourth, Ezekiel's contemporary Jeremiah is known to have had his oracles written down by a scribe (Jer 36). Fifth, the practice of transcribing oracles immediately after they were received from a deity is attested in other Ancient Near Eastern sources.²¹ Sixth, Ezekiel is unique among the prophets in that about sixteen oracles are introduced by date notices locating the oracles within a specific historical context (cf. 1:1–3; 8:1; 20:1; 29:1, 17; 40:1). Thus, it is likely that much of the material is attributable to the prophet himself, although there

²⁰ E. C. Broome, "Ezekiel's Abnormal Personality," *JBL* 65 (1946): 277–92.

²¹ A. R. Millard, "La prophétie et l'écriture: Israël, Aram, Assyrie," *RHR* 202 (1985): 125–44.

seems to also have been later working of the oracles by a succeeding generation.²² Leslie Allen summarizes:

No long period of time seems to have elapsed in the composition of the book. While Ezekiel ministered in person to the pre-587 prisoners of war and to the first generation of post-587 exiles, the later adaptations that appear in the book seem to have been made among the second generation of exiles.²³

In comparison to Second Isaiah, Ezekiel shows a reticence about the prospects of the fall of Babylon at the hands of the Persians.

Several fragments of Ezekiel have been found at Qumran indicating its import for that Jewish community. 1QEzekiel (1Q9) is a tiny fragment from Cave 1 containing fifteen words from Ezek 4:16–5:1.²⁴ Given the tiny nature of the fragment, it is possible it was part of a citation rather than an entire manuscript. A small fragment discovered in Cave 3 (3Q Ezekiel; 3Q1) contains a single *hapax legomenon* word (לְקַלֵּס) found only at Ezek 16:31 leading scholars to conclude the fragment belonged to a manuscript of Ezekiel although the recognition of a single word, if it does indeed belong to Ezekiel, hardly reveals much. In Cave 11, a roll was discovered which, due to heavy water damage, was unable to be read. The scroll is called 11Q4 Ezekiel. W. H. Brownlee was able to recover a few fragments from the surface which he identified as Ezek 4:3–6; 5:11–17; 7:9–12; 10:11.²⁵ Regarding 11Q4 Ezekiel, Edward Herbert concluded that the text is “broadly Masoretic.” While there is some deviation from the MT, there is no significant agreement with the Greek.²⁶ One of the most important finds was three manuscripts, labeled ‘a’, ‘b’, and ‘c’, discovered in Cave 4. 4QEz^a (4Q73) preserves portions of Ezek 10 and 11 as well as

²² R. E. Clements, *Old Testament Prophecy: From Oracles to Canon* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 169.

²³ Leslie Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 17.

²⁴ DJD I, 68–69.

²⁵ W.H. Brownlee, “The Scroll of Ezekiel from the Eleventh Qumran Cave,” *RevQ* 4 (1963): 11–28.

²⁶ Edward Herbert, “11QEzekiel (Pls. II, LIV),” in *Qumran Cave 11. 2, 11Q2–18, 11Q20–21*, ed. Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, and Adam S. Van der Woude, DJD 23 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 22.

parts of chs. 23 and 41. Based on the identification of the script as late Hasmonean with tendencies toward early and Herodian semiformal hand, the document has been dated to the mid-first century BCE.²⁷ 4QEz^b (4Q74) contains Ezek 1:10, 11–12, 13, 16–17, 20–24. Johan Lust summarizes that generally 4QEz^b “is identical with the MT and does not support the corrections inspired by the LXX.”²⁸ A remaining fragment from Cave 4 (4QEzek^c; 4Q75) contains just nine words which show no variants from the MT consonantal text.²⁹ Additionally, Ezekiel is quoted several times in non-biblical texts at Qumran.³⁰ Hector Patmore concludes that the texts of Ezekiel found at Qumran are “virtually indistinguishable from our MT.”³¹

In addition to Qumran, more than fifty fragments were discovered beneath the floor of the synagogue at Masada.³² These fragments dated to the second half of the last century BCE, and one fragment discovered there contained Ezek 35:11–38:14. “Like the fragments from Qumran, the limited evidence appears to point to a text in basic conformity to the MT.”³³ In his analysis of MasEzek, Shemaryahu Talmon demonstrates “the basic textual identity of MasEzek with MT” by drawing out two examples where the Greek has additional text not found in MT Ezekiel or MasEzek; ten examples where MT Ezekiel and MasEzek contain text absent in the Greek version; and eleven examples where the Greek has a reading where MT Ezekiel and MasEzek are in agreement.³⁴ Patmore summarizes the evidence from Qumran and Masada:

²⁷ Sinclair Lawrence A., “A Qumran Biblical Fragment 4QEzeka (Ezek. 10, 17–11, 11),” *RevQ* 14 (1989): 100.

²⁸ Johan Lust, “Ezekiel Manuscripts in Qumran,” in *Ezekiel and His Book: Textual and Literary Criticism*, ed. Johan Lust, *ETL* 74 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1986), 96.

²⁹ Hector Patmore, “The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel: The Implications of the Manuscript Finds from Masada and Qumran,” *JSOT* 32 (2007): 235.

³⁰ cf. 4Q Flor 1,16–17; CD 19,11–12

³¹ Patmore, “The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel,” 232–33.

³² Shemaryahu Talmon, “1043–2220 (MasEzek) Ezekiel 35.11–38.14,” in *Masada: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–65 VI*, ed. J. Aviram, et al. (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1999), 59–75.

³³ Patmore, “The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel,” 236.

³⁴ Talmon, “1043–2220 (MasEzek),” 68.

Although we must caution against over-confidence (in total the fragments of Ezekiel from Qumran preserve a mere 340 words, many of which are preserved only in part, sometimes only a single letter, and require reconstruction), what we can say *positively* is that what data we do have *do not* reflect a prototype of the Greek recensions.³⁵

Around the third century BCE, Hebrew texts began to be translated into Greek. The critical edition of the LXX Ezekiel was published in the Göttingen series in 1952 by J. Ziegler. Since that time, fragments of Ezekiel were discovered in the Antinoopolis papyri as well as the publication of papyrus 967 by D. Fraenkel leading to the publication of a second edition of LXX Ezekiel in 2006. The manuscript p967 dates to the second or third century CE and contains most of Ezek 11:25–48:35 and along with Codex Vaticanus, is the main witness to the pre-Hexaplaric Old Greek text.³⁶ John Wevers and Galen Marquis both noted that the LXX Ezekiel translators produced a Greek text that was Hebrew in character, often impressing Hebrew syntactical features and Hebrew word order upon the Greek.³⁷ Since the translators followed Hebrew word order, where deviations from the MT do occur, this may point to a different parent text of the MT. This is likely true for p967 and Vetus Latina Codex Wirceburgensis (sixth century CE) which bear witness to a significantly shorter version of Ezekiel than MT. These Old Greek texts of Ezekiel are likely based on a different Hebrew parent text which is earlier. This brief survey of the textual traditions of the MT and LXX demonstrate that the prophet Ezekiel's work, set in a

³⁵ Patmore, "The Shorter and Longer Texts of Ezekiel," 237; Karrer agrees: "Die sieben gefundenen (fragmentarischen) Ez-Manuskripte aus Höhlen bei Qumran und Massada bestätigten nämlich nicht nur die Durchsetzung des protomasoretischen Textes für den hebräischen Ez—mit der Folge, dass wir für das Hebräische insgesamt den masoretischen Text zur Apk vergleichen können... Keine der Handschriften weicht groß vom (nachmaligen) MT ab, so dass der protomasoretische Text zur Abfassungszeit der Apk faktische über die Fragmente hinaus als verfestigt zu gelten hat." ("Von der Apokalypse zu Ezechiel: Der Ezechieltext der Apokalypse," in *Das Ezechielbuch in der Johannesoffenbarung*, ed. Dieter Sänger, *Biblisch-Theologische Studien* 76 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2004], 94).

³⁶ Johan Lust, "Ezekiel 36–40 in the Oldest Greek Manuscript," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 517.

³⁷ John Wevers, "Evidence of the Text of the John H. Scheide Papyri for the Translation of the Status Constructus in Ezekiel," *JBL* 70 (1951): 211–16; Galen Marquis, "Word Order as a Criterion for the Evaluation of Translation Technique in the LXX and the Evaluation of Word Order Variants as Exemplified in LXX-Ezekiel," *Textus* 13 (1986): 59–84.

period nearly six centuries prior was available to John writing at the end of the first century CE in both Hebrew and Greek formats.³⁸

The question of the language of John's text source has been much debated. Was John's *Vorlage* a Hebrew text similar to that preserved later in the MT or the Greek of the LXX³⁹, or a different text-type altogether? In his important study of John's use of Zechariah, Garrick Allen lists twelve possibilities: 1. A translation of proto-MT; 2. A translation of the *Vorlage* of OG/LXX; 3. A translation of another Hebrew text; 4. Old Greek; 5. The *καίτε* recension; 6. A proto-Hexaplaric recension; 7. A translation of a Hebrew text (options 1–3) with adaptations; 8. An adaptation of a Greek version (options 4–6); 9. A free paraphrase of a Hebrew text; 10. A free paraphrase of OG/LXX; 11. A Greek text influenced by memory of a Hebrew text; and 12. A quotation from memory.⁴⁰

A full investigation of this question is not possible here; however, since scholars have reached somewhat of a consensus on this question, the results will now be summarized. Almost no scholars have followed Swete's conclusion that John was solely dependent upon the LXX.⁴¹ Swete noted examples of John's use of the LXX everywhere, and where Revelation's wording

³⁸ "Die Prophetenbücher und unter ihnen Ezechiel, der Focus unseres Beitrags, liefen in hebräischer Gestalt (durch hebräische Textüberlieferungen), auf griechisch (durch die LXX, deren Ez-Übersetzung damals schon eine Reihe von Generationen alt war) und evtl. auf aramäisch um (so gewiss kein erhaltenes Propheten-Targum bis auf die Zeitenwende zurückgeht). Sie konnten also in unterschiedlichen Sprachen rezipiert werden, und textgeschichtlich waren selbst innerhalb einer Sprache beträchtliche Veränderungen möglich" (Karrer, "Von der Apokalypse zu Ezechiel," 85).

³⁹ The existence of various Hebrew and Greek texts is beyond doubt. Moyise notes, "At the very least, we must posit a Hebrew Text A, the *Vorlage* behind the LXX, which was then revised (B') on the basis of a Hebrew Text B, which somehow became associated with Theodotion (possibly as a revision based on another Hebrew Text C)" ("The Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation" [Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1993], 196). There has been considerable discussion about whether John was aware of two different recensions of Ezek 37–39 (Vogelgesang, "The Interpretation of the Ezechiel," 64–66).

⁴⁰ Garrick Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, SNTSMS 168 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 93.

⁴¹ Swete, *Apocalypse*, clv–clvi; although see Karrer who argues that John was primarily dependent on the Greek text although he does not rule out the influence of Hebrew texts. He concludes, "Der Apk-Autor kannte das Ezechielbuch auf griechisch und mutmaßlich zusätzlich hebräisch. Die Kenntnis Ezechiels bei seinen Leserinnen und Lesern setzt er nur in geringerem Umfang voraus" ("Von der Apokalypse zu Ezechiel," 118).

diverged from the LXX, Swete attributed the differences to John's independent translation from the Hebrew or dependence on another (non-extant) version of the LXX.⁴² More have followed Charles's conclusion that John was primarily dependent upon a Hebrew text.⁴³ Charles's method involves comparing John's use to the LXX, and where there are departures or differences, he assumes John's use of the Hebrew (or Aramaic).⁴⁴ He concludes that John translates directly from the Hebrew text "though he was often influenced in his renderings by the LXX and another later Greek Version."⁴⁵ This "later Greek Version" Charles believed was a text that is later represented by Theodotion (Ur-Theodotion).⁴⁶ Moyise notes that the assumption behind Charles's argument is that if John had used the LXX, he would have followed it more closely, but is that assumption correct? Does John employ source material accurately and closely? Differences from the LXX may as likely point to John's creative use of the LXX than to proof John is exclusively following a Hebrew text.⁴⁷ Further, John's wording often departs from the Hebrew.⁴⁸ Moyise states that we do not have the criteria sufficient to distinguish confidently between the "loose" use of a Semitic source and the "influence" of the Septuagint.⁴⁹

Anticipated by Laughlin (1902), the majority view is that John made use of both the Hebrew and Greek. The majority view accepts that John used Greek texts to some extent but also insists he used the Hebrew text primarily.⁵⁰ An important study was produced by Albert Vanhoye in 1962 which focused on John's use of Ezekiel. He begins by analyzing eight texts

⁴² Ibid., cliv.

⁴³ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:lxvi–lxxxii; see also Thompson, *Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, 102–08; Ozanne, "Influence of the Text and Language," 191–92.

⁴⁴ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:lxvi.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 1:lxvi–lxvii.

⁴⁷ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 17.

⁴⁸ Beale, *Revelation*, 78.

⁴⁹ Moyise, "Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," 226–28.

⁵⁰ Laughlin, "Solecisms of the Apocalypse," 21–22; Beale, *Revelation*, 78; Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 17; Fekkes, *Isaiah and the Prophetic Traditions*, 17.

which supposedly indicate John's use of the LXX of Ezekiel.⁵¹ He concludes, "En résumé, il nous apparaît qu'aucun des indices invoqués en faveur d'une utilisation du texte grec d'Ézéchiel ne s'impose de façon incontestable."⁵² He then looks at three texts which he considers to be "citations exactes" (Rev 1:15; 10:10; 18:1) and four that he deems "citations presque exactes" (Rev 7:14; 11:11; 18:19, 21). He compares these texts to both the MT and LXX and concludes that in all seven texts, Revelation represents an independent use of the Hebrew text.⁵³

Vogelgesang largely agrees with Vanhoye's assessment that "the text-type of Ezekiel utilized by John was considerably closer to MT than LXX" and provides other passages overlooked by Vanhoye which suggest John's dependence on the MT.⁵⁴ In his unpublished dissertation, Leonhard Trudinger examines 44 texts and concludes that 30 agree with the MT against the LXX while 6 occurrences agree with the LXX against the MT; one agrees with the MT/LXX against the Targums; three agree with the Targums against the MT/LXX; four follow Targums against LXX but not decisively against MT; and one agrees with the Greek version of Symmachus. From this, Trudinger concludes that John primarily drew on the Hebrew text although he was familiar with many phrases from the Greek versions.⁵⁵

In Wei Lo's unpublished dissertation, he first examines how Ezekiel makes use of sources and compares Ezekiel's methodology of using sources to John's use of Ezekielian

⁵¹ Rev 1:13 (Ezek 9:11); 2:7 (Ezek 31:9); 6:8 (Ezek 5:12); 9:21 (Ezek 43:9); 10:9 (Ezek 2:8f); 11:11 (Ezek 37:5, 10); 11:13 (Ezek 38:19f); 22:1 (Ezek 47:1).

⁵² Vanhoye, "L'utilisation," 460.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 460–72; Vanhoye was followed by his students who subsequently reached similar conclusions of the priority of the Hebrew text without discounting the influence of the Greek: A. Lancellotti, "L'Antico Testamento nell'Apocalisse," *RivB* 14 (1966): 369–84; A. Gangemi, "L'utilizzazione del Deutero-Isaia nell'Apocalisse di Giovanni," *Euntes Docete* 27 (1974): 109–44; B. Marconcini, "L'utilizzazione del T.M. nelle citazioni Isaiane dell'Apocalisse," *RivB* 24 (1976): 113–36; G. Deiana, "Utilizzazione del libro di Geremia in alcuni brani dell'Apocalisse," *Lateranum* 48 (1982): 125–37; see also Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 36–38, 267–73.

⁵⁴ Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 20; He lists 10:9–10 (Ezek 3:14 MT) and 21:13 (Ezek 42:16–19 MT).

⁵⁵ Trudinger, "Text of the Old Testament," 175.

material. He explores four case studies: Ezek 26–28 in Rev 18; Ezek 38–39 in Rev 19–20; Ezek 40–48 in Rev 21; and Ezek 47 in Rev 22. In each section, he undertakes a comparison of John’s use of Ezekiel with the LXX and MT.⁵⁶ In most cases, Lo concludes John “verbally echoes its antecedent” and “the wordings of Revelation come closer to that of the MT rather than that of the LXX.”⁵⁷ In some cases, John appears to be giving an independent rendering of the Hebrew.

Moyise questions whether it is possible to distinguish between John’s familiarity with a Hebrew text on the one hand and “influence” from other Greek versions on the other.⁵⁸ He points out several texts where it appears that Revelation’s word order reflects more closely the Hebrew text.⁵⁹ He also points to a number of texts where John’s wording is very close to known Greek manuscripts.⁶⁰ However, even where John’s Greek text reflects a word order that is better explained by dependence on the Hebrew text, there are still obvious differences from the Hebrew. Moyise says this highlights John’s creative use of the OT rather than his direct dependence on one source.⁶¹ “On the available evidence, therefore, we conclude that John knew and used both Greek and Semitic sources but the question of whether he preferred one to the other must remain open.”⁶² However, in Moyise’s view, John’s use of Ezekiel seems the most likely candidate to argue that Revelation stands closer to the Hebrew text.

⁵⁶ Lo, “Ezekiel in Revelation,” 72–80; 107–18; 160–74; 201–07.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 79, 111.

⁵⁸ Moyise, “Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation,” 223–24; *Idem.*, “The Language of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse,” *JSNT* 76 (1999): 108–112.

⁵⁹ He cites Rev 10:10 (Ezek 3:3); 18:1 (Ezek 43:2b); 18:19 (Ezek 27:30); 7:14 (Ezek 37:3); 18:21 (Ezek 26:21); 19:11 (Isa 11:4) (“Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation,” 203–04).

⁶⁰ He cites Rev 1:7 and 1:12 (Dan 7:13 Theodotion); 1:14 (Dan 7:9 LXX); 2:7 (Gen 2:9 LXX); 2:23 (Ezek 33:27 LXX); 2:27 (Ps 2:9 LXX); 3:9 (Isa 43:4 LXX); 4:1 (Dan 2:45 Theodotion); 4:6 (Ezek 1:5 LXX); 7:14 (Gen 49:11 LXX); 12:2 (Isa 7:14; 26:17 LXX); 12:5 (Isa 66:7 LXX); 12:12 (Isa 49:13 LXX); 12:14 (Dan 7:25; 12:7 LXX); 13:5 (Dan 7:8 LXX); 17:14 (Dan 4:37 LXX); 17:16 (Isa 49:26 LXX); 20:9 (2 Kings 1:10 LXX); 20:11 (Dan 2:35 Theodotion); 21:1 (Isa 65:17 LXX) (“Use of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation,” 198–99).

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 228.

The publication of Allen's PhD thesis on John's use of Zechariah is impressive and convincing. Allen's study is exemplary in its attention to pluriformity of material textual culture. Allen analyzes seven unambiguous cases of John's use of Zechariah in order to determine the textual form of Zechariah in Revelation.⁶³ His draws extensively from textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint studies, and the textual history of the NT making this one of the most thorough studies on the topic to date. His overarching conclusion confirmed by multiple examples is that John "had access to numerous forms of Zechariah, and the evidence suggests that he drew material from Hebrew Zechariah traditions *and* exegetical traditions linked to Zechariah encoded in Greek."⁶⁴ Again, he says:

John was aware of *both* the wording of Greek traditions that that [*sic*] stand within the proto-MT stream *and* Hebrew scriptural manuscripts themselves. In some instances (e.g. the horse visions in Rev 6,1–8), the wording of John's allusion only makes sense if he had direct access to a Hebrew textual tradition since no Greek traditions exist that correspond to John's presentation of colour lexemes.⁶⁵

Based on numerous studies, it is impossible to say with a high degree of certainty which version (Hebrew or Greek) John knew and used in every instance of allusion. Because John never quotes directly from the Hebrew Bible but produces his own creative amalgamation of the texts, it is often difficult to determine the source of his text with precision. The majority of scholars have maintained that John primarily drew upon the Hebrew text while also being influenced by the Greek text (or Greek exegetical traditions) in some fashion⁶⁶; however, Moyise's critique of the difficulty of distinguishing between creative use of a Hebrew text and

⁶³ Allen studies Rev. 1:7 (Zech 12:10); 5:5b (Zech 4:10); 6:1–8 (Zech 1:8; 6:1–5); 11:2 (Zech 12:3); 11:4 (Zech 4:14); 19:11–16 (Zech 1:8; 6:1–6); 19–22 (Zech 14:7–11) (*Revelation*, 112–64).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 255; see also 256–260.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 108.

⁶⁶ Characteristic is Bøe's conclusion on John's use of the Gog and Magog material from Ezekiel: "It has also been clear that John takes the Gog and Magog material directly from Ezekiel, most probably in Hebrew, but possibly with an acquaintance with the Greek form known to us as the LXX" (Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38–39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19,17–21 and 20,7–10*, WUNT 135 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001], 346).

the “influence” of Greek texts is advisable. Perhaps the most that can be said with confidence is that John knew and used both Hebrew and Greek sources.⁶⁷ *Pace* Swete, John had access to Hebrew texts of Scripture. He also shows some awareness either of literary traditions preserved in Greek sources or knowledge of Greek translations. This conclusion fits the bilingual character of the book (cf. 9:11; 16:16) due to the author’s probable background in Palestinian Judaism.

Criterion 2: Significant Similarities

This criterion focuses on significant similarities which exist between Revelation and Ezekiel at the level of theme and content, details and actions, organizational and conceptual structures, and verbal and stylistic similarities. This selective and yet substantial investigation is essential for several reasons. First, it demonstrates John’s familiarity with Ezekiel’s text and his identification with Ezekiel’s prophetic task and text. Second, embedded within the larger argument of this section, I demonstrate that Ezek 1 played a significant role in the shaping of Revelation and in John’s own prophetic self-conception. I demonstrate that John used Ezekiel’s *merkabah* vision comprehensively. Third, the investigation of the structural influence of Ezekiel on Revelation furthers the notion that Ezekiel played the central and exemplary role in John’s prophetic work. Finally, these observations lead to the crux of my thesis—the unusual style of Ezekiel’s inaugural vision impacted John’s own prophetic style.

a. Themes and Content

Certain features of John’s Revelation are undoubtedly inspired by Ezekiel. This section will explore some themes, content, and motifs that are motivated primarily by Ezekiel. Given the extent of Ezekiel’s influence on Revelation, this investigation will necessarily be selective and

⁶⁷ Although Karrer argues for the primacy of the LXX for John’s use of Ezekiel, he acknowledges that John also was likely influenced by Hebrew texts (“Von der Apokalypse zu Ezechiel,” 101, 110, 118).

cursory. The following list is not exhaustive but includes motifs that have a high probability of direct dependence on Ezekiel.

a.1 Throne Vision (Rev. 4–5)

Ezekiel’s throne room vision is the basis for John’s own vision in chs. 4–5.⁶⁸ There are clear indications that elements from Isaiah’s throne vision (Isa 6) have also been incorporated with Ezekiel in John’s vision. Additionally, the throne vision shares parallels with other texts in the apocalyptic tradition which would continue to develop within ongoing *merkabah* mysticism. In this scene, John sees an open door in heaven and hears an invitation to ascend to heaven in order that “what must happen after this” will be revealed to John.

Revelation	Ezekiel LXX	Ezekiel MT
Μετὰ ταῦτα εἶδον, καὶ ἰδοὺ θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἦν ἤκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλούσης μετ’ ἐμοῦ λέγων, Ἀνάβα ὧδε, καὶ δείξω σοι ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι μετὰ ταῦτα. εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι, καὶ ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος (4:1–2)	καὶ ἠνοίχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδον ὀράσεις θεοῦ, πέμπτη τοῦ μηνός (1:1–2)	וַאֲנִי בְתוֹרֵה־הַגּוֹלֵה עַל־נְהַר־כְּבָר נִפְתְּחוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וַאֲרָאָה מַרְאֹת אֱלֹהִים (1:1)

Like Ezekiel, John sees the door of heaven opened and is taken ἐν πνεύματι (cf. Rev 1:10; 17:3; 21:10) to the throne of God.⁶⁹ John casts his own experience as similar to that of Ezekiel who was taken by the Spirit in visions at successive stages of God’s revelation (cf. Ezek 8:1–4; 11:1–5). John first sees a throne in heaven (4:2), and then sees the One sitting on the throne (4:3) as

⁶⁸ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 43–51.

⁶⁹ The motif of the door of heaven occurs in other apocalyptic works (1 En. 14:8–10, 15; T. Levi 5; Ascen. Isa. 6:6; 3 Apoc. Bar. 2:1; 6:13; 11:2). Although 4:1 pictures a door standing open, the phrase in Rev 19:11 “I saw the heaven opened” compares closely with the description in Ezek 1:1.

well as twenty-four thrones and twenty-four elders sitting on them (4:4). Next, John describes the theophanic signs “coming out of the throne” (ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται; 4:5–6) which include lightning, thunder, and sounds of thunder. There are also seven lamps burning. Before the throne is something like a sea of glass as if it is crystal (ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνη ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ) and a rainbow was around the throne like emerald. “In the center and around the throne” (Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου), there are four living creatures (τέσσαρα ζῷα) which are “full of eyes in front and behind” (γέμοντα ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπίσθεν). These four living creatures were like a lion, a calf, a man, and an eagle (4:7–8).⁷⁰ Each of the living creatures has six wings and they are “full of eyes” (γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν) and they praise God day and night with the trisagion: “Ἄγιος ἅγιος ἅγιος κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ, ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος.” The chapter concludes with doxologies by the creatures and the twenty-four elders (4:8–11). In the continuing scene in ch. 5, a scroll is introduced which no one is allowed to open. The solution to the problem is that the Lamb is the only one able to open the seals of the scroll (5:6). The Lamb takes the scroll (5:7) before being worshipped by the creatures and the elders (5:8–10) as well as a multitude of angels (5:11–12) and finally by the entire cosmos (5:13).

There are numerous similarities with Ezekiel’s vision. In addition to the description of the open heaven and the ascent “in the Spirit”, the four living creatures (man, lion, ox, and eagle) are the same in both books. Like Ezekiel’s living creatures, the creatures in Revelation are “in the midst” of the throne (Ezek 1:5; Rev. 4:6).⁷¹ The description of a sea of glass like crystal supporting the throne brings up the image of the firmament supporting the throne which recalls

⁷⁰ The lack of other names for the “living creatures” in Rev 4 forms a sharp contrast with other apocalyptic literature, like the Angelic Liturgy at Qumran. The designation “living creatures” is relatively rare in other texts (Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 46).

⁷¹ The location of the living creatures “in the midst” of the throne is taken from Ezek 1:5.

Ezekiel's description (1:22).⁷² The appearance of precious stones like jasper, carnelian, and emerald recall Ezekiel's attempt to describe the throne room as having the appearance of precious stones (1:4; 26–27). The rainbow around the throne is similarly taken from the description in Ezek 1:28.⁷³ The thunder and lightning recall the description of the bright flashing fire in Ezek 1:4 which is translated in the LXX as fire "flashing as with lightning" (ἐξαστράπτων). The curious double notice that the creatures are "full of eyes" recalls Ezekiel's even more curious description of the wheels of the throne chariot as being "full of eyes" (1:18). "The most likely explanation of John's unusual detail in describing the many-eyed living creatures is his attempt to follow the Ezekielian description, since no known apocalyptic tradition does the same."⁷⁴

Despite the indebtedness of Revelation's throne scene to Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision, there are also a number of differences. First, whereas John has four separate living creatures, each with a different face, Ezekiel has four creatures, each having four faces. Second, the description in Revelation incorporates elements from Isaiah's vision and commissioning experience (Isa 6) of the winged seraphim with Ezekiel's living creatures.⁷⁵ Like Isaiah's seraphim, the creatures have six wings and worship with the trisagion (Isa 6:2; Rev 4:8). Third, while Ezekiel's throne is pictured as a portable chariot with wheels, John makes no mention of

⁷² The notion of the sea in the seven heavens does occur in other apocalyptic works (T. Levi 2:7; 2 En. 3:3), only in Rev 4:6 is it described as crystalline which shows direct dependence on Ezekiel (Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 50).

⁷³ This is strong evidence for the direct dependence on Ezekiel since the rainbow is not found in other apocalyptic traditions dependent on Ezek 1 (Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 49–50).

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁷⁵ "In Rev 4, Isa 6 has a prominent role to play and is freely combined with Ezek 1. What we have in this use of Isaiah in Revelation is evidence of expansions of Ezek 1, in which various elements are either changed or ignored, and where the very variety of usage indicates the versatility of the interpretative process even if the ultimate inspiration of the texts is not in doubt" (Rowland, "Things into Which Angels Long to Look: Approaching Mysticism from the Perspective of the New Testament and the Jewish Apocalypses," in *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones [Boston: Brill, 2009], 76).

wheels thus depicting the throne as stationary. Fourth, John depicts the creatures as “full of eyes” whereas Ezekiel says the wheels are “full of eyes.”⁷⁶ Fifth, John’s vision is shorter and omits significant details of Ezekiel’s vision such as the wheels. Another omission is the avoidance of the anthropomorphism in Ezek 1:26 that the one seated on the throne had the appearance of a human. Thus, John’s use of Ezekiel’s vision involves significant overlap while at the same time showing omissions, alterations, transferences, and even expansions from other texts such as Isa 6.⁷⁷

a.2 Sealing the Redeemed (Rev. 7:1–8)

Revelation 7:1–8 details how believers are sealed so that they are protected from the judgments in ch. 6.⁷⁸ The chapter begins with four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the winds of the earth (7:1). Then, John sees another angel ascending from the rising of the sun with “the seal of the living God” (7:2). The notice that the angel rises ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς ἡλίου indicates the east which is the place of paradise.⁷⁹ This other angel tells the four angels previously mentioned, “Do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have sealed the servants of our God on their foreheads” (7:3). Next, John hears the number of the sealed from every tribe of the sons of Israel—144,000 in number (7:4). Later, Rev 14:1–5 describes the characteristics of the sealed. Their identity is determined by their fealty to the Lamb. The sealed stand with the Lamb on Zion and sing a new song. The reward for the sealed is demonstrated in Rev 20:4 when the sealed co-reign with Christ. The sealing with a mark for the redeemed

⁷⁶ Although in Ezekiel 10, the creatures are said to be cherubim and full of eyes. The relationship between Ezek 1 and 10 will be discussed later.

⁷⁷ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 70.

⁷⁸ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 27–30.

⁷⁹ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 328.

contrasts with the mark of the beast which enabled participation in commercial transactions (Rev 13:17).

The background for this sealing imagery is Ezek 9:4–6. In Ezek 9, God commands an angelic figure “clothed in linen, who had a writing case on his waist” (9:3) to place a mark on the foreheads of the redeemed of the city who have not committed abominations (9:4). The purpose of the sealing with a mark was meant to protect the redeemed from judgment and destruction.⁸⁰ In Ezek 14:12–23, a remnant of Israel is able to escape the plagues sent on the people because of their righteousness. The imagery of Ezek 9 may be modeled on the marking of the door with blood at Passover.⁸¹ In Revelation, the marking protects believers from the bowl plagues, which are themselves modeled on the plagues of the Exodus. Immediately following the sealing section in Ezekiel, the Lord tells the angelic man clothed in linen to “Go within the wheelwork underneath the cherubim; fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city” (10:2). After the sealing section in Revelation, at the opening of the seventh seal, a golden censer appeared at the altar and “the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth” (8:5).

Kowalski suggests that Isa 44:5 stands in the background in addition to the dominance of the sealing imagery from Ezek 9.⁸² In Isaiah, the prophet speaks of writing the name of YHWH on the hand. The naming by YHWH coupled with the mark on the hand suggests that the imagery of Isa 44:5 has been joined with the marking and sealing of Ezek 9. Like the description of the living creatures, the dominant imagery comes from Ezekiel while also combined with

⁸⁰ There is debate about whether the seal protects the redeemed from hostile spiritual forces, physical harm, or spiritual harm. Like Ezek 14:12–23, the most compelling argument is the seal protects the remnant from physical harm caused simultaneously by God but executed through Babylonian hands.

⁸¹ Beale, *Revelation*, 409.

⁸² Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 342–43.

elements of the imagery from Isaiah. “Erst die Kombination beider Schriften miteinander gibt Aufschluss über das Verständnis der Besiegelung in der Offb.”⁸³

a.3 Measuring the Temple (Rev. 11:1–2)

In Rev 10, John receives a scroll from an angel and is instructed to eat the scroll and commissioned to “prophesy again about many peoples and nations and languages and kings” (Rev. 10:11). In 11:1–13 the contents of the scroll are revealed.⁸⁴ In the first scene in Rev 11:1–2 John is given a reed and instructed to measure the “the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.” The function of the measurement of the sanctuary containing the altar is most likely protective (cf. Zech 2:1–5).⁸⁵ He is then instructed not to measure the outer court of the temple since it will be given over to the Gentile nations to be trampled for 42 months. The instruction to eat the scroll and measure the temple constitute the only symbolic prophetic actions in the book.⁸⁶ The purpose of this symbolic act is to signify that the new prophetic commission in Rev 10:11 has officially begun. Bauckham locates this pattern in the prophetic commission of Ezekiel. Ezekiel receives his prophetic commission in ch. 3 which is followed by the first symbolic action in ch. 4. “By following this pattern, John indicates that in 11:1–2 he begins to divulge the contents of the scroll as prophecy.”⁸⁷ Kowalski notes, “In keinem anderen atl. Buch ist das Vermessen des Tempels als prophetische Zeichenhandlung—die einzige Zeichenhandlung in der Offb—mit der Bedeutung des Schutzes zu finden außer bei Ez.”⁸⁸

⁸³ Ibid., 343–44.

⁸⁴ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1999), 266.

⁸⁵ An important difference between Ezekiel’s and Zechariah’s commission to measure is that whereas Zechariah is instructed to measure the city of Jerusalem, Ezekiel is instructed to measure the temple. Thus, while the protective function of the measuring may be indicated if the background of Zechariah is in view, the primary imagery comes from Ezekiel.

⁸⁶ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 266.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 267.

⁸⁸ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 346.

The time period, configured two ways as 1,260 days and 42 months, links the measuring of the temple in 11:1–2 with the two witnesses in 11:3–13. This time period comes from Dan 12:7 which describes the period when the holy people of God will be destroyed. Dan 8:11–14 is added as a conceptual background to Rev 11:1–2 because it refers to the overthrow and trampling of the sanctuary. In the vision of Revelation, John understands the trampling of the sanctuary to refer to the persecution of believers in his own day. Bauckham says:

He is distinguishing the inner, hidden reality of the church as a kingdom of priests (cf. 5:10) who worship God in his presence from the outward experience of the church as it is exposed to persecution by the kingdom of the nations. The church will be kept safe in its hidden spiritual reality, while suffering persecution and martyrdom.⁸⁹

Thus, Daniel also serves as an important backdrop for Rev 11:1–2. Similar to previous findings, the overriding imagery comes from Ezekiel while being joined to images from other prophetic texts (in this case Zech 2:1–5; Dan 8:11–14; 12:7).

The motif of measuring the temple is picked up again in Rev 21:15 which will be explored in more detail later. There, an angel leads John through the heavenly Jerusalem. John is given a measuring stick to measure the city, its gates, and its wall. He measures the length, breadth, and height of the city (21:16) and its wall (21:17). Whereas the purpose of the measuring in 11:1–2 is to indicate the protection of God’s people during the persecution, the purpose of the measurement motif in Rev 21 is the veneration of the heavenly city. There, the measurement of the New Jerusalem is clearly taken from Ezek 40–48. Rev 11:1–13 is related to chs. 21–22 by their dependence on imagery from Ezekiel. The measurement in Rev 11 concerns the contentious relationship between believers and the nations, whereas the measuring in Rev 21 points to the heavenly Jerusalem which attracts the nations, and despite permanently open gates, the holy city has no fear of the opponents of God.

⁸⁹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 272.

a.4 Whore of Babylon (Rev. 17–19)

In Rev 17:1–6a, the vision introduces the whore of Babylon and then provides the interpretation in 17:6b–18. In the following chapter, judgement is announced against Babylon (18:1–3) while the people of God are called to “come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins” (18:4–8) followed by a lament over Babylon (18:9–24). Revelation 17 primarily draws upon Ezek 16 and 23.⁹⁰ In Ezek 16, Jerusalem is pictured as an unfaithful bride to YHWH. Samaria is her older sister and Sodom is her younger (16:46). This chapter is intimately connected to Ezek 23 where the faithfulness of YHWH and the unfaithfulness of Jerusalem is pictured as two sisters, Oholah (the older) and Oholibah (the younger). Oholah represents Samaria while Oholibah represents Jerusalem. There are at least four themes Rev 17–19 utilizes from Ezek 16: the theme of idolatry, the jewelry and clothing of the woman, God’s judgment on unfaithful women, and the list of commercial goods.⁹¹

Numerous verbal and conceptual links exist between Revelation’s and Ezekiel’s description of the harlots. The women are described as πόρνη (Rev 17:1, 5, 15–16; Ezek 16:30–31, 35; 23:43–44). Following Ezek 16:10, 13 (LXX), Rev 17:4; 18:16 uses περιβάλλω to describe the women’s apparel. Like Ezek 16:13, 17, the whore of Revelation wears gold (17:4; 18:16). There are several terms that link the description of the woman in Ezek 16 to the list of goods in Rev 18: θυμίαμα (Ezek 16:18; Rev 18:13), σεμίδαλις (Ezek 16:13; Rev 18:13), and ἔλαιον (Ezek 16:9, 13, 18, 19; Rev 18:13). Both women are said to have appeal to all the nations (ἔθνος; Ezek 16:14; 23:30; Rev 18:3, 23) and peoples (λαός; Ezek 23:24; Rev 17:15). Both women are described as queens (Ezek 16:13 MT; Rev 18:7). The sins of the two women make

⁹⁰ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 72.

⁹¹ These connections are made by Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 361–64.

use of the image of αἴμα (Ezek 16:36; 23:37, 45; Rev 17:6; 19:2) which is related to idolatry. Both harlots are judged for πορνεύω (Ezek 16:15; 23:19; Rev 17:2; 18:3, 9), πορνεία (Ezek 16:15; 22:25; 23:7–8, 11, 14, 17–19, 27, 29, 35; Rev 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3; 19:2), and φθείρω (Ezek 16:52; Rev 19:2). Both women are described as naked (γυμνός; Ezek 16:7, 22, 39; 23:29; Rev 17:16). Both texts describe their sins by the word ἁμαρτία (Ezek 16:51–52; 23:49; Rev 18:4). The judgment against both women is expressed with κρίμα (Ezek 23:24; Rev 17:1; 18:20), κρίνω (Ezek 23:36; Rev 18:8, 20; 19:2), and ἐκδικέω (Ezek 23:24, 45; Rev 19:2). Both women are given (δίδωμι) a cup (ποτήριον) from God as punishment (Ezek 23:31–32; Rev 16:19). Both women are said to be drunk (Ezek 23:33; Rev 17:6). The motive for God’s judgment in all three texts is θυμός (Ezek 16:38, 42; 23:25; Rev 16:19; 18:3) and ὀργή (Ezek 23:25; Rev 16:19). The judgment involves repayment expressed with (ἀπο)δίδωμι (Ezek 16:38, 43; 23:31, 49; Rev 16:19; 18:6–7). Kowalski summarizes:

Die drei Kapitel hängen eng zusammen: Johannes hat aus dem umfangreichen Material die zentralen Grundgedanken aufgegriffen, aber die zahlreichen Details des unzüchtigen Verhaltens der Frauen, die Ez beschreibt, weggelassen. Es ist eine Tendenz bei ihm zu erkennen, längere Textpassagen zusammenzufassen.⁹²

The economic critique of the harlot and the mourning over the fall of the city in Rev 18 is heavily influenced by Ezekiel’s description of the fall of Tyre in Ezek 26–28. One of the most noticeable similarities is the commodity lists (Ezek 27:12–24; Rev 18:12–13). Ezekiel’s list is more extensive with forty foreign products compared to John’s list of twenty-eight items. While some of the items in the two lists overlap, this would be expected since some commercial goods (e.g. flour, spices, building materials) would be expected in all ancient economies. John apparently was influenced by Ezekiel’s list of goods while making his own list specific to the

⁹² Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 368.

political and economic realities of the Roman Empire.⁹³ However, at least one of the items stands out—ψυχαῖς ἀνθρώπων (Ezek 27:13); ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων (Rev 18:13). Rev 18:16 further takes up six of the commodities listed in v. 12.

The description in Rev 18 is structured—there are three groups of mourners: kings of the earth (18:9), merchants (18:11, 15), and seafarers (18:19). Throughout the lament over Babylon, there are repeated elements. The double description of mourning (κλαίω) and lamenting (κόπτω; πενθέω) are repeated throughout (18:9, 11, 15, 19). All three descriptions of the mourners involves a double woe for Babylon (18:10, 16, 19). The time of judgement is mentioned three times as one hour (μῆ ὥρα; 18:10, 17, 19). There are numerous points of linguistic and conceptual contact between Rev 18 and Ezek 26–28 represented in the following chart:⁹⁴

Description	Ezek 26–28	Rev 18
The greatness of the city	ἡ πόλις ἡ ἐπαινεσθῆ (26:17)	ἡ πόλις ἡ μεγάλη (18:10, 16, 19, 21) ἡ πόλις ἡ ἰσχυρά (18:10)
Wealth of the city	πλουτίζω (27:33)	πλουτέω (18:3, 15, 19) πλοῦτος (18:17)
Trade	ἔμπορος (27:12, 15, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 23, 25, 36)	ἔμπορος (18:3, 11, 15, 23)
Seafaring	κυβερνήτης (27:8, 27, 28) πλοῖον (27:9, 25, 29) θάλασσα (26:3, 5, 12, 16; 27:3, 9, 25–27, 29, 33; 28:2, 8)	κυβερνήτης (18:17) πλοῖον (18:19) θάλασσα (18:17, 19, 21)
Downfall of the city	πίπτω (27:27, 34) εἰς μέσον τῆς θαλάσσης ἐμβαλεῖ (26:12)	πίπτω (18:2) ἔβαλεν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν (18:21)
Destruction by fire	καὶ ἐξάξω πῦρ ἐκ μέσου σου, τοῦτο καταφάγεται σε (28:18)	καὶ ἐν πυρὶ κατακαυθήσεται (18:8) τὸν καπνὸν τῆς πυρώσεως αὐτῆς (18:9, 18)

⁹³ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 351.

⁹⁴ Reproduced from Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 376–77. Previously, I concluded that John likely drew upon a Hebrew source of Ezekiel and was influenced by Greek exegetical traditions. In the charts of this chapter, I have chosen to represent the Greek translations where there is a close correspondence to the Hebrew. Because Revelation is written in Greek, it is helpful to see the verbal correspondences in Greek. This is not meant to suggest John is solely dependent on the Greek but that there are strong verbal resonances. Where a Hebrew construction is missing from the Septuagint, the Hebrew is included in the table.

Time and duration of downfall	ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ (26:18; 27:27)	μῆρας ὥρα (18:10, 17, 19)
Double description of lament	מָה טָרַחַם שְׂפָרַיִם מְרַבֵּי אֲרֵיכָהּ וְרַבֵּי (27:31 MT)	κλαίω– κόπτω; κλαίω– πενθέω (18:9, 11, 15, 19)
Lament	מָה טָרַחַם שְׂפָרַיִם מְרַבֵּי אֲרֵיכָהּ וְרַבֵּי (27:32 MT)	Τίς ὁμοία τῇ πόλει τῇ μεγάλη (18:18)
Ashes and Lament	καὶ ἀλαλάξουσιν ἐπὶ σὲ τῇ φωνῇ αὐτῶν καὶ κεκράζονται πικρὸν καὶ ἐπιθήσουσιν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν αὐτῶν γῆν καὶ σποδὸν ὑποστρώσονται (27:30)	καὶ ἔβαλον χοῦν ἐπὶ τὰς κεφαλὰς αὐτῶν καὶ ἔκραζον κλαίοντες καὶ πενθοῦντες (18:19)
Not found	יִשְׁפָּרְתֶּינָהּ (26:21 MT)	οὐ μὴ... εὐρήσουσιν (18:14) οὐ μὴ εὐρεθῆ (18:21, 22)
Fear	φοβέω (26:16)	φόβος (18:10, 15)
Silence	καὶ ἡ φωνὴ τῶν ψαλτηρίων σου οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἔτι (26:13)	καὶ φωνὴ κιθαρῶδων καὶ μουσικῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ σαλπιστῶν οὐ μὴ ἀκουσθῆ ἐν σοὶ ἔτι (18:22)
Kings of the earth	βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς (27:33; 28:17)	οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς (17:2, 18; 18:3, 9)
Nations	ἔθνος (26:2, 5, 7, 16; 27:33, 36; 28:7, 19, 25)	ἔθνος (18:3, 23)

This brief survey has shown that Rev 17 draws mainly on the description of the unfaithful bride Jerusalem in Ezek 16 and 23 while Rev 18 draws primarily on the judgment and lament for Tyre in Ezek 26–28.⁹⁵ The sections are linked by the description of the expensive adornments of the harlot (Rev 17:4; 18:16) which represent the commercial goods listed (18:12–13) and the wealth of Rome (18:17).

a.5 Gog and Magog Tradition (Rev. 16; 19–20)

Rev 19–20 makes extensive use of the Gog-Magog chapters from Ezek 38–39.⁹⁶ In Revelation, the eschatological battle is first mentioned in Rev 16:12–21 where the sixth bowl of wrath is poured out. The dragon, the beast, and the false prophet go out like frogs into the world

⁹⁵ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 30–34.

⁹⁶ Bøe, *Gog and Magog*; Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 34–36.

to gather all the kings of the earth for battle on the great day of God the Almighty (16:13–14). The enemies of God are assembled at Harmageddon (16:16). The next reference to the eschatological battle is described in 19:11–21. In this vision, the heavens open and Christ appears pictured as a warrior on a white horse to judge (κρίνει) and make war (πολεμεῖ; 19:11). His eyes are a flame of fire and he has many diadems on his head (19:12). He is clothed in a robe dipped with blood and called the Word of God (19:13). He is accompanied by the armies of heaven clothed in fine white linen following on horses (19:14). Judgement is described in a number of metaphors: sword coming from his mouth, rod of iron for ruling, and treading the wine press of God's wrath (19:15).

Next, John sees an angel crying out to birds in the sky to assemble for the great supper of God which includes eating the flesh of the kings, commanders, mighty men, horses, and all who ride on the horses (19:17–18). Before this supper happens, the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies assemble to make war on Christ and his army (19:19). Both the beast and the false prophet are seized and thrown into the lake of fire (19:20). The rest of the enemy armies are slain with the sword from Christ's mouth and all the birds feast on their flesh (19:21). Following the first eschatological battle, the dragon is locked in the abyss for 1,000 years so that he will not deceive the nations any longer (20:1–3). After the millennium, the dragon will be released for a short time (20:3). Next, John sees the martyrs and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image, come to life in the first resurrection and reign with Christ as priests for the millennium (20:4–6). The dragon is released from the abyss (20:7) and immediately begins to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for the war (20:8). The enemy army gathers in the plain around the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire comes down from heaven and devours them (20:9). The devil who had deceived them was

thrown into the lake of fire where both the beast and false prophet were tormented day and night (20:10).

There are two motifs in these sections which are based mainly on Ezek 38–39: the supper of the birds and the battle imagery. There are numerous points of linguistic and conceptual contact with Ezek 39 regarding the supper of the birds represented in the following chart.⁹⁷

Description	Ezek 39	Rev 19–20
The meal	39:17, 19	19:9, 17
The Lord initiates the meal	39:17, 20	19,17
The invitation	Συνάχθητε καὶ ἔρχεσθε, συνάχθητε ἀπὸ πάντων τῶν περικύκλω ἐπὶ τὴν θυσίαν μου (39:17)	Δεῦτε συνάχθητε εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τὸ μέγα τοῦ θεοῦ (19:17)
The invited	παντὶ ὀρνέῳ πετεινῷ καὶ πρὸς πάντα τὰ θηρία τοῦ πεδίου (39:17)	πᾶσιν τοῖς ὀρνέοις τοῖς πετομένοις ἐν μεσουρανήματι (19:17) πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα (19:21)
Eating and drinking	καταβιβρώσκω (39:4) ἐσθίω (39:17, 18, 19) πίνω (39:17, 18, 19) ἐμπίμπλημι ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης μου (39:20)	χορτάζω (19:21) ἐσθίω (19:18)
The food	39:17, 18, 20	19:18, 21

Differences exist between the two meals. While Ezekiel speaks of a sacrifice (θυσία), Revelation announces a meal (δεῖπνον). In both cases, the meal is initiated by God, even though in Revelation the angel announces the meal on behalf of God. While both texts do invite all the birds of the air, the invitation in Ezekiel is also extended to all the animals in the field. Ezekiel uses a different term (κρέας) for the meat consumed than Revelation (σάρξ). Ezekiel mentions the consumption of blood at the meal which is omitted in Revelation most likely since this imagery has already been employed for the harlot drunk on the blood of the saints (17:6).⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Reproduced from Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 394–95; Words and phrases will be provided that share close verbal correspondence.

⁹⁸ Kowalski also suggests the imagery may have been omitted to avoid eucharistic connections to flesh and blood (*Die Rezeption*, 396).

Despite these differences, the similarities of the core details are striking. Both texts involve birds feasting on the flesh of the opponents of God in judgment, both horse and rider. As seen in earlier motifs, the material from Ezekiel is abbreviated in Revelation.

Numerous points of linguistic and conceptual images connect Ezek 38–39 to Rev 19–20 (anticipated in Rev 16) regarding the battle demonstrated in the following chart:⁹⁹

Description	Ezek 38–39	Rev 16, 19–20
Day of judgment	ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ ἐκείνῃ (38:10, 14, 18, 19; 39:11) ἡ ἡμέρα (39:13) ἀπὸ τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης (39:22) ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (38:16) ἡ ἡμέρα (39:8)	τὸν πόλεμον τῆς ἡμέρας τῆς μεγάλης τοῦ θεοῦ (16:14)
The battle description	πολεμιστής (39:20) ἀπορίπτω (38:11) προνομεῦσαι προνομὴν (38:12) σκῦλεύω (38:12, 13; 39:10) σκῦλον (38:12, 13) ἀγαγεῖν σε ἐπ’ αὐτούς (38:17) ἔλθη Γωγ ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν τοῦ Ἰσραηλ (38:18) καλέσω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν πᾶν φόβον (38:21) κρίνω (38:22) καταβάλλω (39:3) ἀπόλλυμι (39:3) πίπτω (39:4, 5, 23)	πολεμέω (19:11) πατάσσω (19:15) ποιμαίνω (19:15) πατέω (19:15) κρίνω (19:11)
Preparations for war	συνάγω (38:4, 7, 13, 15) έτοιμάζω (38:7, 8)	συνάγω (16:14, 16; 19:17, 19; 20:8) κυκλεύω (20:9)
Weapons and equipment	μάχαιρα (38:4, 11, 21; 39:23) περικεφαλαία (38:4) πελτη (38:4, 5; 39:9) τόξον (39:3, 9) τοξευμα (39:3, 9) ὄπλον (39:9) κοντός (39:9) ράβδος (39:9) λόγχη (39:9)	ῥομφαία (19:15) ράβδος (19:15)

⁹⁹ Reproduced from Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 394–95, 400–401.

Soldiers	ἵππους καὶ ἵππεῖς ἐνδεδυμένους θώρακας πάντας, συναγωγή πολλή (38:4) συνήγαγες συναγωγὴν σου (38:13) ἵππων πάντες, συναγωγή μεγάλη καὶ δύναμις πολλή (38:15) τὰ ἔθνη τὰ μετὰ σοῦ (39:4) πάντα ἄνδρα πολεμιστὴν (39:20)	ἵππος λευκὸς καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ἐπ’ αὐτὸν (19:11) στράτευμα (19:14, 19) ἵππων καὶ τῶν καθημένων ἐπ’ αὐτῶν καὶ σάρκας πάντων ἐλευθέρων τε καὶ δούλων καὶ μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων (19:18, 19) παρεμβολή (20:9)
God’s anger	ὁ θυμὸς μου (38:18) ὁ ζῆλός μου (38:19) ἐν πυρὶ τῆς ὀργῆς μου (38:19)	τοῦ θυμοῦ τῆς ὀργῆς τοῦ θεοῦ (19:15)
Great earthquake	ἔσται σεισμὸς μέγας ἐπὶ γῆς Ἰσραηλ (38:19)	ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς τηλικούτος σεισμὸς οὕτω μέγας (16:18)
Gog and Magog	Γωγ καὶ τὴν γῆν τοῦ Μαγωγ (38:2)	τὰ ἔθνη τὰ ἐν ταῖς τέσσαρσιν γωνίαις τῆς γῆς, τὸν Γὼγ καὶ Μαγὼγ (20:8)
Means of destruction for Gog and Magog	θανάτῳ καὶ αἵματι καὶ ὑετῷ κατακλύζοντι καὶ λίθοις χαλάζης, καὶ πῦρ καὶ θεῖον βρέξω ἐπ’ αὐτὸν καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας τοὺς μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐπ’ ἔθνη πολλὰ μετ’ αὐτοῦ (38:22) δοθήσονται εἰς πλήθη ὀρνέων, παντὶ πετεινῷ καὶ πᾶσι τοῖς θηρίοις τοῦ πεδίου δέδωκά σε καταβρωθῆναι (39:4) ἀποστελῶ πῦρ ἐπὶ Γωγ (39:6)	λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ θείου (19:20; 20:10) οἱ λοιποὶ ἀπεκτάνθησαν ἐν τῇ ρόμφαίᾳ (19:21) πάντα τὰ ὄρνεα ἐχορτάσθησαν ἐκ τῶν σαρκῶν αὐτῶν (19:21) κατέβη πῦρ ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ κατέφαγεν αὐτούς (20:9)

This brief comparison shows that the terminology for war is more extensive in the description of Ezekiel; however, this is consonant with the pattern of abbreviating source material demonstrated by John’s use of Ezekiel elsewhere. Both authors agree that the battle represents a judgment (Ezek 38:22; Rev 19:11). The main preparation for war in both texts is the gathering indicated with the verb *συνάγω*. Both of the weapons mentioned in Revelation (*ρόμφαία* and *ράβδος*) are mentioned in Ezekiel although Ezek LXX has a different word for sword (*μάχαιρα*) while Revelation omits many of the weapons mentioned in Ezekiel and only puts the weapons in

the hand of the warrior Christ. Both texts emphasize those involved in the battle are mounted on horses. Both Ezekiel and Revelation emphasize the θυμός and ὀργή of God. The destruction of Gog takes place in both texts through various plagues, fire, and finally, the enemies are eaten by birds (and wild animals in Ezekiel). In both cases, fire falls from heaven to destroy Gog and his followers (Ezek 38:32; Rev 20:9).

One of the most noticeable differences is the identity of Gog and Magog. In Ezekiel, Gog is the chief prince of Meschech and Tubal from the land of Magog (38:2). In Revelation, both Gog and Magog are people (20:8). While the Hebrew is clear that Gog is from the land of Magog, the LXX represents a tendency which also appears in later rabbinic works to see the two names as representing two people.¹⁰⁰ In Revelation, both Gog and Magog represent all the nations collectively. A second difference is that Ezekiel's vision is split into two scenarios in Revelation. The battle which results in the gorging of the birds on God's enemies occurs before the millennium (19:17–21), while the fire which consumes Gog and Magog occurs after the millennium (20:7–10).¹⁰¹ Finally, as seen previously, Revelation's account of the gorging of the birds and the destruction of Gog and Magog with fire, although inspired by Ezek 38–39, is abbreviated.

a.6 New Jerusalem (Rev. 21–22)

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Aqiba in b. 'Ed. 2.10; b. Ber. 7b; Targums (Exod 40:11; Num 11:26; Deut 32:39); Other Jewish texts list Magog as the ancestor of a people (Gen 10:2; 1 Chron 1:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.123). Other texts treat Gog and Magog as two nations (Sib. Or. 3.319, 512; 4Q523.5; 3 En. 45:5).

¹⁰¹ While this might indicate the two scenes represent the same battle twice, a more likely interpretation is to see the two battles as extensions of the same plotline (see Craig Koester, *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 38A [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015], 789). Another possible explanation is that the mss of Ezekiel known to John had a different chapter order. In MS967 and the Würzburg Codex, ch. 37 follows chs. 38–39 (Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 403–04).

One of the most striking intertextual connections is the description of New Jerusalem in Rev 21–22 which is patterned after the heavenly temple vision in Ezek 40–48.¹⁰² While Rev 21–22 contains allusions to other Scriptural texts (especially Isa 40–66 and Zech 14), it is significantly influenced by Ezekiel. Because Rev makes such significant use of Ezekiel, as Mathewson argues, “there is a certain linear progression evident in John’s use of Ezekiel which prepares the attentive reader for what is to come in the climactic chapters of Revelation. The reader of 21.1–22.5 is in a sense prepared for advance to look for connections with Ezek. 40–48.”¹⁰³ The similarities and differences are represented in the following chart:¹⁰⁴

Description	Ezek 40–48	Rev 21–22
Prophetic experience	Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ πέμπτῳ... καὶ ἤγαγέν με ἐν ὁράσει θεοῦ (40:1–2)	καὶ ἀπήνεγκέν με ἐν πνεύματι (21:10)
Visionary location	εἰς τὴν γῆν τοῦ Ἰσραηλ... καὶ ἔθηκέν με ἐπ’ ὄρους ὑψηλοῦ σφόδρα (40:2)	ἐπὶ ὄρος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν (21:10)
Visionary guide	ἰδοὺ ἀνὴρ, καὶ ἡ ὄρασις αὐτοῦ ἦν ὡσεὶ ὄρασις χαλκοῦ στίλβοντος, καὶ ἐν τῇ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἦν σπαρτίον οἰκοδόμων καὶ κάλαμος μέτρου (40:3)	Καὶ ἦλθεν εἰς ἐκ τῶν ἑπτὰ ἀγγέλων τῶν ἐχόντων τὰς ἑπτὰ φιάλας τῶν γεμόντων τῶν ἑπτὰ πληγῶν τῶν ἐσχάτων (21:9)
Description of the New Jerusalem	καὶ αἱ πύλαι τῆς πόλεως ἐπ’ ὀνόμασιν φυλῶν τοῦ Ἰσραηλ, πύλαι τρεῖς πρὸς βορρᾶν, πύλη Ρουβην μία καὶ πύλη Ἰουδα μία καὶ πύλη Λευι μία. καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀνατολὰς τετρακισχίλιοι καὶ πεντακόσιοι, καὶ πύλαι τρεῖς, πύλη Ἰωσηφ μία καὶ πύλη Βενιαμιν μία καὶ πύλη Δαν μία. καὶ τὰ πρὸς νότον τετρακισχίλιοι καὶ πεντακόσιοι μέτρον, καὶ πύλαι τρεῖς, πύλη Συμεων μία καὶ πύλη Ἰσσαχαρ μία καὶ πύλη Ζαβουλων μία. καὶ τὰ πρὸς θάλασσαν τετρακισχίλιοι καὶ πεντακόσιοι μέτρον, καὶ πύλαι τρεῖς,	ἔχουσα τεῖχος μέγα καὶ ὑψηλόν, ἔχουσα πυλῶνας δώδεκα καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς πυλῶσιν ἀγγέλους δώδεκα καὶ ὀνόματα ἐπιγεγραμμένα, ἃ ἐστὶν [τὰ ὀνόματα] τῶν δώδεκα φυλῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ· ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν πυλῶνες τρεῖς. (21:12–13)

¹⁰² Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 38–43.

¹⁰³ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 30–31.

¹⁰⁴ Reproduced from Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 408–13.

	πύλη Γαδ μία καὶ πύλη Ασηρ μία καὶ πύλη Νεφθαλιμ μία. (48:31–34)	
Wall of the city	τοιχος (40:13; 41:5–7, 9, 12, 17, 22; 43:8)	τειχος (21:1, 14, 15, 17–19)
Entrance to the city	<p>Negative: τοῦ εἰσαγαγεῖν ὑμᾶς υἱοὺς ἀλλογενεῖς ἀπεριτμήτους καρδία καὶ ἀπεριτμήτους σαρκὶ τοῦ γίνεσθαι ἐν τοῖς ἀγίοις μου, καὶ ἐβεβήλουν αὐτὰ ἐν τῷ προσφέρειν ὑμᾶς ἄρτους, στέαρ καὶ αἷμα, καὶ παρεβαίνετε τὴν διαθήκην μου ἐν πάσαις ταῖς ἀνομίαις ὑμῶν (44:7) Πᾶς υἱὸς ἀλλογενῆς ἀπερίτμητος καρδία καὶ ἀπερίτμητος σαρκὶ οὐκ εἰσελεύσεται εἰς τὰ ἁγία μου ἐν πᾶσιν υἱοῖς ἀλλογενῶν τῶν ὄντων ἐν μέσῳ οἴκου Ἰσραηλ (44:9)</p> <p>πορνεία (43:7, 9) εἰδωλον (44:12) Positive: διότι ὁ ἡγούμενος, οὗτος καθήσεται ἐν αὐτῇ τοῦ φαγεῖν ἄρτον ἐναντίον κυρίου, κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν αἰλαμ τῆς πύλης εἰσελεύσεται καὶ κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ ἐξελεύσεται. καὶ εἰσηγάγεν με κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς πύλης τῆς πρὸς βορρᾶν κατέναντι τοῦ οἴκου, καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ πλήρης δόξης ὁ οἶκος κυρίου, καὶ πίπτω ἐπὶ πρόσωπόν μου (44:3–4)</p>	<p>Negative: τοῖς δὲ δειλοῖς καὶ ἀπίστοις καὶ ἐβδελυγμένοις καὶ φονεῦσιν καὶ πόρνοις καὶ φαρμάκοις καὶ εἰδωλολάτραις καὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ψευδέσιν τὸ μέρος αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ λίμνῃ τῇ καιομένη πυρὶ καὶ θείῳ, ὃ ἐστὶν ὁ θάνατος ὁ δεύτερος. (21:8) καὶ οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτὴν πᾶν κοινὸν καὶ [ὁ] ποιῶν βδέλυγμα καὶ ψεῦδος εἰ μὴ οἱ γεγραμμένοι ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τῆς ζωῆς τοῦ ἁρνίου. (21:25) ἔξω οἱ κύνες καὶ οἱ φάρμακοι καὶ οἱ πόρνοι καὶ οἱ φονεῖς καὶ οἱ εἰδωλολάτραι καὶ πᾶς φιλῶν καὶ ποιῶν ψεῦδος (22:15) πόρνος (22:15) εἰδωλολάτραι (22,15) Positive: καὶ περιπατήσουσιν τὰ ἔθνη διὰ τοῦ φωτὸς αὐτῆς, καὶ οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς φέρουσιν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν εἰς αὐτήν, (21:24) καὶ οἴσουσιν τὴν δόξαν καὶ τὴν τιμὴν τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰς αὐτήν. (21:26)</p>
What is measured?	Temple (40:3–42; 41:1–20; 43:13–17)	Heavenly Jerusalem (21:15)
Measuring Instrument	σπαρτίον οἰκοδόμων καὶ κάλαμος μέτρου (40:3)	μέτρον κάλαμον χρυσοῦν (21:15)
Shape	Τετράγωνος (41:21; 43:16; 45:2; 48:20)	Τετράγωνος (21:16–17)
What is measured?	Wall (40:5); threshold of east gate (40:6); gate chambers (40:7); threshold of temple gate (40:7, 9); gate portico (40:9); gate pillars (40:10); width of gate from	City (21:15–16); gates (21:15); walls (21:15–17)

	multiple angles (40:11, 13, 19); north gate of the court (chambers, pillars, window, porch, palm decorations; 40:20–27)	
Glory of God's presence	καὶ ἰδοὺ δόξα θεοῦ Ἰσραὴλ ἦρχετο κατὰ τὴν ὁδὸν τῆς πύλης τῆς βλεπούσης πρὸς ἀνατολάς (43:2) καὶ ἰδοὺ πλήρης δόξης κυρίου ὁ οἶκος (43:5; 44:4) ἢ γῆ ἐξέλαμπεν ὡς φέγγος ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης κυκλόθεν. (43:2)	τὴν πόλιν τὴν ἁγίαν Ἰερουσαλήμ καταβαίνουσιν ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχουσιν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ φωστὴρ αὐτῆς ὁμοίος λίθῳ τιμιωτάτῳ (21:10–11) καὶ ἡ πόλις οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχει τοῦ ἡλίου οὐδὲ τῆς σελήνης ἵνα φαίνωσιν αὐτῇ, ἢ γὰρ δόξα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐφώτισεν αὐτήν, καὶ ὁ λύχνος αὐτῆς τὸ ἄρνιον. (21:23)
Water flowing from the temple	Source: ὔδωρ ἐξεπορεύετο ὑποκάτωθεν τοῦ αἰθρίου κατ' ἀνατολάς (47:1) Result: Healing (ὑγιάσει; 47:8–9) Life (ζήσεται; 47:9)	Source: ποταμὸν ὕδατος ζωῆς λαμπρὸν ὡς κρύσταλλον, ἐκπορευόμενον ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἄρνιου. (22:1) Result: Healing (θεραπείαν; 22:2) Life (ὕδατος ζωῆς; 22:1)
Vegetation and their purpose	ἐπὶ τοῦ χεῖλους τοῦ ποταμοῦ δένδρα πολλὰ σφόδρα ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν. (47:7) καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἀναβήσεται ἐπὶ τοῦ χεῖλους αὐτοῦ ἔνθεν καὶ ἔνθεν πᾶν ξύλον βρώσιμον οὐ μὴ παλαιωθῆ ἔπ' αὐτοῦ, οὐδὲ μὴ ἐκλίπη ὁ καρπὸς αὐτοῦ, τῆς καινότητος αὐτοῦ πρωτοβολήσει, διότι τὰ ὕδατα αὐτῶν ἐκ τῶν ἁγίων ταῦτα ἐκπορεύεται, καὶ ἔσται ὁ καρπὸς αὐτῶν εἰς βρῶσιν καὶ ἀνάβασιν αὐτῶν εἰς ὑγίαν (47:12)	ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ξύλον ζωῆς ποιοῦν καρποὺς δώδεκα, κατὰ μῆνα ἕκαστον ἀποδίδουν τὸν καρπὸν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ φύλλα τοῦ ξύλου εἰς θεραπείαν τῶν ἐθνῶν. (22:2)
12 Tribes and the New Jerusalem	Ezek 48:1–8, 23–28	καὶ ὀνόματα ἐπιγεγραμμένα, ἃ ἔστιν [τὰ ὀνόματα] τῶν δώδεκα φυλῶν υἱῶν Ἰσραὴλ. (21:12)
Cultic instructions for the temple	Ezek 43:18–27; 44:4–31; 45:13–46	Καὶ ναὸν οὐκ εἶδον ἐν αὐτῇ, ὁ γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἔστιν καὶ τὸ ἄρνιον. (21:22)
Land division	Ezek 45:1–12; 47:13–23; 48:1–29	

John's incorporation of Ezek 40–48 in Rev 21–22 reveals many similarities and differences. Both visions of the eschatological Jerusalem occur at the end of the prophetic works. The visions are both inspired by God (Ezek 40:1–4; Rev 21:10) on a high mountain (Ezek 40:2; Rev 21:10). While both visions center on Jerusalem, Ezekiel focuses on the earthly Jerusalem while Revelation focuses on the eschatological Jerusalem which comes down from heaven. Both John and Ezekiel are guided through the new Jerusalem although Ezekiel is guided by a man shining like bronze holding a measuring rod while John is guided by one of the angels who held one of the seven bowls (21:9) who later reaches for a measuring rod (21:15). In both visions, the city is described in great detail and exact dimensions are provided although Ezekiel's vision focuses on the temple while John's vision focuses on the city of Jerusalem since Revelation's new Jerusalem lacks a temple (21:22).¹⁰⁵ Both cities have twelve gates described according to their directional relation to the city (Ezek 48:31–34; Rev 21:12–13). Both visions provide the regulations, both negative and positive, imposed for entry into the eschatological city. Idolatry and *porneia* are forbidden in each city.

In both visions, the thing measured—the temple in Ezekiel and the new Jerusalem in Revelation—is described as a cube (Ezek 41:21; 43:16; 45:2; 48:20; Rev 21:16). In both cases, the new Jerusalem is linked closely to the presence of the glory of God. In Ezekiel, the glory of God enters through the east gate and then fills the city (43:2–5; 44:4) while John describes the city as being filled with the glory of God (21:11). Both Ezekiel and Revelation include a description of a life-giving stream while the description in Ezekiel is longer and more detailed. In Ezekiel, the life-giving stream flows from the temple while in Revelation, the river of life flows

¹⁰⁵ The “temple imagery from the Old Testament texts (Ezek. 40–48) has consistently been extended to the city itself, so that the sacred space is now co-extensive with the entire city, making a separate temple superfluous” (Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 219).

from the throne of God and the Lamb. This difference is explainable since, in Revelation, God and the Lamb are the temple (21:22). Both texts emphasize the healing and life-giving function of the stream (Ezek 47:7–12; Rev 22:1–2). In the two descriptions, the vegetation produced by the stream is emphasized—many trees and fruit trees are emphasized in Ezek 47:7 while John emphasizes the tree of life which harkens to the trees of the Edenic paradise (22:2). The trees in both accounts emphasize the production of fruit year round and the functional purposes of the leaves of the trees (Ezek 47:12; Rev 22:2). The twelve tribes are central to both accounts. In Ezekiel, the twelve tribes receive portions of the land (48:1–8) while in Revelation, the twelve gates of the heavenly Jerusalem bear the names of the twelve tribes (21:12).

Also, many elements in Rev 21–22 allude to other Scriptural texts in addition to Ezekiel. For example, the background of the twelve precious stones mentioned in Rev 21:19–20 is complex. Four of the stones are *hapax legomena* in the LXX. Seven of the stones are mentioned in Exod 28:15–20 which describes the priest’s garments and Exod 36:15–20 which describes the stones of the tabernacle. It is explicable that stones from both of these cultic contexts would describe the stones of the city wall since there is no temple in the new Jerusalem. Seven of the stones in Revelation occur in Ezek 28:13 in the lament over Tyre. Nevertheless, the list of stones in 21:19–20 shares the most in common with another ancient Jewish text, Tobit 13:16, which describes the newly built Jerusalem.¹⁰⁶

Conclusion to Criterion 2: Significant Similarities— a. Themes and Content

This brief survey summarizes what scholars have recognized as the significant use of Ezekiel in Revelation at the level of theme, content, and motif. This section explored six major areas of content which come primarily from Ezekiel: the throne vision (Rev 4–5), the sealing of

¹⁰⁶ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 424–26.

the redeemed (Rev 7:1–8), the command to measure the temple (Rev 11:1–2), the whore of Babylon (Rev 17–18), the Gog and Magog tradition (16, 19–10), and the new Jerusalem (Rev 21–22). While these sections involve significant similarities with the Ezekielian pre-text, they also display notable omissions and differences. Some omissions are due to the fact that Revelation’s scenes are significantly shorter. Other differences are often due to transformations due to theological emphases and the incorporation of elements from other biblical texts. Thus, the first category of significant similarities in theme and content in the imitation of one text by another is satisfied.

b. Details and Actions

Although other avenues might be explored, this section will focus on details and actions which demonstrate John’s significant identification with the prophetic experience of Ezekiel. I will survey John’s prophetic commissioning in chs. 1, 4–5, and 10.

b.1 John’s Prophetic Commissioning

The account of Ezekiel’s commission spans the first several chapters of the book. It extends from Ezek 1:1–3:21. Ezekiel’s vision begins with a temporal and geographical marker (1:1–2). One of the structure-forming devices used in the commissioning scene is the seven occurrences of אֶרְצָאֵל/אֶרְצָאֵל (MT)/εἰδὼν (LXX) in 1:1, 4, 15, 27 (bis), 28; 2:9.¹⁰⁷ Ezekiel sees the heavens opened where he is shown visions of God (מַרְאֵי אֱלֹהִים; ὁράσεις θεοῦ). The description of Ezekiel’s prophetic experience is attributed to the hand of the Lord which comes upon the prophet (cf. 1:3; 3:14, 22; 8:1; 40:1). The second instance of seeing occurs in 1:4 which begins

¹⁰⁷ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 308.

the description of YHWH's throne-chariot vision. The account proceeds from a description of the living creatures followed by descriptions of the wheels of the chariot, the firmament, and the throne. The vision culminates with a description of one "with the appearance of a man" seated on the throne (1:26). That this figure is the climax of the vision is indicated by the double use of *וַיֵּשֶׁב* / *וַיֵּשֶׁב* in 1:27. The vision ends in 1:28 with a summary statement (*מִרְאֵה דְּמִוּת כְּבוֹד יְהוָה*; *αὐτή ἡ ὄρασις ὁμοιώματος δόξης κυρίου*) followed by a description of Ezekiel's physical response to the vision. Ezekiel falls on his face (*וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פָּנָי*; *πίπτω ἐπὶ πρόσωπόν μου*) and immediately heard a voice speaking (*וַיִּשְׁמַע קוֹל מִדְּבָר*; *καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν λαλοῦντος*). The following section (2:1–8) contains the content of the Lord's instructions to Ezekiel to call the rebellious house of Israel to repentance. After falling on his face, Ezekiel is instructed to stand on his feet (2:1). This happens as a result of the spirit coming in order to lift Ezekiel up (2:2; *ἤλθεν ἐπ' ἐμὲ πνεῦμα*). In 2:1–2, the second structural marker of hearing is introduced (*ἤκουον*; *וַיִּשְׁמַע*). The structural marker of seeing is resumed at 2:9 where the prophet is given a scroll to eat. After seven days had passed from his initial commission, Ezekiel receives a second commission to be a watchman for the house of Israel (3:16). Immediately after the commissioning, Ezekiel begins his first sign act (3:22–27) followed by other sign acts in ch. 4.

Ezekiel's call narrative evinces a two-step commissioning. The first commission is to relay to the rebellious house of Israel the words of YHWH. The second part of his commission (3:16–21) consists of being the watchman of Israel and pointing out their guilt. The motif of Ezekiel's call as a watchman is resumed again in 33:1–9. Ezekiel's prophetic task was difficult since he was sent into a hostile situation. Israel is described as being rebellious (2:3, 5, 6, 7, 8; 3:9; *παραπικραίνω*; *מרד*); hard-faced children (2:4; *וְהַבָּנִים קָשִׁי פָּנִים*); hard hearted (2:4; *וְהָזְקִי-לֵב*; cf.

3:7 σκληροκάριδος); and having hard foreheads (3:7; קָשְׁיִימוֹת). They do not want to hear YHWH's message (3:7, 11). The commission assumes that Ezekiel should expect opposition.

John's commission in Revelation is found in 1:9–20 following the epistolary-like greeting in 1:4–8. At the end of the commission scene, John is commanded to write what he sees and is shown seven lampstands which are the seven churches (1:19–20). This command is taken up in chs. 2–3 in the seven letters written to the seven churches. John introduces himself as a “brother” and “partner in the tribulation” while being on the island of Patmos (1:9). Next, John says that he was “in the Spirit on the Lord's day” (1:10). John sees a vision of the risen Christ which is described in detail in vv. 13–16. In response to the vision, John falls at the feet of the risen Lord (1:17; ἔπεσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ). The Lord lays his right hand on John and instructs him to “Fear not” (1:17). The courage gained from this experience leads to his writing to the seven churches in the following chapters. The second part of John's commissioning occurs in the heavenly throne room scene in chs. 4–5. There, the scroll is introduced (5:1–9), and is not taken up again until chs. 10–11 where the scroll is consumed and the contents of the scroll are finally revealed.¹⁰⁸ Thus, John's commissioning is not relegated to the first few chapters as in Ezekiel but extends over the entire first half of the Revelation.

Ezekiel's commissioning includes two essential elements—an encounter between the prophet and God as well as a heavenly vision of God. These two elements are found in John's commissioning although they are separated between the encounter in 1:9–20 and the visions of chs. 4–5 and 10. Some similarities and differences between these two accounts are represented in the following chart:¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ The scroll will be discussed in more detail later.

¹⁰⁹ Reproduced from Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 318–21.

Description	Ezek 1–3	Rev 1:9–20; 4–5; 10
Visionary experience	καὶ ἦλθεν ἐπ’ ἐμὲ πνεῦμα καὶ ἀνέλαβέν με καὶ ἐξῆρέν με καὶ ἔστησέν με ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας μου, καὶ ἤκουον αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος πρὸς με (2:2) καὶ ἀνέλαβέν με πνεῦμα, καὶ ἤκουσα κατόπισθέν μου φωνὴν σεισμοῦ μεγάλου (3:12) καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα ἐξῆρέν με καὶ ἀνέλαβέν με (3:14) καὶ ἦλθεν ἐπ’ ἐμὲ πνεῦμα καὶ ἔστησέν με ἐπὶ πόδας μου, καὶ ἐλάλησεν πρὸς με καὶ εἶπέν μοι (3:24)	ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ καὶ ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος (1:10) εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι (4:2)
εἶδον	Seven occurrences: 1:1, 4, 15, 27 (bis), 28; 2:9	Seven occurrences: 1:12, 17; 4:1; 5:1, 2, 6, 11
Place of the vision	Καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ τριακοστῷ ἔτει ἐν τῷ τετάρτῳ μηνὶ πέμπτη τοῦ μηνὸς καὶ ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐν μέσῳ τῆς αἰχμαλωσίας ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Χοβαρ, καὶ ἠνοιχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδον ὀράσεις θεοῦ (1:1) καὶ εἰσῆλθον εἰς τὴν αἰχμαλωσίαν μετέωρος καὶ περιῆλθον τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Χοβαρ (3:15)	ἐγενόμην ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ (1:9) θύρα ἠνεωγμένη ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ (4:1)
First calling	καὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ ὁμοιώματος τοῦ θρόνου ὁμοίωμα ὡς εἶδος ἀνθρώπου ἄνωθεν (1:26)	ὅμοιον υἷόν ἀνθρώπου ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ περιεζωσμένον πρὸς τοῖς μαστοῖς ζώνην χρυσαῖν. (1:13)
	καὶ ἤκουον τὴν φωνὴν τῶν περυγῶν αὐτῶν ἐν τῷ πορεύεσθαι αὐτὰ ὡς φωνὴν ὕδατος πολλοῦ, (1:24)	καὶ ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν (1:15) ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος (1:10)
	καὶ πίπτω ἐπὶ πρόσωπόν μου καὶ ἤκουσα φωνὴν λαλοῦντος (1:28)	ἔπεσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡς νεκρός (1:17)
	μὴ φοβηθῆς αὐτούς (2:6) μὴ φοβηθῆς ἀπ’ αὐτῶν (3:9)	Μὴ φοβοῦ (1:17)
	Mission to Israel (2:3–11)	Mission to the seven churches (1:11, 19)
Second calling	κατάφαγε τὴν κεφαλίδα ταύτην (3:1)	ἀπῆλθα πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναί μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον. καὶ λέγει μοι, Λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό (10:9)

	τὸ στόμα σου φάγεται καὶ ἡ κοιλία σου πλησθήσεται τῆς κεφαλίδος ταύτης (3:3)	
	Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, σκοπὸν δέδωκά σε τῷ οἴκῳ Ἰσραηλ (3:17)	Δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς. (10:11)
Theophany sign	καὶ φέγγος τοῦ πυρός, καὶ ἐκ τοῦ πυρὸς ἐξεπορεύετο ἀστραπή (1:13)	καὶ ἐκ τοῦ θρόνου ἐκπορεύονται ἀστραπαὶ (4:5)
God's throne	ὡς ὄρασις λίθου σαπφείρου ὁμοίωμα θρόνου ἐπ' αὐτοῦ (1:26)	ἰδοὺ θρόνος ἔκειτο ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ τὸν θρόνον καθήμενος (4:2; cf. 4:3, 9, 10; 5:1, 7, 13)
	ὡς ὄρασις λίθου σαπφείρου ὁμοίωμα θρόνου ἐπ' αὐτοῦ (1:26) 28 ὡς ὄρασις τόξου, ὅταν ἦ ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὑετοῦ, οὕτως ἡ στάσις τοῦ φέγγους κυκλόθεν (1:28)	καὶ ὁ καθήμενος ὅμοιος ὀράσει λίθῳ ἰάσπιδι καὶ σαρδίῳ, καὶ ἴρις κυκλόθεν τοῦ θρόνου ὅμοιος ὀράσει σμαραγδίνῳ (4:3) καὶ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου ὡς θάλασσα ὑαλίνῃ ὁμοία κρυστάλλῳ. (4:6)
Heavenly beings	καὶ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ αὐτοῦ ὡς ὄρασις ἠλέκτρον ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ πυρὸς καὶ φέγγος ἐν αὐτῷ. καὶ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ ὡς ὁμοίωμα τεσσάρων ζώων (1:4–5)	Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῶα γέμοντα ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν (4:6)
	τεσσάρων ζώων (1:5)	τέσσαρα ζῶα (4:6)
Descriptions of the beings	καὶ ἐν τῷ μέσῳ ὡς ὁμοίωμα τεσσάρων ζώων, καὶ αὕτη ἡ ὄρασις αὐτῶν, ὁμοίωμα ἀνθρώπου ἐπ' αὐτοῖς, καὶ τέσσαρα πρόσωπα τῷ ἐνί, καὶ τέσσαρες πτέρυγες τῷ ἐνί. καὶ τὰ σκέλη αὐτῶν ὀρθά, καὶ πτερωτοὶ οἱ πόδες αὐτῶν, καὶ σπινθῆρες ὡς ἐξαστράπτων χαλκός, καὶ ἐλαφραὶ αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν. καὶ χεὶρ ἀνθρώπου ὑποκάτωθεν τῶν πτερυγῶν αὐτῶν ἐπὶ τὰ τέσσαρα μέρη αὐτῶν, καὶ τὰ πρόσωπα αὐτῶν τῶν τεσσάρων (1:5–8) καὶ ὁμοίωσις τῶν προσώπων αὐτῶν, πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπου καὶ πρόσωπον λέοντος ἐκ δεξιῶν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν καὶ πρόσωπον μόσχου ἐξ ἀριστερῶν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν καὶ πρόσωπον ἀετοῦ τοῖς τέσσαρσιν. καὶ αἱ πτέρυγες αὐτῶν	Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου τέσσαρα ζῶα γέμοντα ὀφθαλμῶν ἔμπροσθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν. καὶ τὸ ζῶον τὸ πρῶτον ὅμοιον λέοντι καὶ τὸ δεῦτερον ζῶον ὅμοιον μόσχῳ καὶ τὸ τρίτον ζῶον ἔχων τὸ πρόσωπον ὡς ἀνθρώπου καὶ τὸ τέταρτον ζῶον ὅμοιον ἀετῷ πετομένῳ. καὶ τὰ τέσσαρα ζῶα, ἐν καθ' ἓν αὐτῶν ἔχων ἀνά πτέρυγας ἕξ, κυκλόθεν καὶ ἔσωθεν γέμουσιν ὀφθαλμῶν (4:6–8)

	ἐκτεταμέναι ἄνωθεν τοῖς τέσσαρσιν, ἑκατέρω δύο συνεζευγμένοι πρὸς ἀλλήλας, καὶ δύο ἐπεκάλυπτον ἐπάνω τοῦ σώματος αὐτῶν (1:10–11)	
Purpose of the beings	πορεύω/ πορεύομαι (1:9, 12, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24)	καὶ ἀνάπαυσιν οὐκ ἔχουσιν ἡμέρας καὶ νυκτὸς λέγοντες (4:8)
Consuming the scroll	καὶ σύ, υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, ἄκουε τοῦ λαλοῦντος πρὸς σέ, μὴ γίνου παραπικραίνων καθὼς ὁ οἶκος ὁ παραπικραίνων, χάνε τὸ στόμα σου καὶ φάγε ἃ ἐγὼ δίδωμί σοι. καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοὺ χεὶρ ἐκτεταμένη πρὸς με, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ κεφαλὴς βιβλίου, καὶ ἀνείλησεν αὐτὴν ἐνώπιον ἐμοῦ, καὶ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα ἦν τὰ ὀπισθεν καὶ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν, καὶ ἐγγράπτο εἰς αὐτὴν θρῆνος καὶ μέλος καὶ οὐαί. καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, κατάφαγε τὴν κεφαλίδα ταύτην καὶ πορεύθητι καὶ λάλησον τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ. καὶ διήνοιξα τὸ στόμα μου, καὶ ἐψώμισέν με τὴν κεφαλίδα. καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς με Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, τὸ στόμα σου φάγεται, καὶ ἡ κοιλία σου πλησθήσεται τῆς κεφαλίδος ταύτης τῆς δεδομένης εἰς σέ. καὶ ἔφαγον αὐτὴν, καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκάζον. (2:8–3:3)	Καὶ εἶδον ἐπὶ τὴν δεξιὰν τοῦ καθημένου ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου βιβλίον γεγραμμένον ἔσωθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν κατεσφραγισμένον σφραγῖσιν ἑπτὰ. (5:1) Καὶ ἡ φωνὴ ἦν ἤκουσα ἐκ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ πάλιν λαλοῦσαν μετ’ ἐμοῦ καὶ λέγουσαν, Ὑπάγε λάβε τὸ βιβλίον τὸ ἠνεωγμένον ἐν τῇ χειρὶ τοῦ ἀγγέλου τοῦ ἐστῶτος ἐπὶ τῆς θαλάσσης καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς. καὶ ἀπῆλθα πρὸς τὸν ἄγγελον λέγων αὐτῷ δοῦναί μοι τὸ βιβλαρίδιον. καὶ λέγει μοι, Λάβε καὶ κατάφαγε αὐτό, καὶ πικρανεῖ σου τὴν κοιλίαν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ στόματί σου ἔσται γλυκὺ ὡς μέλι. καὶ ἔλαβον τὸ βιβλαρίδιον ἐκ τῆς χειρὸς τοῦ ἀγγέλου καὶ κατέφαγον αὐτό, καὶ ἦν ἐν τῷ στόματί μου ὡς μέλι γλυκὺ καὶ ὅτε ἔφαγον αὐτό, ἐπικράνθη ἡ κοιλία μου. καὶ λέγουσίν μοι, Δεῖ σε πάλιν προφητεῦσαι ἐπὶ λαοῖς καὶ ἔθνεσιν καὶ γλώσσαις καὶ βασιλεῦσιν πολλοῖς. (10:8–10)

The linguistic, conceptual, and structural similarities indicate that John is presenting his own prophetic experience as similar to that of Ezekiel. John describes himself as a prophet (22:9) and his work as a “prophecy” (1:3; 19:10; 22:7, 10, 18, 19). Further, he couches his own commissioning as a call to prophesy (10:11; 22:6). The important vision of the two witnesses serves as the visionary exhortation for the churches in Asia Minor to engage in prophetic

ministry, for which John sees himself as exemplary (cf. 22:9).¹¹⁰ John’s opponents in the seven churches are described as false prophets (2:20; cf. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10). John applies names to two of the false prophets in the churches taken from biblical texts—Jezebel and Balaam (2:14, 20).¹¹¹ Central to John’s commissioning is the command to write (1:11, 19; 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). On one occasion, John is instructed not to write down his vision in order to keep secret what the thunders have spoken (10:4). John’s reaction to the visions is characterized by shock (17:6; θαυμάζω), weeping (5:4; κλαίω), and three times, John falls down at the sight of the vision (1:17; 19:10; 22:8). While many features of John’s commission narrative in 1:9–20 are influenced by Ezekiel, the actual vision of the risen Lord is influenced by texts in Daniel and other common apocalyptic traditions.¹¹²

Similarly, Ezekiel’s commissioning refers to him as prophet (2:5; cf. 11:13; 14:4, 7; 33:33), and he is instructed to prophesy (4:7; cf. 37:7, 10).¹¹³ Ezekiel also deals with false

¹¹⁰ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 157.

¹¹¹ Kowalski notes that Jezebel is only described as a queen in books of Kings in which she appears (cf. 1 Kings 16:31; 18:4, 13, 19; 19:1f; 20:5, 7, 11, 14f, 23, 25; 22:53; 2 Kings 9:7, 10, 22, 30, 36f). While she does give orders to kill the prophets of YHWH (1 Kings 18:4), she herself is never referred to as a prophet. Jezebel’s sins could be summarized as whoring and sorceries (2 Kings 9:22). While there are women who serve as prophets in the Old Testament, and there are critiques against false prophets, the only prophetic critique against female false prophets occurs in Ezek 13:17. Kowalski concludes, “Man wird daher davon ausgehen können, dass Johannes den Namen der dem Baalskult anhängenden Königin Isebel zusammen mit der ezechielischen Kritik an selbsternannten Prophetinnen miteinander verwoben hat. Trotz fehlender wörtlicher übereinstimmungen wird man Ez 13,17 als Bezugsvers zu Offb 2,20 ansehen können (zusammen mit den Stellen aus den beiden Königsbüchern, die von Isebel und ihrem Tun sprechen)“ (*Die Rezeption*, 433–34).

¹¹² “Though the primary inspiration for John’s inaugural vision is Daniel’s vision by the River Tigris (Daniel 10), albeit woven together with the throne-vision of Daniel 7, there are a number of verbal echoes of Ezekiel’s own throne-vision which influenced Daniel no less than Revelation. These include the loud voice like a trumpet (Rev 1:10; cf. Ezek 3:12), the voice like many waters (Rev 1:15= Ezek 1:24; 43:2), and the seer’s reaction to the vision (Rev 1:17= Ezek 1:28; cf. Dan 10:9–10). There is a further verbal allusion to the LXX of Ezek 9:2 in the clothing of the heavenly being (ποδήρη, Rev 1:13). Moreover, as Christopher Rowland has shown, Daniel’s ‘man clothes in linen’ (Dan 10:5–6) is probably itself modelled on the glorious human figure of Ezek 1:26–28. Hence the author of Revelation may well have read Daniel 10 as a further elaboration and clarification of what Ezekiel saw” (Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 156).

¹¹³ cf. 6:2; 11:4; 13:2, 17; 21:2, 7, 14, 19, 33; 25:2; 28:21; 29:2; 30:2; 34:2; 35:2; 36:1, 3, 6; 37:4, 9, 12; 38:2, 14; 39:1.

prophets (7:26; 13:2–4, 9, 16–17; 14:9–10; 22:28; 38:17).¹¹⁴ Ezekiel is primarily instructed in his commissioning to speak (2:4–7; 3:4–11, 16–21) although the theme of writing does show up in the commissioning scene with the scroll, written on the front and back, which is given to Ezekiel (2:10).¹¹⁵ Similar to John, Ezekiel’s reaction to visions involves falling down on his face (1:28; 3:23; 9:8; 11:13; 43:3; 44:4).

Boxall notes that John apparently also understands his prophetic ministry as related to that of Elijah.¹¹⁶ By describing his prophetic battle with the prophetess Jezebel, John aligns his ministry with Elijah’s. Further, the two witnesses of ch. 11 have generally been associated with Elijah and Moses. Like Elijah, they have the ability to “shut up the sky” to prevent rainfall (1 Kgs 17:1). They also have the Mosaic ability to turn water to blood and strike the earth with plagues (Ex 7:17). Elijah was able to call down fire from heaven to consume Ahab’s soldiers (2 Kgs 1), and the witnesses are able to bring forth fire from their mouths to consume their enemies (Rev 11:5). However, Boxall contends that John’s identification of Elijah is related to inspiration from Ezekiel since it is an oft noted that Ezekiel’s own self-perception is influenced by the Elijah-Elisha cycle.¹¹⁷ Ruiz had already concluded that “John clothes himself with the same prophetic mantle which Ezekiel took up from Elijah.”¹¹⁸ Further, Boxall notes, echoes of the Mosaic tradition are present in Ezekiel and continued to be associated with Ezekiel in succeeding generations.¹¹⁹

Other factors point to John’s identification with Ezekiel’s prophetic experience. It can be argued that the impulse to provide an autobiographical introduction in Rev 1 was inspired by the

¹¹⁴ Contemporary prophets to Ezekiel also deal with false prophecy (cf. Zech 13:2; Jer 6:12; 33:7f; 11:16; 34:9; 35:1; 36:1, 8).

¹¹⁵ Ezekiel is instructed to write later (cf. 24:2; 37:16, 20; 43:11).

¹¹⁶ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 158.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 302; cited in Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 158.

¹¹⁹ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 158.

beginning of Ezekiel’s work (Ezek 1:1–4).¹²⁰ Both prophets are located in exile (Rev 1:9; Ezek 1:1).¹²¹ John’s description of being a sharer in the θλίψις (1:9) characterizes his stay on Patmos as one of adversity. Additionally, John’s need to write rather than deliver his prophetic message in person suggests an involuntary separation from the churches of Asia Minor, pointing to John’s depiction of his circumstances in terms of exile.¹²² As John found himself in his own exile on Patmos, Boxall says it would have been natural for a Jew to turn for inspiration to the figures in Israel’s past who prophesied during Israel’s exile— especially, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel. One of the keys to understanding John’s exhortation to the believers in Asia is the theme of exile. By picturing the Roman Empire as Israel’s foe, Babylon, John reminds the audiences that they are still in exile (cf. 1 Pet 1:1, 17). They are not waiting for a return to an earthly Jerusalem, but they are awaiting the arrival of the heavenly one. His exhortation is to come out of Babylon (Rev 18:4) as a way of preparing for entrance into the new Jerusalem. Thus, the theme of exile is present in the opening verses and in the final chapters. The arrival of the heavenly New Jerusalem proclaims the end of exile, and all along the way, “John’s exiled predecessor Ezekiel has played no little part.”¹²³

They both begin their accounts with a temporal identification (Ezek 1:1; ἐν τῷ τριακοστῷ ἔτει...; Rev 1:10; ἐν τῇ κυριακῇ ἡμέρᾳ) as well as a geographical marker involving their location near water (Ezek 1:1; ἐπὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ τοῦ Χοβαρ; Rev 1:9; ἐν τῇ νήσῳ τῇ καλουμένῃ Πάτμῳ). Both texts emphasize the vision is given from God by pointing to the revelation from God’s Spirit (Rev 1:10; 4:2; Ezek 1:3). In Ezekiel, the phrases “the Spirit lifted me up” and “the hand of

¹²⁰ Ibid., 157.

¹²¹ Although John does not use the term “exile,” the motif of exile is present in Revelation (see Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 160).

¹²² Ibid., 161.

¹²³ Ibid.

the Lord was upon me” frequently occur at the beginning of visions (1:3; 3:12, 14, 22; 8:3; 11:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). Similarly, John employs the phrase “I was in the Spirit” to introduce new sections (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10).¹²⁴ When John describes being “ἐν πνεύματι” in 1:10, he likely has Ezekiel in mind since the next occurrence of the term in 4:2 (εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι) begins his description of his own *merkabah* vision modelled on Ezek 1. In Rev 21:10, John is transported “ἐν πνεύματι” to a high mountain which is an obvious allusion to Ezek 40:2.¹²⁵ Although scholars have pointed to general parallels between Isa 6 and Jer 1 as influences for John’s prophetic description, Boxall argues, “Ezekiel is by far the most likely influence on Revelation of the three.”¹²⁶ He provides the following chart:¹²⁷

	Rev 1:9–11	Ezek 1:1–4
‘I was’	1:9 Ἰωάννης... ἐγενόμην	1:1 LXX ἐγὼ ἤμην ἐν μέσῳ...
seer’s name	1:9	1:3
place of exile	1:9 Patmos	1:3 river Chebar
day of vision	1:10	1:1,2
seeing/hearing	1:10 (hear) 1:11 (see)	1:1,4 (see) [1:24 (hear)]
Word of God/Lord	1:9 τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ	1:3 λόγος κυρίου
spirit	1:10	1:4 (MT πῆλ; LXX πνεῦμα); cf. 1:20–21; 2:2

The prophets frequently employ the formula *Táde λέγει* (:הִנֵּה אֲנִי אֵלֶיךָ הֵבֶר). Outside of Revelation, this phrase occurs in the NT only at Acts 21:11. The phrase appears seven times to introduce each of the seven letters (2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). While this expression is used frequently in the prophetic corpus of Israel’s Scriptures, it appears most frequently in Ezekiel (126 occurrences).¹²⁸ While sign acts are more prominent in Ezekiel, the one sign act in

¹²⁴ This will be discussed later under organizational and conceptual structures. See Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 52–53.

¹²⁵ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 156.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 157.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 430.

Revelation is connected to the eating of the scroll followed by the instruction to measure the temple (10:8–11; 11:1–2), both of which are inspired by Ezekiel. Similar to the prophetic oracles against the nations in Ezekiel, John is instructed to prophesy about nations and kings (10:11). Two of the sins John is particularly interested in addressing are idolatry and sexual immorality (cf. 2:14, 20). These sins comprise the most commonly attributed sins to pagans in Jewish and Christian writings (cf. Rom 1:18–27; Acts 15:29). The critique of idolatry looms large in Ezekiel’s message.¹²⁹ Ezekiel also addresses sexual immorality proportionally more than the other prophetic texts.¹³⁰ While denunciation of idolatry and sexual immorality are also given by other prophets, the frequency given to these topics in Ezekiel might have made it natural for John to conceive of his own experience in similar fashion to Ezekiel’s.

One of the most striking examples of John’s identification with Ezekiel is the consumption of the scroll.¹³¹ The accounts of the scrolls in both books begins with the formula Καὶ εἶδον (Rev 5:1; Ezek 2:9). In both cases, the scroll is handed to the prophet by an outstretched hand (Rev 5:1; 10:2; Ezek 2:9). In Rev 5:1, the scroll is written on the front and the back (ἔσωθεν καὶ ὀπισθεν) which alludes to the scroll in Ezekiel’s commissioning which was written on front and back (2:8; ὀπισθεν καὶ τὰ ἔμπροσθεν). Unlike Ezekiel’s scroll, the scroll in Revelation is sealed with seven seals which only the Lamb can open (Rev 6:1–8:5).¹³² In both accounts, God communicates with the prophet through speaking (Rev 10:8–9, 11; Ezek 3:1, 3). In each case, the voice gives a double command to the prophet. Ezekiel is told to open his mouth and eat (2:8; χάνε τὸ στόμα σου καὶ φάγε). John is instructed to take it and eat (10:9; Λάβε καὶ

¹²⁹ cf. 6:4–6, 9, 13; 8:10; 14:3–7; 16:36; 18:6, 12, 15; 20:7–8, 16, 18, 24, 31, 39; 22:3–4, 7, 30, 37, 39; 30:13; 33:25; 36:18, 25; 37:23; 44:10, 12.

¹³⁰ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 431; cf. 6:9; 16:15, 16, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, 30, 31, 33–36, 39, 41; 20:30; 23:7–11, 14, 17–19, 27, 29, 30, 35, 43; 43:7, 9.

¹³¹ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 24–27.

¹³² A sealed scroll occurs in Dan 12:4 which is likely combined with the imagery taken from Ezekiel’s commissioning narrative.

κατάφαγε αὐτό). In Rev 10:2, 8–10, John is commanded to eat the scroll which parallels the instruction to Ezekiel in 2:8–3:3. In both accounts, a scroll is given to the prophet to eat and then prophesy. When the prophet consumes the scroll, it is sweet as honey in the mouth (Rev 10:10; μέλι γλυκὸν; Ezek 3:3; μέλι γλυκάζον). In Rev. 10:10, it is sweet in the mouth, but became bitter (πικραίνω) in the stomach. In Ezek 2:8, the prophet is instructed not to become bitter (παραπικραίνω), and the MT notes at Ezek 3:14, the prophet went out in a spirit of bitterness (יָצָא בְרוּחַ אֲמָרָה). Thus, a detail which seems to be an addition in Revelation’s description (the scroll becomes bitter in the stomach) becomes further proof of dependence on Ezekiel’s commissioning account. Both accounts mention the stomach (Ezek 3:3; Rev 10:9). The result of consuming the scroll in Revelation is a command to prophesy (10:10) which is the same purpose of Ezekiel’s eating of the scroll. Thus, a comparison reveals that the only detail of the account of the consummation of the scroll in Ezekiel which is not found in some form in Revelation is the mention of lamentation (θρήνος), mourning (μέλος), and woe (οὐαί) in Ezek 2:10.¹³³ The writing on the front and the back which occurs in Ezek 2:10, does not occur in the account in Rev 10 but earlier in the introduction of the scroll in 5:1. Thus, elements missing in the account in ch. 5 occur later in ch. 10 and vice versa so that almost every detail (with the exception of the lamenting) of Ezekiel’s consumption of the scroll is found in Revelation.

There are differences between the prophetic ministries of Ezekiel and John.¹³⁴ First, while John writes for a Jesus-believing audience in seven churches in the province of Asia Minor, Ezekiel prophesied only “to the house of Israel” (Ezek 3:1, 4). Second, while Ezekiel focuses on

¹³³ Although, mourning and woe occur elsewhere in surrounding contexts in the book (cf. 8:13; 9:12; 11:14).

¹³⁴ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 159.

God's judgment on the people of God, most of the judgments in John's Apocalypse are reserved for those outside the people of God.

Conclusion to Criterion 2: Significant Similarities— b. Details and Actions

This section has demonstrated that John's commissioning and prophetic self-conception as depicted in chs. 1, 4–5, and 10, is primarily influenced by Ezek 1:1–3:14. This influence extends to descriptions of details (cf. the throne scene in chs. 4–5) as well as prophetic actions (cf. falling down in fear in response to visions of God in ch. 1 and eating the scroll in ch. 10). These similarities of detail and actions point to John's prophetic self-conception. Although speaking of John's heavy dependence on Ezek 40–48 in Rev 21–22, Mathewson's comments are apropos for the present discussion: "the author's visionary experience is to be understood within the framework of Ezekiel's, cloaking himself with the prophetic aura of his visionary predecessor."¹³⁵ John's close identification with Ezekiel has the effect of strengthening his *ethos* with the Christian communities to which he writes. His words are also the great prophet Ezekiel's words which functions to legitimate his own visionary experience and prophetic ministry.¹³⁶ Moyise conjectures that these similarities point to the "obvious explanation" that John has assumed the 'persona' of Ezekiel. He is so familiar with Ezekiel's text that he has "absorbed the character and mind of the prophet."¹³⁷ In John's deployment of Ezekiel, Moyise detects a studied familiarity with the text of Ezekiel which has allowed John to take on the personality, character, and mind of the prophet. This is not surprising given the ideal trajectory of *imitatio* summarized by Fantham:

¹³⁵ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 221.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 230.

¹³⁷ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 78.

The self-conscious aspect of imitation—analysis, memorizing, paraphrasing—has to be followed for a time by the less self-conscious activities of the brain before the models will begin to act upon the literary personality of the new artist... While his words appear to be spontaneous in form and content, they will actually have absorbed the merits of his chosen models...¹³⁸

c. Organizational and Conceptual Structures

Several studies have confirmed that Ezekiel has significantly influenced the structure of Revelation, both at the level of smaller units and the macro-structure of the whole work. The impact of Ezekiel’s structure on Revelation can only be understood by the author’s knowledge of a written version of Ezekiel.¹³⁹ Alfred Wikenhauser (1932) and Karl Georg Kuhn (1964)¹⁴⁰ were two of the first to suggest that the order of events in Rev 20–21 is structured after Ezekiel 37–48. Wikenhauser called these chapters in Ezekiel the *Vorbild* for the final chapters of Revelation.¹⁴¹ Johan Lust built off these observations and provided the following chart:¹⁴²

Revelation	Ezekiel
First resurrection (20:4)	Revival of the Dry Bones (37:1–14)
Messianic Millennium (20:4–6)	Reunited Kingdom Governed by Messianic King David (37:15–28)
Final Battle vs. Gog & Magog (20:1–10)	Final Battle vs. Gog & Magog (38–39)
Second Resurrection (20:11–15)	—————
Descent of the Heavenly Jerusalem (21–22)	Vision of the New Temple and the New Jerusalem (40–48)

In articles that appeared in 1949 and 1952, Boismard offered the most thorough investigation of how Ezekiel impacted Revelation’s structure.¹⁴³ Boismard’s theory began with his observation of doublets in Revelation (e.g. the trumpets in chs. 8–9 and the bowls in ch. 16;

¹³⁸ Fantham, “Imitation and Decline,” 110–11.

¹³⁹ Karrer, “Von der Apokalypse zu Ezechiel,” 90.

¹⁴⁰ Karl Georg Kuhn, “Γὼγ καὶ Μαγῶγ,” *TDNT* 1: 789–91.

¹⁴¹ Alfred Wikenhauser, “Das Problem des tausendjährigen Reiches in der Johannes-Apokalypse,” *RQ* 40 (1932): 13.

¹⁴² Johan Lust, “The Order of the Final Events in Revelation and in Ezekiel,” in *L’Apocalypse johannique et l’apocalyptique dans le Nouveau Testament*, ed. Jan Lambrecht, BETL 53 (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1983), 179; A similar chart is provided by Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 30.

¹⁴³ M.-É. Boismard, “L’Apocalypse,” 307–41; Idem., “Notes sur L’Apocalypse,” *RB* 59 (1952): 161–81.

the 144,000 in chs. 7 and 14). After rejecting previous source theories, he put forth his own. He believed the final work to be a unified composition which thus prohibited any theory that posited the redaction of disparate sources. More likely, Boismard maintained, Revelation was the result of the same author joining together two texts which he himself had written.¹⁴⁴ He viewed Text I (Rev 4–9) and Text II (Rev 12–16) as a diptych which explained the doublets.¹⁴⁵ He then assigns the remaining chapters to one of the primitive texts. After dividing the text of Revelation into the two primitive texts, Boismard then postulates that Text II was inspired by Dan 7 which focused on the persecution of the faithful by oppressive powers. Other prophetic texts, especially Joel 3, were combined with Dan 7.¹⁴⁶ Text I, on the other hand, was inspired by Ezekiel for which he notes major correspondences. The inaugural vision in Rev 4–5 was drawn from Ezek 1 and 10. The judgments in Rev 6–9 were influenced by the oracles against pagan nations in Ezek 3–24. Beginning in Rev 17, John follows Ezekiel more closely. Rev 17 corresponds to Ezek 16 and 23. Rev 18 is modelled after Ezek 26–27. The resurrection of Rev 20 corresponds to the raising of the dry bones in Ezek 37. The depiction of the battle against Gog and Magog comes from Ezek 38–39. The vision of the New Jerusalem in Rev 21–22 is inspired by Ezekiel’s vision of the temple in Ezek 40–48. Boismard held that the hypothesis of two texts smoothed out the textual inconsistencies. He held that Text II, based on Daniel, was composed during the reign of Nero while Text I, based on Ezekiel, was composed post-70 during the reign of Vespasian or Domitian.¹⁴⁷ He maintained that an important corollary of his work was that his two-text hypothesis accounted for differing scholarly views on the earlier and later date of Revelation.

¹⁴⁴ Boismard, “‘L’Apocalypse’,” 509.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 510.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 529–30.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 538–41.

While Boismard’s two-text hypothesis has proved unconvincing, some of his observations about the influence of Ezekiel on Revelation’s structure still hold.¹⁴⁸ While it is clear that Dan 7 exhibits influence on the content in portions of Rev, especially chs. 13 and 17; it is not clear that Dan 7 exhibits comprehensive influence on the macro-structure of the book. As to Ezekiel’s influence on the book, the follow chart represents the structural influence:¹⁴⁹

	Revelation	Ezekiel
Inaugural Vision	4	1 (+10)
— Living Creatures	4:7	1:10; 10:14
— Eyes	4:6, 8	10:12
— Crystal Sea/Platform	4:6	1:22
— Rainbow	4:3	1:28
Prophecies vs. Pagans	6–9	3–24
— 4 Horsemen	6:1–3	Zech 6:1–3
— Sword, Famine, Plague, Beasts	6:8	14:21 (cf. 5:16; 7:14–15)
— Plagues	7:1	7:2
— Mark/Seal	7:2–8	9:4–6
— 7 Trumpet Angels/ 6 Angels with Instruments of Destruction	8:1–2	9:1–3
Burning Coals Hurlled	8:5	10:2–7
Plagues	8:7–12	5:12–14
Woes	8:13; 9:12; 11:13	7:5, 25
The Great Prostitute	17	16; 23
— Fate of the City	17:16	16:39–41; 23:25–39
— Its Crimes of Adultery and Murder	17:4–6	16:36–38; 23:37–45
Lament over the City	18 18:11–17a 18:17–19	26–27 27:12–14 27:27–29
Resurrection & Beginning of Messianic Reign	20	37; 34–47
— Assault of Gog (& Magog)	20:7–10	38–39
— Defeat of Enemies by Fire from Heaven	20:9	38:18–23
— Final Judgment of Pagan Nations	20:13–15	39:21
The Messianic Jerusalem	21:9–22; 22:6–15	40–47
— Seer on a High Mountain	21:10	40:2
— City Illuminated by God’s Glory	21:11	43:1–5
— 12 Gates, 3 Facing in Each Direction	21:12–13	47:30–34

¹⁴⁸ See Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 38–54.

¹⁴⁹ This chart is reproduced from Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 48–49.

— Streams of Water	22:1–2	47:12–14
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Boismard concluded from the close relationship between the two texts that Revelation should be regarded as an “imitation” of Ezekiel.¹⁵⁰ In addition to the weakness of his hypothetical source identification, Boismard also failed to note the correspondences in Rev 1 with Ezekiel as well as the mention of the scroll in Rev 5:1.

Similarly, Vanhoye noted similarities which exist on the level of structure which cannot be reduced to recognizing verbal allusions. The structure of Ezekiel appears to have left a mark on John’s material. He refers to these organizational influences as “utilisations d’ensemble.” The following chart summarizes Vanhoye’s structural observations:¹⁵¹

	Revelation	Ezekiel
Inaugural Vision	4:1–8	1 (+10)
Swallowing the Scroll	5:1; 10:1–4, 8–11	2:8–3:3
Indictments on Charges of Prostitution	17:1–6, 15–18	16; 23
Lamentations	18:9–19	26–27
Feasting of Birds	19:17–21	39:4, 17–20
Attack on Gog (and Magog)	20:8–9	38–39
Measurement of Temple	11:1–2; 21:10–27	40–48
Water Flowing from Temple	21:10–27	47

Although not intended as a comprehensive analysis, Vanhoye summarizes the relationship:

Au sujet de ces utilisations d'ensembles, il faut remarquer enfin que l'ordre de leur apparition dans l'Apocalypse reproduit, à peu de chose près, l'ordre du livre d'Ézéchiél. Ce fait vient confirmer, de façon éclatante, que l'influence de ce prophète s'est exercée sur le voyant de Patmos dans des proportions considérables.¹⁵²

In a provocative article, M. D. Goulder argued that Revelation follows the outline of Ezekiel.¹⁵³ After noting numerous similarities between Revelation and Ezekiel, Goulder concludes that John’s deployment of Ezekielian material was not accidental but intentional.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Boismard, “L’Apocalypse,” 532.

¹⁵¹ Vanhoye, “L’utilisation,” 440–41.

¹⁵² Ibid., 442.

¹⁵³ M. D. Goulder, “The Apocalypse as an Annual Cycle of Prophecies,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 342–67.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 348–49.

Next, Goulder examines two possible explanations for the large-scale influence of Ezekiel on Revelation: the literary hypothesis and the liturgical hypothesis. He finds the notion that John constructed his text after closely consulting the text of Ezekiel to be implausible. More likely, he maintains, John "... might have heard passages from the prophet read out serially in the liturgy in successive weeks, and draws inspiration from them to see visions in the course of worship."¹⁵⁵ In support of this, he notes the liturgical context of Rev 1 "on the Lord's day" as well as the fact that Revelation was designed to be read aloud to the churches during the course of the liturgy.¹⁵⁶ In order to demonstrate how Revelation would have been read cyclically, he divides Revelation into fifty-two units for liturgical reading, for which he recognizes correspondences in Ezekiel. These correspondences are noted in the following chart:¹⁵⁷

Revelation	Theme	Ezekiel	Calendar
1	Risen Christ	43a	Passover
2a	Ephesus	43b	
2b	Smyrna	44	
2c	Pergamum	45	
2d	Thyatira	46	
3a	Sardis	47	
3b	Philadelphia	48	
3c	Laodicea		
4	Throne-Vision	1	Pentecost
5a	Scroll, Lion	2	
5b	Lamb as Slain	3	
6a	4 Seals	5	
6b	Martyrs	6	
6c	Earthquake	7	
7a	144,000 Sealed	8–9	
7b	Multitude	10	
8a	Incense, Altar	11	
8b	4 Trumpets	12	
9a	Locust-Scorpions	13	
9b	Lion Cavalry	14	
10a	Angel of Oath	15	

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 349.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 349–50.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 350–52.

10b	Little Scroll	16	
11a	2 Witnesses	16	
11b	7 th Trumpet	17	
12a	Woman and Dragon	18	New Year
12b	Michael and Dragon	19	Atonement
12c	Woman in Wilderness	20	Tabernacles
13a	Beast from the Sea	21	
13b	Beast from the Land	22	
14a	Lamb and 144,000	23	
14b	Cup of Wrath	23	
14c	Harvest and Vintage	24	
15a	Bowl Angels	25	
15b	Glory in Temple	26	
16a	3 Bowls	27	
16b	2 Bowls	28	
16c	7 th Bowl	29	Dedication
17a	Babylon the Harlot	30	
17b	Mystery Expounded	31	
18a	Fallen is Babylon	32	
18b	Lament over Babylon	33	
19a	Lamb's Bride	34	
19b	Rider on White Horse	35	
19c	Armageddon	36	
20a	Resurrection and Millennium	37	
20b	Gog and Magog	38	
20c	Last Judgment	39	
21a	New Jerusalem	40	
21b	City, Walls, Gates	40	
22a	God's Glory, River of Life	41	
22b	Come!	42	

Goulder acknowledges this theory is speculative.¹⁵⁸ Some of his suggested parallels strain credibility. For example, his claim that Ezek 43–48 is primarily responsible for Rev 1–3, and his identification of the slaughtered Lamb of Rev 5 with Ezek 3 are implausible.¹⁵⁹ His liturgical theory has proved unconvincing.¹⁶⁰ Despite the failure of his liturgical hypothesis, he does seem

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 354.

¹⁵⁹ See the critique in Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 150.

¹⁶⁰ Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 91–95; Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 76–78.

to have demonstrated that the broad outline of the book of Ezekiel was incorporated into Revelation.¹⁶¹

In his dissertation, Vogelgesang used five criteria to test the hypothesis that Revelation is literarily dependent on Ezekiel.¹⁶² First, he evaluates whether Ezekielian motifs are expressed within an Ezekielian pattern of thought. Second, if it can be demonstrated that motifs in Revelation which are taken from Ezekiel and are not found in other corresponding literature, it strengthens the probability of direct dependence. Third, the existence of striking similarities which are most easily explained on the basis of literary relationship indicates dependence. Fourth, if difficult details of exegesis can be explained by appealing to literary dependence, the relationship solidifies. Fifth, if Vanhoye’s thesis is right that “the order of Ezekielian passages used in Revelation approximates the order of Ezekiel itself”, then “we have conclusive evidence that Revelation is not only literarily dependent on Ezekiel, but that John used Ezekiel as an important model for the overall structure of the book.”¹⁶³ Regarding his final criterion concerning the organization of Ezekielian material, he concludes, “the order of Ezekielian passages used in Revelation approximates the order of Ezekiel itself.”¹⁶⁴ Vogelgesang presents the following chart to demonstrate the “main utilizations” of Ezekiel in Revelation:¹⁶⁵

Ezekiel	Description	Revelation
1:1–28	Inaugural Vision	1:9–16; 4*; 10:1
1:28b–3:12	Commissioning	1:17–20; 5:1*; 10:2, 8–11
5:17; 14:21	Acts of Judgment	6:8
9:1–6	Mark on the Forehead	7:1–8*; 13:16–17; 14:2, 9–11; 16:2; 17:5; 22:4

¹⁶¹ cf. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 94.

¹⁶² Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 15–16.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 68; Vogelgesang uses “main utilization” to refer to the text which demonstrates the primary influence from the Ezekielian text. For example, although elements from Ezek 1:1–28a occur throughout Revelation like Rev 1:9–18; 4; 10:1, it is clear that Rev 4 represents the main utilization of Ezekiel. The main utilization is indicated by the asterisk.

8–11	Judgment	8:5; 11:1–2*
16; 23	The Harlot	17
26–28	Oracles against Nations	18
34–37	Restoration Prophecies	7:13–17; 11:11; 21:1–4*; 20:4–6
38–39	Gog and Magog	19:17–21*; 20:7–9*
40–48	New Jerusalem	3:12; 11:1–2; 21:9–22:5*

As further proof, Vogelgesang notes that when Revelation shows influence from Ezekiel’s inaugural vision and commissioning, the order is the same:¹⁶⁶

Revelation	Ezekiel
1:9–16	1:1–1:28a
1:17–20	1:28b–2:7
4:1–8a	1:1–1:28a (HT Ezek 10:2)
5:1	1:28b–3:3
10:1	1:1–1:28a
10:2, 8–11	1:28b–3:3 (HT 3:14)

Vogelgesang concludes:

Our conclusion is that over a wide breadth of Ezekielian material utilized in Revelation, the order of Ezekiel and that of Revelation are, for all intents and purposes, the same. This is conclusive proof that John utilized Ezekiel directly. There is no intervening literature where such broad coverage of Ezekiel, and in order, is even remotely approached.

Even more significantly, such an adherence to the order of Ezekiel over such a wide range of material suggests that not only was John dependent on Ezekiel, but that he modeled his book on that of Ezekiel.¹⁶⁷

After surveying the influence of major segments of Ezekiel on Revelation, Moyise provides the following chart:¹⁶⁸

Revelation	Description	Ezekiel
4	Throne creatures/eyes/bow/crystal	1
7–8	Marking/scattering of fire	9–10
17	Punishment of the Harlot city	16; 23
18	Lament over fallen city, trading list	26–27
20–22	Revival, reign, battle, new Jerusalem	37–48

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 69.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 74.

This simple chart reveals that these sections appear in the same order in both works. Moyise rejects Goulder’s lectionary theory as the explanation for this close correspondence. Given the close similarities between the works, Moyise says, “The most obvious explanation is that John has taken on the ‘persona’ of Ezeziel.”¹⁶⁹ In other words, John is so familiar with Ezeziel’s book through meditation and study that his absorption of the character and mind of the ancient prophet results in a work that looks like and is structured after Ezeziel’s.

Karrer demonstrates that John’s extensive use of Ezeziel can only be explained by John’s knowledge of a written text of Ezeziel since he follows the order so closely. He provides the following chart:¹⁷⁰

Apk	Wichtige Einzelbezüge (Auswahl)	Ez	Wichtige Einzelbezüge (Auswahl)
Kap. 1		Kap. 1	
	1,13.15		1,24.26
Kap. 4–5 Himmlische Versammlung		Kap. 1	
	4,1.3.5–8 5,1		1,1.5.10.13.18.22.26–28 2,9f.
Kap. 7 Markierung der Heiligen		Kap. 9	
	7,3		9,4.6
Kap. 11		Kap. 37; 38	
	11,11.13		37,5.10; 38,19f
Kap. 18 Sturz der großen Stadt		Kap. 26–27	
	18,3.9–19.21f.24		26,13.17.19.21 27,13.27–33.36
Kap. 19 Schreckensmahl		Kap. 39	
	19,17f.21		39,4.17–20
Kap. 20 Auferstehung		Kap. 37	

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 78.

¹⁷⁰ Reproduced from Karrer, “Von der Apokalypse zu Ezeziel,” 91; Karrer says that he indents the references to “Kap 1“ and “Kap 11” in the table to indicate a second internal reference marking a special relationship between these chapters.

	20,4		37,10
Kap. 20 Gog–Magog		Kap. 38–39	
	20,8.10		38,6.22; 39,6
Kap. 21,1–8 Gottes Wohnen bei den Menschen		Kap. 37	
	21,3		37,27
Kap. 21,9–22,5 himmlisches Jerusalem		Kap. 40–48	
	21,10.15.17 21,12–13 22,1f.		40,2.3.5 48,31–35 47,12

Karrer says that since the first reference to Ezek 1 can be found in the opening vision of Rev 1:12–16, the intertextuality signals to readers that there is a connection between the opening vision in ch. 1 and the throne vision in ch. 4.¹⁷¹ The only break in the sequence is John’s use of Ezek 37–39; however, Karrer notes that in different Greek versions and Hebrew texts, these chapters appear in different orders demonstrating a textual fluidity. For example, in the important manuscript p967, Ezek 37 is placed between chs. 38–39 and 40. It is impossible to know what text tradition John was using, but the textual fluidity of these chapters may explain the different order of these chapters in John’s reception of Ezekiel.¹⁷²

In Mathewson’s work on the use of the OT in Rev 21–22, he finds a significant purpose in Revelation’s use of major blocks of material from Ezekiel. Drawing on the work of Umberto Eco, he suggests that John presupposes a model or ideal reader who is competent in the OT texts. “In reading texts, the reader is guided by indications encoded within the text itself as to how the text is to be read.”¹⁷³ By using so much of the Ezekielian material in the same order as their presence in Ezekiel, this shapes the readers’ expectations and intertextual competence so that by

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁷² Ibid., 113–18.

¹⁷³ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 31.

the time the concluding chapters are reached, the ideal reader is prepared to read these chapters in close interaction with Ezek 40–48.¹⁷⁴

Boxall examines the studies just presented to investigate whether Ezekiel’s work has “exercised a primary influence on the ordering of John’s visions...”¹⁷⁵ Boxall’s purpose for the investigation is that if John modelled the macro-structure of his work on Ezekiel’s work, this has implications for understanding John’s prophetic self-conception. He asks:

If Ezekiel’s influence does indeed extend to the structural level, might it in part have suggested the choice and order of broad themes, in a manner which goes beyond the ability to detect detailed verbal allusions? Moreover, what might this influence have to say about the nature of John’s book? Is he attempting to write a new Ezekiel, or to reinterpret the old, for the first century? Does he regard himself as in some sense inheriting Ezekiel’s mantle, such that the exilic prophet has become paradigmatic for John’s own role? Or, allowing for his claim to visionary experience, has he taken on the *persona* of the son of Buzi?¹⁷⁶

Boxall particularly focuses on Goulder’s Jewish lectionary hypothesis. On its face, he finds the lectionary hypothesis more credible than mere literary solutions. On the whole, Boxall believes Goulder “has added weight to the case for Ezekiel being the dominant Old Testament influence on Revelation in terms of sequential use...”; however, he does dismiss what he considers to be Goulder’s maximalist thesis which in some cases overidentified or misidentified intertextual relationships.¹⁷⁷

Boxall accepts the widely accepted parallels between the two texts including Ezek 1–2 in Rev 4–5, Ezek 9–10 in Rev 7–8, Ezek 16, 23, 26–28 in Rev 17–18, and Ezek 37–48 in Rev 19–22. While the ordering of the parallel material from Ezekiel mostly follows the sequential ordering in Revelation, there are a few instances where Ezekiel is invoked out of chronological

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 32.

¹⁷⁵ Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 147.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 150.

order. Although the scroll is briefly mentioned in Rev 5:1–2 evoking Ezek 2–3, the scroll is not consumed until ch. 10. Also, there is a brief mention of measuring the temple early on at Rev 11:1–2 which alludes to Ezek 40 which is not taken up again until ch. 21.¹⁷⁸ However, the charts presented by Moyise and others leave several gaps. It leaves Ezek 4–8; 11–15; 17–22; 24–25; and 39–36 unaccounted for in Revelation. Further, in Rev 1–3; 6; and 9–16, Ezekielian structural influence seems to be absent. Boxall believes it is possible to fill some of these gaps. First, Boxall notes that since Ezek 1 exhibits formal and verbal influence on Rev 1:9–20, what if we are meant to allow that influence to continue into chs. 2–3?¹⁷⁹ Allowing for the influence of other texts like Jer 37:2 and Isa 30:9, in chs. 2–3, John is acting prophetically for the first time. He mediates the revealed words of the “one like a Son of Man” to the churches which involves words of judgement as well as promises of salvation. Although tentative, Boxall believes it possible to see chs. 2–3 as building on the connections already established to Ezekiel’s prophetic commission.¹⁸⁰ Second, if John were following Ezekiel sequentially, one would expect to find the influence of Ezek 4–8 on Rev 6 which relays the opening of the first six seals as well as the vision of the four horseman. He acknowledges that Rev 6:1–8 is primarily influenced from Zechariah’s horsemen; yet, with Goulder, Boxall believes it is possible to detect the secondary influence of Ezek 5. There, the prophet acted out the prophecy with a sword demonstrating God’s judgment on Jerusalem. The judgments in Ezek 5:16–17 include famine, wild animals, pestilence, bloodshed, and the sword. There is significant overlap in these judgments with John’s depictions of what the fourth horseman effects in Rev 6:8). “Indeed, a similar juxtaposition of

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 151.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 160.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

the sword, famine, and pestilence is found at Ezek 6:11 and 7:15, suggesting the whole sequence of Ezekiel 5–7 as the thematic background for Revelation 6.”¹⁸¹

The next major gap would be Rev 9–16 which Goulder posited as coming from Ezek 11–29. Finding that identification problematic, Boxall argues it more likely John was influenced by Ezek 11–15. Although the influence is less strong, the verbal and thematic parallels to Ezek 11–14 in this section suggest “John has not lost sight of Ezekiel’s order entirely.”¹⁸² Thematically, these chapters contain Ezekiel’s prophetic ministry to exiles as he proclaims God’s revealed word to Israel (Ezek 11–12), and these chapters are also concerned with discerning true prophecy from false (Ezek 13–14). Similar concerns occur in Rev 10, 11, and 13 which involves John’s prophetic commissioning, the activity of the two prophetic witnesses, and emergence of the beasts, the second of which is identified as the “false prophet.”¹⁸³ It also may not be accidental that this section describes Satan as “the great dragon” (δράκων μέγας; Rev 12:3) since Ezekiel spoke oracles against Pharaoh of Egypt, the great dragon (τὸν δράκοντα τὸν μέγαν; Ezek 29:3; cf. 32:2).¹⁸⁴ Further, the thematic parallels are supported by overt verbal resonances. First, the angel’s announcement at Rev 10:6 that there would be “no more delay” in the fulfillment of the mystery of God echoes Ezek 12:25. Second, the description of beast from the land and the false prophet who leads the people astray and encourages idolatry shares a number of verbal themes found in Ezek 14. “This suggests that, although Ezekiel is far from the only influence upon Revelation (10)11–15, it has continued to make its mark, and in sequence.”¹⁸⁵ Boxall believes the evidence suggests “that the influence of Ezekiel and its order is even more pervasive than

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 152.

¹⁸² Ibid., 153.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 154.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

sometimes admitted.”¹⁸⁶ In contrast to the more literary (“bookish”) explanations as well as Goulder’s lectionary hypothesis to explain John’s dependence on Ezekiel, Boxall explores the possibility that John has meditated on Ezekiel “so profoundly that it has entered into his psyche and been a determining factor in what he saw in his Patmos visions.”¹⁸⁷

Before proceeding, it is important to assess an alternative proposal made by Beale. Rather than Ezekiel, Beale contends that Daniel functioned as the *Vorbild* for Revelation. He provides a detailed list and exegesis of all the passages in Revelation which allude to Daniel, especially in chs. 1, 4–5, 13, and 17. Beale sees a reference to Dan 7:13 in Rev 1:7 followed by several allusions in the vision of 1:12–20. In the opening vision, John fuses images derived from Dan 7 and 10. Based on these observations, Beale concludes that 1:8–20 constitutes a midrash on Dan 7 and 10.¹⁸⁸ He acknowledges the presence of allusions to other OT texts but asserts that those allusions are added to “supplement the Daniel midrash.”¹⁸⁹ Next, Beale investigates how supplemental imagery was selected from other texts. He believes that passages like Ezek 1–3 and 8–11 were used by John because of their thematic associations with Dan 7 and 10. The primary texts in Daniel function as a “hermeneutical ‘magnet’” for other texts with related themes.¹⁹⁰ After having established this pattern for Rev 1, Beale moves to analyzing Rev 4–5 which he sees as patterned after Dan 7:9–27.¹⁹¹ His observations are represented in the following chart:¹⁹²

Revelation 4–5	Description	Daniel 7
4:1	Introduction to the Vision	7:9
4:2a	Throne(s) in Heaven	7:9a
4:2b	God on the Throne	7:9b
4:3a	God’s Appearance	7:9c

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ G. K. Beale, *Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 171.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 173.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 174.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 181–82.

¹⁹² Ibid.

4:5	Fire Before the Throne	7:9d–10a
4:4b, 6b–10; 5:8, 11, 14	Throne Attendants	7:10b
5:1ff	Book(s)	7:10c
5:2–5, 9	Book(s) Opened	7:10d
5:5–7, 9a, 12–13	Divine/Messianic Figure Approaches the Throne to Receive Authority	7:13–14a
5:9b	“Peoples, Nations, Tongues”	7:14a (MT)
5:4	Seer’s Reaction	7:15
5:5a	Heavenly Figure Speaks to the Seer	7:16
5:10	Saints Given Ruling Authority	7:18, 22, 27a
5:13–14	God’s Eternal Reign	7:27b

Based on these observations, Beale denies that Ezek 1–2 plays an important role in the structuring of this vision since several structural elements are lacking in Revelation.¹⁹³ Further, he argues that while Ezek 1–2 does influence Rev 4:1–5:1, the influence ceases at 5:2 suggesting that Ezekiel plays a supplemental role to Daniel 7 which supplies the *Vorbild* for Rev 4–5.¹⁹⁴ He says, “Ezekiel 1 should not be seen as the model for chaps. 4–5, but more probably has been used because of its many parallels to Daniel 7.”¹⁹⁵ He similarly argues that Daniel is the major influence on the mind of the author in the construction of chs. 13 and 17.

Beale moves from these observations to summarize his view that Revelation depends on Daniel primarily for its structure. He believes that John found in Daniel common leitmotifs which appear in no other OT book such as God’s absolute power to use rebellious acts for his purpose and the decision of the faithful suffering persecution to endure.¹⁹⁶ He also finds allusions to Dan 2:28–29, and 45 at key moments throughout Revelation (1:1, 19; 4:1; 22:6). Most telling, he suggests that the reference in Rev 1:1 is an allusion to Daniel 2 and as such “he may be asserting that the following contents of the whole book are to be conceived of ultimately within

¹⁹³ Ibid., 183.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 183–84.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 224.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 272–73.

the thematic framework of Daniel 2.”¹⁹⁷ As an explanation for how John came to employ a midrash on Daniel as the *Vorbild* for his work, Beale suggests that this was already common in Christian tradition. He accepts Lars Hartman’s conclusion that Mark 13 constitutes a midrash on Daniel as well as the observations of Farrer and Sweet that Mark 13 and Revelation share material in common.¹⁹⁸ In Beale’s view, the Synoptic eschatological tradition and Revelation are both drawing from early Christian interpretation of Daniel.¹⁹⁹ Thus, Beale’s argument summarized is that Revelation conducts a midrash on Daniel by employing structural markers from Dan 2 in order to activate John’s interpretation of Dan 7.

Beale’s thesis has largely been unconvincing for several reasons. First, several scholars have noted that the designation of “midrash” has been overused in biblical studies. In Beale’s own words, “The term ‘midrash’ is used loosely to refer to the dominant influence of an OT passage on a NT writer and to that writer’s interpretative development of the same OT text, so that we are not using the word in its generic sense.”²⁰⁰ As Yarbrow Collins notes, for something to be considered midrash, it must be demonstrated that the book of Daniel was the object of interpretation rather than a means.²⁰¹ Beale has failed to make the case that Daniel was the object of John’s interpretation rather than simply a means. Ruiz notes that a more reasonable stance would recognize the prevalence of Daniel in Revelation as a means John used to his own creative ends.²⁰² Second, Beale’s assertion that Danielic texts function as “hermeneutical magnets” for other texts does not seem to explain the evidence adequately. For example, the prominence of Ezekielian material in Rev 4–5 weakens the conclusion that disparate elements of Ezekiel have

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 277.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 286–287.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 293–98.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 148.

²⁰¹ Adela Yarbrow Collins, review of *The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John*, by G.K. Beale, *JBL* 105 (1986): 735.

²⁰² Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 121.

simply been attracted to Daniel.²⁰³ Third, Ruiz faults Beale for failing to differentiate “influence” from “dependence.”²⁰⁴ While Beale does demonstrate the influence of Daniel on Revelation, influence does not by itself prove dependence. Ruiz finds this fault particularly in his treatment of Rev 4–5.²⁰⁵ He says:

First, he expends considerable effort downplaying the influence of Ezekiel on these chapters, offering a comparison of Rev 4–5 with Dan 7:9–27 as evidence of structural dependence. After imposing a Dan 7-based structure on Rev 4–5, he points out that Ezek 1–2 differs from this structure and consequently that its influence on these chapters of Revelation is less than that of Dan 7. He claims that “it is clearly the structure of Daniel 7 which dominates the whole of the Revelation 4–5 vision,” and that the Ezekiel references are pulled in by their resemblance to Dan 7, Beale’s “hermeneutical magnet” in operation. This is an unjustified leap from recognition of Daniel’s influence to the assertion that Rev 4–5 is *dependent* on Dan 7.²⁰⁶

Fourth, Beale fails to address the arguments of Boismard and Vanhoye regarding the structural influence of Ezekiel. There is simply more convincing evidence that the macro-structure of Revelation is heavily dependent on Ezekiel.²⁰⁷ In fact, in a later work, after addressing the critiques of Ruiz, Moyise, and Yarbro Collins, Beale concedes, “There is no doubt that Ezekiel also provided a conceptual framework. Indeed, Moyise and others are correct in saying that there is more evidence for Ezekiel than any other book being the primary Old Testament lens for the entire Apocalypse.”²⁰⁸ Thus, while Beale has drawn attention to John’s significant use of Daniel, he has overstated his case that Daniel is the dominant influence on the structure of Revelation.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 122–23.

²⁰⁵ Ruiz provides a table of correspondences between Rev 4–5 and Isa 6. Demonstrating the influence of one text on another text does not necessarily entail dependence on that text. No one asserts that based on similarities, John is dependent on Isa 6. “Though Rev 4–5 gives clear evidence of Daniel influences, it would be excessive to assert that these chapters depend on Danie” (126).

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 123–24.

²⁰⁷ “It is certainly going well beyond the evidence to conclude that the whole of Revelation is to be ‘conceived of ultimately within the framework of Daniel 2... a much better case can be made for the book of Ezekiel having influenced the structure of John’s book’ (Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 62).

²⁰⁸ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 93. See his full rejoinder to their critiques on pgs 79–93.

²⁰⁹ Yarbro Collins, “Use of Scripture in the Book of Revelation,” 18; Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 63.

Conclusion to Criterion 2: Significant Similarities— c. Organizational and Conceptual Structures

In this section, I analyzed several scholarly works which sought to account for the significant influence of Ezekiel on John's organizational and conceptual structure. The arguments of Wikenhauser, Kuhn, Lust, Boismard, Vanhoye, Goulder, Vogelgesang, Moyise, Karrer, Mathewson, and Boxall presented above leave little doubt about the influence of Ezekiel on Revelation's structure. While various elements of their arguments—Boismard's two-text hypothesis and Goulder's lectionary cycle theory—have been rejected, the overall impression of these studies demonstrates that Ezekiel has served as a significant and complex model to John for his own vision and interpretation. Finally, the only serious competing theory to the import of Ezekiel for Revelation's organizational macro-structure was considered. Beale's hypothesis that Revelation is a midrash on Daniel was found wanting. While Daniel certainly exhibits influence on Revelation, it does not rise to the same level of structural influence as Ezekiel.

d. Verbal and Stylistic

Imitatio often involved verbal and stylistic similarities with a pre-text which effect the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax of the new work. Although embedded within the larger argument that Revelation constitutes an *imitatio Ezechielis*, in this section, I argue that Ezekiel's text influences John's irregular grammar in a heretofore unrecognized manner; namely, that John's irregular grammar (apparent solecisms) are one part of John's larger attempt to stylistically imitate Ezekiel. Scholars have not noted the potential import of Ezekiel's irregular (and apparently incorrect) grammar in the inaugural vision for the style of Revelation.

d.1 Intentional Archaic Semitisms/Septuagintalisms

As demonstrated previously in chapter 2, one of the dominant theories regarding Revelation's unique style is that: "while he [John] writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew, and the thought has naturally affected the vehicle of expression."²¹⁰ While some have found the syntactical irregularities to derive from grammatical blunders made by a struggling second language speaker, others have detected more intentionality. For example, Beale writes, "It seems that his grammatical 'howlers' are deliberate attempts to express Semitisms and Septuagintalisms in his Greek, the closest analogy being that of the LXX translations, especially Aquila."²¹¹ The fact that John mostly demonstrates aptitude in the norms of Greek grammar makes these irregular uses of grammar appear intentional to many scholars. One of the primary suggestions is that these Semitisms/Septuagintalisms were a deliberate way for John to create a "biblical effect" in his hearers and to legitimize his own *ethos* by aligning his voice with the voice of the Hebrew prophets in the Scriptures.²¹²

This was the view of Laughlin when he wrote in 1902:

Viewing the evidence as a whole, the impression is strong that the author of the Apocalypse made use of the LXX and Hebrew idiom in a conscious effort to reproduce the manner and spirit of the ancient Prophets; it was not through ignorance of correct Greek usage.²¹³

Similarly, Farrer writes:

In Revelation the Old Testament material is still rough from the quarry, in the very form and phrase of its originals, so much so that St John adopts an artificial language, Septuagintic Greek, in which to handle it... It is certainly not the dialect of the Asian Ghetto, but an elaborate archaism. The suggestion that St John wrote like this because he

²¹⁰ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxliii.

²¹¹ Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 125.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Laughlin, "Solecisms of the Apocalypse," 22.

knew no better may be dismissed out of hand. He was writing a Christian Ezekiel or Zechariah in the phrase of the old.²¹⁴

Ozanne argues, “The explanation which the present writer believes to be correct is that the author deliberately modelled his grammar on the pattern of the classical Hebrew of the Old Testament.”²¹⁵ Ozanne notes that in 1922, Burney had already made the observation that the Hebraisms of Revelation were an attempt to imitate “Biblical Hebrew style.”²¹⁶ Ozanne detects almost no Septuagintal influence and believes the author is frequently using Hebraisms to render words and phrases in an obvious Semitic sense. “Accordingly we are forced to the position that all the grammatical abnormalities of the Apocalypse were deliberately devised by an author who wished to signify the solidarity of his writings with those of the Old Testament.”²¹⁷

Karrer reaches a similar conclusion. After noting John’s sophisticated vocabulary and overall aptitude in Greek, he says, “Im Ganzen ist der Soziolekt der Apk jüdisch-griechisch und sind die Semitismen und Septuagintismen am besten als seine bewusste rhetorische Stilwahl zu erklären.”²¹⁸ He finds a theologically significant reason for these semitisms:

Der Stil der Apk erweist sich vor solchem Hintergrund als theologisch durchdacht. Durch seine auffälligen Semitismen nähert der Autor das Griechische der heiligen hebräischen Sprache an und nötigt die Leserinnen und Leser, auf den einen Gott zu hören, der die religiös-kulturellen Traditionen des nichtjüdischen griechischen Sprachraums korrigiert.²¹⁹

Thus, one prominent argument advanced by several scholars is that the irregular grammar was due to the author’s conscious employment of stylistic Semitisms/Septuagintalisms. The explanations for the various Semitic constructions lying behind each individual occurrence vary

²¹⁴ Farrer, *Rebirth of Images*, 24.

²¹⁵ Ozanne, “Language of the Apocalypse,” 4.

²¹⁶ Burney, *Aramaic Origin*, 15–16.

²¹⁷ Ozanne, “Language of the Apocalypse,” 9.

²¹⁸ Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 95; Karrer notes that of the 916 words in the Apocalypse, 128 are *hapax legomena* (*Johannesoffenbarung*, 91).

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 101.

from scholar to scholar. By employing Semitisms in this way, the author seeks to link his work with the prophetic tradition of Israel's Scriptures. This stylistic device creates a "biblical effect" upon the hearers. On its surface, this is a more sophisticated and attractive solution that seeks to do justice to the complexity of the phenomenon of unusual grammar in the Apocalypse, which on the one hand, seems very irregular, while on the other hand, a part of a document from a sophisticated mind. In this view, the Semitisms/Septuagintalisms function to point more generally to the Hebrew Scriptures without having a particular author or book in mind. However, can a more specific relationship be identified? Rather than the style reflecting all of the writers of Israel's past generally, does the irregular style of Revelation point to a work in the Scriptures of Israel more specifically?

d.2 The Ungrammaticality of Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision

As discussed previously, Ezekiel's inaugural vision influenced John and Revelation significantly. It is a widely recognized feature by scholars studying Ezekiel that the inaugural vision of Ezekiel is grammatically and stylistically difficult.²²⁰ The major commentaries of Ezekiel as well as articles have been published on this feature of Ezekiel's inaugural vision. Daniel Fredericks has referred to it as "The cumbersome and grammatically inappropriate and irritating opening chapter of Ezekiel..."²²¹ However, no scholar has discussed this issue as thoroughly as Block in his influential article which appeared in 1988, "Text and Emotion: A

²²⁰ "Especially with regard to the inaugural vision, the text contains so many inconsistencies and apparent contradictions that an expositor is constantly faced with the dilemma of attempting to reconcile discrepancies, either through an exercise of ingenuity or through recourse to the putative authority of an earlier version. Because the ur-text is simply not to be had, expositors must finally opt for a version that most nearly approximates their sense of what the text is supposed to be" (Michael Lieb, *The Visionary Mode: Biblical Prophecy, Hermeneutics, and Cultural Change* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991], 17).

²²¹ Daniel Fredericks, "Diglossia, Revelation, and Ezekiel's Inaugural Rite," *JETS* 41 (1998): 189.

Study in the ‘Corruptions’ in Ezekiel’s Inaugural Vision (Ezekiel 1:4–28).”²²² In this article he states that the “obscurities and difficulties presented by the text of Ezekiel have almost become proverbial” and no study had sufficiently accounted for the difficulties posed by the Hebrew text of Ezek 1. Block’s study proceeds in three parts: (1) a review of the difficulties posed by the text; (2) a survey of interpretations; (3) a new (and tentative) approach and proposal. Given the import of Block’s argument for the present study, each of his arguments will be presented below.

d.2.1 Problems in the Text of Ezekiel’s Inaugural Vision

First, Block discusses the difficulties of Ezekiel’s inaugural vision under three headings: problems of grammar, style, and substance. First, regarding the problems of grammar, Block says, “The grammatical difficulties encountered in the text are legion.”²²³

(1) Confusion of Gender

“The most obvious grammatical problem is the ubiquitous confusion of gender. The seemingly irrational interchange of masculine and feminine forms permeates the entire text and every conceivable context.”²²⁴ The most noted gender confusion appears to be in the use of pronominal suffixes, which up to 1:26, “appears to be totally arbitrary.”²²⁵ Moshe Greenberg calls the vacillation of genders “extreme” in vv. 9–11 and 23–25 where pronominal references are used almost interchangeably in the same clause.²²⁶ Greenberg notes that out of forty-five suffixes, thirty-three are masculine plural while only twelve are the grammatically proper feminine plural which is the expected form since the creatures are not gynecomorphous. Block

²²² Daniel Block, “Text and Emotion: A Study in the ‘Corruptions’ in Ezekiel’s Inaugural Vision (Ezekiel 1:4–18),” *CBQ* 50 (1988): 418–42.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 419.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 420.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, Anchor Bible (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2011), 43–44.

notes that although the subject in 1:15–18 is the masculine **הַאֲוֹפְנִים**, the subject throughout the remaining text is assumed to be **אֵל** (v. 4) or **תְּהִיֹת**.²²⁷ Similarly, feminine pronominal suffixes appear alongside masculines as with the occurrence of **לְאֲרַבְעָתָן** (vv. 16, 18), **רַבְעִיהֶן** (v. 17), and **וְגַבִּיהֶן** (v. 18) alongside **וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם** (v. 16 bis), **וּמְרַאֲיָהֶם** (v. 16), and **וְגַבְתָּם** (v. 18). The only consistent feature of the pronominal suffixes in this chapter is their inconsistency in almost every type of syntactic construction. The pronouns vacillate with prepositions²²⁸, nouns²²⁹, and verbs²³⁰ sometimes within just a few words (cf. v. 17 **בְּלִכְתָּם** and **בְּלִכְתָּן**).²³¹

The gender of verbs is also discordant. As Block notes, the appearance of **תִּרְפְּנֶהָ** in vv. 24–25 demonstrates that the author is familiar with the expected form of the 2nd person, feminine, plural, imperfect conjugation of the verb; however, in every other occurrence of the verb, the masculines are used, regardless of the gender of the subject.²³² The participial verbal forms do exhibit more regularity with the exception of two instances. In v. 7, **וְנִצְצִים** follows **וְרַגְלֵיהֶם**, and in v. 13, **בְּעָרוֹת** follows **כְּגַחְלֵי־אֵשׁ**.²³³ Additionally, there seems to be gender confusion in the use of nouns. For example, in v. 9a, the feminine **אֵשָׁה** refers back to the masculine **כְּנָפֵיהֶם**; however, in the same verse, the masculine **אֵשׁ** is used in the exact same distributive sense. The masculine **אֵשׁ** occurs twice in v. 11 with a feminine antecedent. In v. 23, both the feminine **אֵשָׁה** and masculine **אֵשׁ** occur in the same verse.

²²⁷ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 420.

²²⁸ cf. feminine: **מִתּוֹד** (vv. 4, 5); **לְהִנָּה** (vv. 5; 23 bis); **לְאֶחָת** (v. 6 bis); masculine: **לֵן** (v. 4); **לָהֶם** (v. 6); **אֶצְלָם** (v. 19); **לְעַמְתָּם** (vv. 20, 21)

²²⁹ cf. feminine: **מְרַאֲיָהֶן** (v. 5); **לְאֲרַבְעָתָן** (vv. 10 bis, 16); **גְּוִיֹתֶיהֶן** (v. 11); **כְּנָפֵיהֶם** (vv. 24, 25); masculine: **וְרַגְלֵיהֶם** (v. 7 bis); **כְּנָפֵיהֶם** (vv. 8 bis, 9, 11, 23, 24); **רַבְעִיהֶם** (v. 8); **וּפְנֵיהֶם** (vv. 8, 10, 11); **לְאֲרַבְעָתָם** (vv. 8, 10); **מְרַאֲיָהֶם** (v. 13); **רַאשֵׁיהֶם** (v. 22); **גְּוִיֹתֵיהֶם** (v. 23).

²³⁰ cf. feminine: **בְּלִכְתָּן** (v. 9, 12, 17); masculine: **בְּלִכְתָּם** (vv. 17, 21, 24); **בְּעַמְדָם** (vv. 24, 25); **וּבְהִנְשָׂאֵם** (v. 21).

²³¹ Other examples of discordant pronominal suffixes within the same verse include vv. 8, 10, 11, 16, 18, 23, 24, 25.

²³² Block, “Text and Emotion,” 420; cf. **יָסְבוּ** (vv. 9, 12; subject: **תְּהִיֹת**; v. 17; subject: **הַאֲוֹפְנִים**); **לָלוּ** (v. 9, 12 bis; subject: **תְּהִיֹת**; vv. 17, 19, 20, 21; subject: **הַאֲוֹפְנִים**); **יָנְשְׂאוּ** (vv. 19, 20, 21; subject: **הַאֲוֹפְנִים**); **עָמְדוּ** (v. 21; subject: **הַאֲוֹפְנִים**); **יָהִיָה** (vv. 12, 20; subject: **הַרְיוֹת**; v. 16; subject: **הַאֲוֹפְנִים**; v. 28; subject: **הַשָּׁשׂת**).

²³³ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 420.

(2) Confusion of Number

There are several instances of confusion of number. In v. 7, the clause **וְרַגְלֵיהֶם רַגְלַיִשׁ** is awkward since it is unclear whether the singular **רַגְלַיִשׁ** refers to each of two legs or each creature having only one leg.²³⁴ The adjective **יִשְׂרָיִם** occurs once more in v. 23 (**יִשְׂרָיִם**), where the feminine form refers to the wings (**כַּנְפֵיהֶם**) of the living creatures. In v. 23 the number of the adjective and its antecedent agree making the occurrence of the discordant adjective and its antecedent in v. 7 appear confused.

In a further example, the appearance of the singular **הַחַיָּה** in vv. 20–22 to refer to the living creatures stands out. G. A. Cooke and Walther Zimmerli suggested that the singular noun is best understood as a collective singular or distributive (“each living creature”).²³⁵ Greenberg suggests the singular is used to emphasize the unity of the movement.²³⁶ However, Block wonders why the unity of the creatures has only now, in vv. 20–22, become significant.²³⁷

Finally, in v. 22, the plural form of **רֹאשֵׁי** occurs twice. The singular antecedent **הַחַיָּה** causes one to expect the singular form of “head.” A few verses later the singular is used in vv. 25–26 (**רֹאשׁ**).²³⁸ Block says, “All in all, one is left bewildered. Is there one creature with one head, or one creature with more than one head? Or is there more than one creature with one head for the whole, or does it have its own head?”²³⁹

²³⁴ Ibid., 421.

²³⁵ G. A. Cooke, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, ICC (Edinburgh: Clark, 1936), 27; Walther Zimmerli, *A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, *Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 20.

²³⁶ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 48.

²³⁷ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 421.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

(3) Use of the Infinitive Absolute as Finite Verb

Block observes that the forms of רָצוּא and וְשׁוּב in v. 14 are pointed as infinitive absolutes in the Masoretic text.²⁴⁰ This is problematic for several reasons. First, infinitives which function as finite verbs typically precede the subject.²⁴¹ In this case, the subject וְהַתְּיָוִת precedes the infinitives. Second, there is a lexical difficulty. Apparently, רָצוּא functions as a by-form of רוּץ; however, if that is the case, it is a *hapax legomenon*.²⁴² The verb may be related to verbs in Aramaic or Akkadian, but this is unclear. The textual tradition bears witness to the difficulty of this construction. The LXX omits the verse entirely and the Vulgate's *ibant* assumes a textual error for יִצֵּא.²⁴³

(4) Inconsistency in the use of תְּשֻׁמָּה/שֵׁם

In the first occurrence of the phrase אֶל אֲשֶׁר יְהִי־תְשֻׁמָּה הָרוּחַ לְלִבָּתָּהּ יִלְכוּ in v. 12, the *hē*-directive is attached to the adverb שֵׁם. However, the expression occurs in almost the same form in v. 20 (עַל אֲשֶׁר יְהִי־שֵׁם הָרוּחַ לְלִבָּתָּהּ יִלְכוּ), and the *hē*-directive is missing. Even more curiously, in the immediately following redundant phrase וְשֵׁמָּה הָרוּחַ לְלִבָּתָּהּ, the *hē*-directive reappears.²⁴⁴

(5) אֶל used in the same sense of עַל

In the last two phrases just reviewed in vv. 12 and 20, the prepositions אֶל and עַל seem to be used interchangeably. In v. 20, the occurrence of עַל with the sense of “to” is normally expected of אֶל.²⁴⁵

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 46.

²⁴² Block, “Text and Emotion,” 421.

²⁴³ Ibid., 421–22.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 422.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

Second, regarding the problems of style, Block says, “Several features of the account are not necessarily grammatically wrong, but they are stylistically irregular.”²⁴⁶

(1) Morphology

Block notes that the masculine, plural, pronominal suffix is typically represented as םה- or ם-. This is not the case for feminine pronominal suffixes. In vv. 5 and 23 (bis), the form attached to the preposition (לְהִנָּה) is the independent personal pronoun הִנָּה which is only attested elsewhere in Ezek 42:9 and Zech 5:9. The form of גְּוִיתֵיהֶנָּה in v. 11 is completely unique. The masculine counterpart in v. 23 (גְּוִיתֵיהֶם) is the expected form.²⁴⁷

(2) Asyndetic Constructions

Block notes that on four occasions, an expected conjunction is missing from the text. In v. 4, there is no conjunction before עָנָנִי. In v. 12, one expects a conjunction before לֹא יִסְבּוּ. In v. 16, there is no conjunction preceding the first word of the clause מִרְאֵה. Finally, in v. 24, the expected conjunction before בְּעֵמֶק is absent. In each of these four instances, the translator of the LXX inserted καὶ to smooth out the difficulty.²⁴⁸

(3) Dittography

“In several places the account appears to contain dittographic errors.”²⁴⁹ Block says the appearance of וּפְנִיָּהּ in v. 11 seems strange and might be influenced by the three preceding

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

expressions in v. 10 which each begin with פָּנָיו.²⁵⁰ In v. 16a, וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם seems redundant due to the repetition in v. 16b of וּמַעֲשֵׂיהֶם. In v. 20, the phrase הָרִיחַ לְלֶכֶת יִלְכוּ שָׁמָּה הָרִיחַ לְלֶכֶת is redundant. In v. 23, the phrase הָרִיחַ לְלֶכֶת וְלֹאִישׁ שְׁתִּימָה מִכִּסּוֹת לְהִנָּח is inexplicably redundant. In vv. 24 and 25 there seem to be redundant descriptions of the living creatures standing and lowering their wings (בָּעֲמֻדָם תִּרְפָּיְנָה כְּנַפְיָהֶן) as well as the repetitious description in vv. 25–26 of the sound which came from above their heads.²⁵¹ The translator of the LXX apparently recognized the redundancies and presented smoother readings.²⁵²

(4) Difficult Constructions

In this section, Block provides four of the most difficult constructions to understand and explain. The fact that the LXX reading in each case presents a shortened and thus smoother reading is a further indicator of the difficulties involved.²⁵³ First, in vv. 8 and 9, the opening clause (וַיֵּדוּ אֲדָם מִתַּחַת כְּנַפְיָהֶם) is followed by a lengthy modifying explanation “on their four sides, and the faces and wings of the four of them touched one another.” This phrase and its meaning in the text is almost incomprehensible.²⁵⁴ Second, v. 14 (“and the living creatures darted back and forth like sparks”) is notoriously difficult to understand. The word בִּזְקָה is a *hapax legomenon* potentially meaning “lightning” or “spark.”²⁵⁵ A few verses later, the word בִּרְקָה (“lightning”) occurs. Third, after mentioning the sound of their wings being “like the sound of many waters” the MT adds “like the voice of the Almighty when they went, the sound of tumult like the sound

²⁵⁰ Ibid., 422–23.

²⁵¹ Ibid., 423.

²⁵² W. A. Lind, “A Text-Critical Note to Ezekiel 1: Are Shorter Readings Really Preferable to Longer?,” *JETS* 27 (1984): 135–39.

²⁵³ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 423.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. The opening word of v. 8 is a Qere Ketib.

²⁵⁵ See Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 46; Block, “Text and Emotion,” 423.

of a camp.” Block refers to this “heaping up of similes” as “laborious” and surprising.²⁵⁶ Fourth, Block says the appearance of the fire which emerges in the upper part of the body seems to belong more appropriately to the lower half.²⁵⁷

(5) Difficult Insertions

“Scattered throughout the text are small details whose presence is difficult to explain.”²⁵⁸ The insertion of *וּמִתּוֹךְ הַשָּׁשׁ* at the end of v. 4 is difficult to understand in its context since the preceding phrase includes the description *וּגְמֵלוֹתָיִם*. At the end of v. 6, the insertion of *לְהֵם* seems unnecessary after *לֹא־תָה*. As Block notes, if it is intended as a repetition of *לְהֵם* earlier, then it changes the gender.²⁵⁹ Translators have struggled with the beginning of v. 13 (*וַיֵּרָא*; “the appearance of”) which is typically amended to *umtwk* or *wbtwk*. The LXX has here *καὶ ἐν μέσῳ*.²⁶⁰ Block says the article attached to *וַיֵּרָא* is unexpected.²⁶¹ The appearance of *וַיֵּרָא* at the beginning of v. 18 has defied explanation.²⁶² In v. 22 the modifier *וַיֵּרָא* for *וַיֵּרָא* is awkward and missing from the LXX.²⁶³ Block says the sudden appearance of the common Hebrew expression for continuous narrative (*וַיֵּרָא*) in v. 25 is unexpected. The LXX’s *καὶ ἰδοὺ* seems to point to the reading *וַיֵּרָא* which occurs previously.²⁶⁴

(6) General Narrative Style

Block summarizes the style of Ezekiel’s inaugural vision:

²⁵⁶ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 423.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 424.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² N. M. Waldman, “A Note on Ezekiel 1:18,” *JBL* 103 (1984): 614–18; Block, “Text and Emotion,” 424.

²⁶³ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 424.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

Beyond all these problems of detail, the literary style of the account is cumbersome and difficult. Sentences are short and constructed in a choppy, staccato mode. A rhythm is never established. The flow characteristic of narrative, even of Ezekiel's own writing, is lacking. Verbless clauses abound. In these, subjects and predicates are often only tentatively identifiable. The first finite verb occurs in v 9b. All in all... coming to grips with the details is an extremely arduous task.²⁶⁵

Block ends his discussion of the problems of style in this chapter by exclaiming, "The problems raised by the text itself are so numerous that it is difficult even to know where one should begin."

Third, Block rounds out his discussion of the difficulties of the text by noting the problems of substance occur in all five basic sections of ch. 1 (v. 4; 5–14; 15–21; 22–27; 28). After the initial introduction to the living creatures in v. 5, vv. 6–9 seeks to explain their faces, legs, wings, and manner of locomotion. Then, the same subjects are taken up again repetitively in vv. 10–12. Vv. 13–14 describe the motion, and shifts from the lightning in the midst of the chariot to the lightning-like motion of the living creatures which creates confusion.²⁶⁶ The reader is left wondering where the image of the lightning fits.

The description of the wheels in vv. 15–21 has the appearance of a self-contained unit. The unit begins with *וְאָרְיָא* and *וְהִנֵּה* which occurs elsewhere to signal the beginning of a new section and theme (cf. 1:4; 2:9; 10:1, 9). Additionally, if vv. 15–21 were removed, vv. 22–25 seems to follow naturally after v. 14. Further, the elements discussed on the first part of the vision recur again in vv. 22–25 while the wheels disappear completely. This has led to the suggestion that vv. 15–21 is a secondary intrusion.²⁶⁷

The final section, vv. 22–27, begins with a reference to the *רָקִיעַ* ("expanse" or "firmament") above the living creatures. One might expect a description of the expanse, but instead, finds in these verses a descriptions of the functions and motions of the wings of the

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid., 424–25.

²⁶⁷ Block, "Text and Emotion," 425; Walther Eichrodt, *Ezekiel* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 118.

living creatures. The account emphasizes the sound effects accompanying the entire phenomenon.²⁶⁸ Only in v. 26 does the narrative return to what appeared above the expanse. Block concludes, “To sum up, the disorganized nature of the account is of a piece with the difficulties in its grammar and literary style.”²⁶⁹ As demonstrated above, these difficulties exist almost exclusively in the Hebrew text of the MT. The translator(s) of the LXX, like the unknown editor(s) of Ezek 10, in most cases, attempted to present a smoother reading and deal with the difficulties in the text.²⁷⁰

To sum up the phenomenon of grammatical irregularity in Ezekiel’s inaugural vision, we might characterize it with a number of observations. First, the irregularities appear in different constructions in every section of the inaugural vision. They are ubiquitous in Ezek 1 with the largest number comprising disagreements in gender and number. Second, the author appears to be familiar with the expected constructions and in most cases of incongruity, demonstrates aptitude elsewhere in the chapter in parallel constructions. The syntactical difficulties are not present to this extreme degree in the rest of the book. Third, there is a general sense of chaos and inconsistency. This is especially felt in the erratic use of pronominal suffixes which has been described as “totally arbitrary”²⁷¹; “extreme”²⁷²; and confused.²⁷³ Finally, the effect of these constructions must have been jolting. The previous study demonstrated that for numerous of the examples provided by Block, the Greek text presents a smoother and more correct reading. Similarly, the redaction process of the book of Ezekiel itself bears witness to efforts of perhaps

²⁶⁸ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 425.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

²⁷⁰ Greenberg for example says, “When reading G [Greek text], it almost reads as a correction to the unsuitable descriptions in MT” (*Ezekiel*, 47).

²⁷¹ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 420.

²⁷² Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 43–44.

²⁷³ David Halperin, “The Exegetical Character of Ezek. X 9–17,” *VT* 26 (1976): 130; C. B. Houk, “The Final Redaction of Ezekiel 10,” *JBL* 90 (1971): 45.

Ezekiel himself or later tradents to make sense of the confusing nature of the text. This is the focus of the next section.

d.2.2 The Relationship Between Ezek 1 and 10

A brief survey of Ezek 10 demonstrates that it is significantly related to the inaugural vision in ch. 1. The relationship between these two chapters is universally recognized although the nature of the relationship has been debated. Most scholars have come to view ch. 10 as a later insertion which was not original to the prophet Ezekiel.²⁷⁴ Zimmerli proposed that ch. 10 constituted the developments of a later “teaching house” which sought to explain the obscurities of the inaugural vision.²⁷⁵ C. B. Houk’s proposal was that the fragment in 10:2–7 was originally part of ch. 9 and was removed from that context and created by later editors with the help of “generous copying from ch. 1.”²⁷⁶ Halperin begins by noting that scholars have had difficulty understanding the purpose of ch. 10 since it appears to be “a random jumble of notes transferred mechanically and pointlessly from ch. 1.”²⁷⁷ Halperin noted that the studies of Zimmerli and Houk have “shown that this passage seeks to impose order and coherence on the frequently expansive and confusing text of its *Vorlage* (Ezek. I 15–21).”²⁷⁸ He says that the final book of Ezekiel is the creation of multiple authors, and ch. 10 in particular, appears to have been the subject of repeated later interpretations and expansions.²⁷⁹ He views Ezek 10:9–17 as a secondary edition formed as a commentary on 1:15–21.

²⁷⁴ Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 129–41; Houk, “Final Redaction,” 42–54.

²⁷⁵ Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 104–114.

²⁷⁶ Houk, “Final Redaction,” 42.

²⁷⁷ Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 129–130.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 130.

²⁷⁹ David Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel’s Vision*, TSAJ 16 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1988), 42.

In Ezek 1, the inaugural vision involves a detailed description of the *ḥayyot* (הַיְיֹוֹת) as well as a description of the portable throne chariot (*merkabah*) and its wheels. In chs. 8–11, Ezekiel is transported from exile in Babylonia to Jerusalem where he is shown in a vision how the people of Jerusalem are committing abominations in the Temple and filling the city with sin. In ch. 10, he sees what appear to be the very same *ḥayyot* along with the chariot and wheels from the first vision. One of the striking differences is that in Ezek. 10, they are no longer referred to as *ḥayyot* but cherubim (הַכְּרֻבִּים). Cherubim have an important role in Israel's traditions and worship. The cherubim are the winged beings on which YHWH is enthroned or rides through the air (cf. 1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 22:11). Two cherubim were sculpted and placed on the cover of the ark of the covenant (cf. Exod 25:18–22; 37:7–9). Similar creatures appear in the Holy of Holies of the first temple (cf. 1 Kings 6:23–28; 8:6–7).

Ezekiel's *ḥayyot* are different from the cherubim in Israel's tradition.²⁸⁰ First, the *ḥayyot* appear to have human bodily forms (Ezek 1:6) with three animal faces and one human face while the cherubim have animal bodies but humanlike faces. Second, each of the *ḥayyot* have four faces while the cherubim only have one face (cf. Exod 25:20). Thus, many have struggled to understand the equation of the *ḥayyot* in ch. 1 with the cherubim of ch. 10. In these two visions, the *ḥayyot* Ezekiel sees by the Chebar river are merged with the cherubim of the Temple.

Halperin represents the scholarly consensus when he says:

But the *ḥayyot* are so unlike the cherubim that I cannot imagine that anyone who knows, on whatever subconscious level, that the two are identical, would describe them with all the idiosyncrasies of Ezekiel 1. Given that so much of chapter 10 was written to interpret chapter 1, it seems to me more likely that the *ḥayyot* = cherubim equation was made by someone who was baffled by the *ḥayyot* and needed a context in which he could make sense of them. He found this context in the Jerusalem Temple.²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 41–44.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 43.

Another key difference concerns the descriptions of the wheels in the two chapters. As noted above, the description of the wheels in 1:15–21 is fraught with interpretive difficulties. In Ezek 10, the tradent(s) seeks to make sense of the wheels by equating them with the cherubim and giving them bodies.²⁸² In v. 11, the wheels have heads, and in v. 12, they have flesh, arms, and wings. In v. 14 (a text which only occurs in the MT and is absent from the LXX), the wheels (אִוֹפָנִים) have four faces like the *hayyot* of ch. 1 although the four faces are not identical to the living creatures of the inaugural vision (cherub, human, lion, and eagle). Notably, the face of the ox has been replaced by the face of a cherub in ch. 10.²⁸³ In essence, the tradent(s) of Ezek 10 has turned the *'ofannim* into a second order of angelic creatures.²⁸⁴

In ch. 10, in addition to making intelligible some of the substantive difficulties in understanding the living creatures and the wheels, there is also an interest in improving upon some of the grammatical and stylistic issues raised by Block and others. This is evident in the parallel material in ch. 10 which is clearly taken from ch. 1. For example, in 1:17, the preposition על is converted to ל in 10:11.²⁸⁵ Similarly, the later editors of ch. 10 sought to smooth out the irregular suffixes from ch. 1.²⁸⁶ Houk says:

Ch. 10 makes use of all the sections of ch. 1 where the suffixes are mixed, but this time with the proper suffixes. This clarification of suffixes points to a unified redactional effort in ch. 10 rather than to a haphazard series of interpolations bringing the text to its present form. Ch. 10 is a unified, purposeful effort to make use of the vision of ch. 1.²⁸⁷

²⁸² Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 138–40.

²⁸³ Halperin demonstrates that there was a serious aversion to bovine images in Jewish mysticism. Later Jewish speculation was suspicious of bovine images because the most exemplary apostasy in Israel was the episode with the golden calf. The vision of bovine creatures associated with YHWH was unsettling because it seemed to confirm the Israelites worshipped a calf which they had actually seen when God revealed himself (*Faces of the Chariot*, 157–90).

²⁸⁴ Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 46.

²⁸⁵ Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 133.

²⁸⁶ Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 133; Houk, “Final Redaction,” 45–46.

²⁸⁷ “Houk, “Final Redaction,” 46.

In 10:17, the author omits the confusing repetitions of 1:20–21 and omits *בְּלִכְתָּם יֵלְכוּ*.²⁸⁸ Thus, the consensus view holds that Ezek 10 represents an attempt by a later editor (students? tradents?) to make sense of the unusual inaugural vision and to make many of the substantive and grammatical difficulties intelligible.

A question one might raise is why later editor(s) simply did not reinterpret and clarify the inaugural vision in ch. 1 if they were concerned to expound the meaning of the vision. Halperin raises this question. He asks why, if the text of Ezek 1 was open to expansion, would later editors not insert some hint that the *hayyot* were cherubim. Why would they not have simply glossed the inaugural vision to provide clarity instead opting to insert the corrections in a later chapter? His response is that “chapter 1 was a fixed text from early times. The later editors and commentators, who filled chapter 10 with their exegetical suggestions, considered chapter 1 too sacred to meddle with.”²⁸⁹ Again, he says, “From a very early period, therefore, ch. 1 was a sacred, and, to this extent, ‘fixed’ text: its obscurities were to be treated in separate exegetical essays, but its own text was not to be tampered with.”²⁹⁰ It is true that the Septuagint, as demonstrated earlier, has shorter readings (cf. LXX 1:14, 24, 25–26). One could argue this points to the fact that MT represents a version with later additions which were not present in the Hebrew *Vorlage* for the translators of the Septuagint; however, a more plausible argument is that the MT’s longer and more difficult readings are older than the simplified, corrected, and shorter readings in the Septuagint. Like the editors of ch. 10, the translators of the Greek versions encountered the

²⁸⁸ Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 135.

²⁸⁹ Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 47.

²⁹⁰ Halperin, “Exegetical Character,” 140; cf. Block, “Text and Emotion,” 426–27.

difficulties in the text and corrected them by means of various strategies including omission, alteration, transference, etc.²⁹¹

d.2.3 Explanations for the Problems in the Text of Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision

One of the most dominant streams of interpreting the irregularity in Ezekiel's inaugural vision has been to attribute the errors to the process of scribal transmission and redaction.²⁹² For example, Walther Eichrodt speaking of the numerous difficulties in the text, including the abrupt alterations between the masculine and feminine suffixes, claims, "their variations must be ascribed to the scribal transmission of the texts..."²⁹³ This view is most thoroughly argued in Zimmerli's commentary where he repeatedly refers to difficult expressions as resulting from later reediting or expansion of the text.²⁹⁴ Zimmerli's method seems to primarily rely on the alternating masculine and feminine suffixes to ferret out the original material from secondary additions. For example, he says that the feminine suffixes in vv. 5–12 point to the original while the discordant masculine suffixes are secondary additions.²⁹⁵ According to Zimmerli then, the ur-text of the vision consisted of 1:4a, 5, 6b, 12, 13, 22, 26–28. The rest of the material results from later schools expanding and explaining Ezekiel's words in transmission.²⁹⁶ He rejects terms like 'redaction' for these expansions because he understands them to be serious attempts by ancient scribes to come to terms with the meaning of the vision.

²⁹¹ Ibid. Halperin says, "There is only one place in chapter 1 where I would say that MT contains an exegetical addition missing from LXX: verse 22, where MT adds a single word that characterizes the crystalline firmament as "terrible" or "awesome." To this, I would add 8:2, where, in the brief gloss "like the appearance of splendor," an annotator of MT makes the earliest attempt we know of to explain the mysterious word *hashmal*. Add also 10:14, and we have the only MT "pluses" I can think of in the *merkabah* materials that seem to represent deliberate exegesis" (*Faces of the Chariot*, 47).

²⁹² cf. K. S. Freedy, "The Glosses in Ezekiel i–xxiv," *VT* 20 (1970): 131–36.

²⁹³ Eichrodt, *Ezekiel*, 55–56.

²⁹⁴ cf. Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*, 83–105.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 100–110.

²⁹⁶ Ibid., 124.

It is outside the scope of the present dissertation to wade into the technicalities of redactional proposals for each unit and difficulties in the inaugural vision. Zimmerli's attempt to account for the problems in scribal transmission has not been fully convincing.²⁹⁷ For example, Houk asks, "Could not even a novice in the language have handled the gender of the suffixes more consistently?"²⁹⁸ Further, one wonders why this severe scribal ineptitude in writing and editing only characterizes the inaugural vision. Houk also pointed out that Zimmerli is not even able to apply his criteria consistently; namely, that feminine suffixes constitute original material while masculine suffixes indicate secondary additions. Houk notes that feminine suffixes occur in what Zimmerli identifies as secondary material in 1:10, 24, and 25.²⁹⁹ Block further critiques Zimmerli's criteria for focusing solely on the gender inconsistency of the suffixes since there is also incorrect gender in the use of verbs and nouns as well. This is also not to mention the multiple instances of confusion of number.³⁰⁰ Michael Lieb has noted that Zimmerli's claim to have recovered the ur-text of Ezek 1 has resulted in the invention of his own text that is coherent, spare, and straightforward.³⁰¹ In response to the approach of Zimmerli and others, Greenberg rejects the attempt to reconstruct the text of an unavailable and nonexistent *Vorlage*. Redactional explanations work on assumptions regarding the compositional process and scribal transmission that may or may not have been the case. Greenberg says that the closest one can come to the Ezekiel's actual prophecy is the text preserved in the MT and thus adopts a literary approach which seeks to appreciate the artistry of the whole text. Block also notes that the remarkable

²⁹⁷ cf. Greenberg, *Ezekiel*, 52.

²⁹⁸ Houk, "Final Redaction," 46.

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Block, "Text and Emotion," 427.

³⁰¹ Lieb, *Visionary Mode*, 21.

agreement of Hebrew texts found at Qumran and the MT make it unlikely that all the difficulties in the text somehow crept into the text in the intervening years.³⁰²

Three other proposals deserve mention which seek to take seriously the significant grammatical irregularity while avoiding ascribing it to scribal transmission alone. First, Thomas Wagner argues that the unusual syntactical phenomena of Ezek 1 are deliberately designed to confuse the reader. He says:

Besonders der Genuswechsel zur Vermittlung unterschiedlicher Aspekte ist für einen Leser bei der Erstlektüre des Textes nicht nachvollziehbar. Die Unverständlichkeit ist kein Zeichen eines redaktionellen Prozesses, durch den der Text korrumpiert wurde, sondern von Anfang an intendiert. Der Text dient dazu, den Leser zu verwirren. Dieses Erlebnis wird dem heutigen Leser durch die meisten Übersetzungen genommen.³⁰³

The intentional strategy is the author's way of including the audience in the confusion of the prophet. The second is Block's own unique proposal. Finding the redactional explanations incapable of explaining the presence of so many grammatical, stylistic, and substantive difficulties, Block proposes the extraordinary nature of Ezekiel's experience might explain the unusual first chapter. In the inaugural vision, the heavens open and Ezekiel experiences a vision of the heavenly throne room of God.³⁰⁴ In 1:3, the phrase "the hand of YHWH came upon on" is used to describe the overwhelming force of God which the prophet experiences.³⁰⁵ In other passages in Ezekiel, the "hand of YHWH" gains complete mastery over his movements and transports him to other locations (cf. 3:22; 8:1; 33:22; 37:1; 40:1). In other words, "What transpires is an unusual, unprecedented, unexpected encounter with divinity."³⁰⁶

³⁰² Block, "Text and Emotion," 427–28.

³⁰³ Thomas Wagner, "Ez 1—verständlich unverständlich: Zu Syntax, Form und Kohärenz," ZAW 125 (2013): 246.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 428.

³⁰⁵ cf. 1 Kgs 18:46; Isa 8:11; Jer 15:17.

³⁰⁶ Block, "Text and Emotion," 429.

Block's main thesis is that the nature of this unusual experience is reflected in the unusual description of the experience. Ezekiel is unable to adequately describe the majesty of what he sees so he is forced to use "the language of analogy."³⁰⁷ The language of analogy shows up in descriptions which involve the frequent use of the words מְרֹאֵה ("the appearance of"), דְּמוּת ("likeness") or כְּ ("like"). The most striking examples occur in vv. 26–28:

26 And above the dome over their heads there was something like [כְּמֹרְאֵה] a throne, in appearance like [דְּמוּת] sapphire; and seated above the likeness [דְּמוּת] of a throne was something that seemed like [דְּמוּת כְּמֹרְאֵה] a human form. 27 Upward from what appeared like [מְרֹאֵה] the loins I saw something like [כְּמֹרְאֵה] gleaming amber, something that looked like [כְּמֹרְאֵה] fire enclosed all around; and downward from what looked like [וּמֹרְאֵה] the loins I saw something that looked like [כְּמֹרְאֵה] fire, and there was a splendor all around. 28 Like [כְּמֹרְאֵה] the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance [מְרֹאֵה] of the splendor all around. This was the appearance of the likeness [מְרֹאֵה דְּמוּת] of the glory of the LORD.

Block marshals these examples to postulate that the vocabulary and forms of expression available to Ezekiel fell short of accurately describing an indescribable vision.³⁰⁸ Block proposes that in the prophet's grasping for appropriate ways to convey the vision, he was frustrated by the inadequacy of the human language and resorted to the only thing left at his disposal—the language of analogy.

The overwhelming nature of the experience is expressed in the first person, "I saw and I fell on my face."³⁰⁹ Although the recording of the event would have happened at a later date, Block proposes that the same shocked feeling experienced by the prophet at the moment of the vision could have been felt at the time of the recording and left its mark on the shape of the text. Block finds further confirmation for this thesis in the relationship between chs. 1 and 10. In ch. 10, the irregular grammar and problems of substance appear to be smoothed out. Since redactional theories have failed to fully account for the relationship of Ezek 1 and 10, Block proposes that by

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ Ibid., 430.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

the time of the experience of ch. 10, Ezekiel had more than a year to reflect on the inaugural vision. During that time, the images which once occurred so spontaneously to him have now fully settled in his mind which allows him to describe what he sees in Ezek 10 in a composed and coherent fashion.³¹⁰ Block summarizes:

In other words, the reason why the account of the inaugural vision appears so garbled and contains so many obscurities lies in the emotional state of the recipient, who by internal data is purported to have been the narrator of the experience as well... We all know from common experience that attempts to describe mental pictures while in a state of high excitement often came out garbled with incomplete sentences, erratic grammar, confused vocabulary, and incoherent structure.³¹¹

Anticipating the import of his study for Revelation, Block concludes by observing that the results of his study may have import for the eccentric grammar in Revelation. Noting the work of Charles and others on Revelation's irregular grammar, he wonders whether "the genre of experience" might better explain the nature of the text.³¹²

A third proposal has been made by Fredericks.³¹³ In the first section of his article, Fredericks places Ezekiel's call narrative within the context of other call narratives in the Hebrew Bible (Moses, Gideon, Jeremiah, Isaiah, and the high priest Jeshua). Fredericks notes that a common feature of these call narratives is the presence of an impediment to the success of the mission to which God calls the servant and God's rectification of impediments. The impediment is often related to speech. For example, Moses claims that he is not eloquent, and God promises to teach Moses what to say (Exod 4:10–12). Jeremiah claims that because of his youth, he is unable to speak, and God promises to tell Jeremiah what he is to speak (Jer 1:6). The Lord reaches out and touches Jeremiah's mouth saying, "Now I have put my words in your

³¹⁰ Ibid., 432–33.

³¹¹ Ibid., 433.

³¹² In personal correspondence with Block, he was surprised to learn that to date, no one has argued that the irregular grammar and style of Ezekiel's inaugural vision effected the shape of Revelation's text.

³¹³ Fredericks, "Diglossia, Revelation, and Ezekiel's Inaugural Rite," 189–99.

mouth.” Isaiah expresses hesitation regarding his prophetic call because he has “unclean lips.” God responds by sending an angelic figure with a burning coal to touch the mouth of Isaiah. The angel says, “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin is atoned for” (Isa 6:5–7, 9). Fredericks notes that Ezekiel’s call narrative differs from these other accounts by seemingly lacking an obvious impediment to be overcome by the prophet.³¹⁴ His suggestion is that the irregular grammar and difficulties of ch. 1 function as the impediment of speech which Ezekiel has to overcome by God’s help. Whereas in Exod 4:10, Moses claims to be deep-lipped (כָּבֵד־פִּי) and heavy-tongued (וַיִּכְבְּדֵנִי לְשׁוֹן), Ezekiel writes as if he is insufficient for the task of relaying the vision to others.³¹⁵ In chs. 2–3, God reassures Ezekiel that although he is being sent to a rebellious people, God will provide him the words he is to speak to them. The solution to the impediment is the consumption of the scroll, after which, Ezekiel is able to speak correctly.³¹⁶

In the second section, Fredericks studies the possibility of the sociodialectal nature of the language in the call narrative. Since the science of differentiating Hebrew dialects in the ancient world is inexact, Fredericks finds diglossia research unable to account for the abnormalities of the text that are “indeed deficient beyond any textual-critical rationale.”³¹⁷ In the next section, Fredericks explores the socio-cultural and -political factors that may have affected the language. The exile was a period of national crisis for Israel. Within such a context, the judgment which God would call Ezekiel to proclaim “demanded that his voice and message be credible.”³¹⁸ Further, like Moses, Ezekiel would be called to deliver a message of deliverance from a foreign power, and like Moses’s objection because of his lack of eloquence, Ezekiel demonstrates a lack

³¹⁴ Ibid., 190.

³¹⁵ Ibid., 190–91.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 192.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 194.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

of eloquence in his first attempt at relaying a vision in Hebrew. In such a moment of national crisis, the message of Ezekiel had to be clear and credible. Fredericks recognizes the conjectural nature of his proposal; however, he maintains that since the exiles were to a large degree the elites of Judah who had been deported, and since Ezekiel was a prophet speaking on behalf of God, it makes sense that the message would be expected to be in an elevated and correct diction.³¹⁹ Fredericks's conclusion is that the grammar of Ezekiel's inaugural vision is inexplicably clumsy. This poor grammar in the inaugural vision is a rhetorical device pointing to an impediment which must be overcome for Ezekiel to carry out his prophetic commissioning. Elsewhere in the book, there are dramatic scenes involved in Ezekiel's prophetic activity—eating scrolls, clapping hands, stomping feet, carrying baggage, etc. It is perfectly within the realm of possibility for the jarringly poor grammar and confusing style of the first chapter to be employed as dramatization. God gives Ezekiel the scroll to consume which serves as the divine correction for this impediment. After chs. 2–3, the book shifts from the incorrect language of ch. 1 to correct language of literary Hebrew.³²⁰

d.3 Stylistic Influence of Ezekiel's Inaugural Vision on Revelation

The previous sections have highlighted the irregularity of Ezekiel's inaugural vision which has left a significant mark on the shape of Ezekiel's message. Additionally, I have demonstrated that Ezekiel's inaugural vision significantly impacted not only John's own call narrative and inaugural vision, but the throne scenes of chs. 4–5 as well as the commissioning scene of ch. 10 and other sections of the book. Further, I argued in previous sections that the majority consensus is that although John may have known Greek exegetical traditions preserved

³¹⁹ Ibid., 198.

³²⁰ Ibid., 198–99.

in the Old Greek and LXX, he is primarily dependent on the MT for his Ezekelian references. Thus, it is certainly plausible that John, intimately familiar with a Hebrew text of Ezekiel like that of the MT, encountered the irregular grammar and style of Ezekiel's call narrative and inaugural vision and employed such a style as part of the complex phenomenon of John's *imitatio Ezechielis*.

Several features of Revelation's irregular Greek grammar strengthen the plausibility of this identification. In the first chapter, I demonstrated that the major categories of syntactically incongruous constructions in Revelation involve disagreements in case, gender, and number in participles, adjectives, pronouns, and nouns; verbal incongruities such as the resolution of participles into finite verbs and the unusual shifting of tense and mood; prepositional irregularities; and redundancies such as resumptive pronouns and pleonasm. Although taking into account that John is writing in Greek, the categories of grammatical and syntactical irregularity overlap significantly with the categories found in the Hebrew of Ezekiel's inaugural vision. Block provided examples of disagreements in gender for pronominal suffixes, verbs, and nouns; confusion of number in nouns and adjectives; the use of the infinitive absolute as a finite verb; inconsistency in the use of adverbs and prepositions; morphological inconsistency; asyndeton; dittography resulting in redundancies; difficult constructions involving *hapax legomena*; difficult insertions involving how to understand details; and the general narrative style. Although working within the registers of two different languages, the categories of grammatical and stylistic aberrations overlap significantly. The overlap in the categories of stylistic irregularity is listed in the following chart with a few examples:³²¹

³²¹ It was concluded in an earlier chapter that one of the major categories of syntactical irregularity in Revelation is confusion of case. This obviously does not feature in the categories of irregular grammar of Ezek 1 since Hebrew lacks case for nouns.

Categories of Irregularity in Ezek 1 MT	Ezekiel	Revelation
Confusion of gender	cf. 1:4, 5, 6 bis, 8, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25 ³²²	cf. 4:1; 5:6, 13; 11:4; 13:14; 17:3, 11, 16; 21:14 ³²³
Confusion of number	cf. 1:9, 12, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 28 ³²⁴	cf. 8:7; 11:8–9; 14:10–11 ³²⁵
Use of infinitive absolute as finite verb	cf. 1:14 ³²⁶	John uses participles as finite verbs (cf. 1:16; 4:1–2; 10:2, 8; 14:1; 21:13) ³²⁷ John uses articular indicatives irregularly (cf. 1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5) ³²⁸
Inconsistency of hē–directive with adverbs	cf. 1:12, 20 ³²⁹	n/a
Inconsistency of prepositions	cf. 1:12, 20 ³³⁰	ἀπό (cf. 1:4) ἐκ (cf. 15:2) μετὰ (cf. 2:16) ³³¹
Morphological inconsistency	cf. 1:5, 11, 23 bis ³³²	Forms of ἔχω ³³³ Forms of λέγω ³³⁴
Irregularly occurring asyndetic constructions	cf. 1:4, 12, 24 ³³⁵	n/a ³³⁶

³²² Block, “Text and Emotion,” 420.

³²³ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 159–81.

³²⁴ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 420–21.

³²⁵ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 181–91.

³²⁶ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 421–22.

³²⁷ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 197–200. Scott, Charles, Mussies, and Thompson argue this is caused by Semitic transfer. See Scott, *Original Language*, 9; Charles, *Revelation*, 1:316; Mussies, *Morphology of the Koine Greek*, 324–26; Thompson, *Semitic Syntax*, 68–69.

³²⁸ “Any good student of Greek knows that the indicative mood cannot be articulated. Rev 1:4 is a startling counter-example, at first sight. It occurs in the middle of the divine appellative ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος. That it is not a slip is clear from the often-repeated formula in 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; and 16:5. How is this articular indicative then to be explained? This is probably the only case in the whole list of solecisms where there is a consensus among scholars and I do not need to say much. It is argued that ὁ ἦν came not from ignorance, but from the lack of other choice. Since there is no participle preterit for the verb “to be,” John treated the imperfect as a participial substantive, perhaps with the purpose of saving “the symmetry of expression.” For a native Greek ear, the expression could not pass unobserved and probably would have been considered erroneous. Yet, it is rather a manifestation of a poetic license” (Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 200–201).

³²⁹ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 422.

³³⁰ Ibid.

³³¹ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 201–05.

³³² Block, “Text and Emotion,” 422.

³³³ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 123–24; 130–31; 133.

³³⁴ Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 161–66; 205–08.

³³⁵ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 422.

³³⁶ Revelation uses the conjunction καὶ throughout the work. Aune says, “A larger percentage of clauses and sentences in Revelation are introduced with καὶ than is the case with any other early Christian composition... there are 337 sentences in Revelation. Of these, 245 sentences (73.79 percent) begin with καὶ” (Aune, *Revelation*,

Dittography and redundancy	cf. 1:10, 11, 16, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26 ³³⁷	cf. 3:8; 7:2, 9; 12:6, 14; 13:8, 12; 14:8–9; 17:9; 20:8 ³³⁸
Difficult/ incomprehensible constructions	cf. 1:8, 9, 14, 24, 27 ³³⁹	ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου (4:6b) ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν (22:2a)
Difficult insertions	cf. 1:4, 6, 13, 14, 15, 22, 25 ³⁴⁰	cf. 1:15 ³⁴¹ ; 1:20 ³⁴² ; 12:7 ³⁴³ ; 14:6 ³⁴⁴

The largest amount of difficulties in Ezek 1 involved confusion of number and gender, especially in the use of pronominal suffixes. The largest category of difficulties in Revelation involve discord or gender, number, and case.

In chapter one, I concluded that the irregular constructions exhibited four characteristics: (1) frequently occurring throughout Revelation; (2) occasionally appear intentional while (3) simultaneously appearing inconsistent and random; and (4) aurally jarring given the author’s general aptitude in Greek. The history of research revealed that scholars have had difficulty explaining these phenomena, usually opting to elevate a few of these features. However, if John was imitating the style of Ezekiel’s inaugural vision, one would expect to find these kinds of stylistic features. The grammatical inconsistencies are frequently occurring in every section of the inaugural vision in several different parts of speech and syntactic constructions. The author demonstrates concord and knowledge of Hebrew in places, especially in the rest of Ezekiel’s book. About a dozen pronominal suffixes agree with their antecedents. In another example, the

1:xcxi). By comparison, the author of the Gospel of Mark uses the conjunction καὶ frequently; however, it only occurs in 62.64 percent of Mark (Aune, *Revelation*, 1:xcxi). John uses other conjunctions sparingly.

³³⁷ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 422–23.

³³⁸ Mot, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 209–16.

³³⁹ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 423.

³⁴⁰ Block, “Text and Emotion,” 424.

³⁴¹ Mathewson, *Handbook*, 13.

³⁴² *Ibid.*, 17.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 161.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 190.

appearance of *תִּרְפִּינָה* in vv. 24–25 demonstrates that author is familiar with the expected form of the 2nd person, feminine, plural, imperfect conjugation of the verb; however, in every other occurrence of the verb, the masculines are used, regardless of the gender. Despite exhibiting grammatical and syntactical concord, there is a general sense of inconsistency, chaos, and confusion in the use of pronominal suffixes which must have been jolting to any person hearing this inaugural vision in Hebrew.

I argue that John has imitated a chaotic and irregular style observed in Ezekiel's inaugural vision. To be clear, the recognition of John's stylistic imitation does not explain the individual occurrences of irregularity in Revelation. The irregular grammar and syntax of Revelation does not have a discernible one-to-one correlation with constructions in Ezekiel. The thesis suggests, however, that John was aware of the unusual style of Ezekiel and has reproduced his own creative version of that style in Revelation. Thus, the stylistic imitation has left its imprint on the text as a whole which is unable to account for specific instances. While scholars might understand individual occurrences differently (Semitism, Septuagintalism, irregular Greek, intentional device, technique for allusion, etc.), John used these means to produce an irregular Ezekielian visionary style. Not every allusion to Ezekiel contains grammatical irregularity, and instances of grammatical irregularity occur in allusions to non-Ezekielian texts. The argument is rather that the main categories of grammatical and stylistic irregularity in Ezekiel left an impression on John which was then creatively imitated throughout his own prophecy.

The argument that John's irregular style is caused by his imitation of the style of Ezekiel's inaugural vision raises some questions and potential objections. The arguments made here are necessarily speculative since we do not have access to the operations of John's mind at the time of the visionary experience or the recording of it. Only the text exists. However, after

analyzing John's use of Ezekiel earlier, we have already observed some of John's tendencies making informed speculation possible. Thus, the question is not whether one can prove with certainty what was happening in John's mind at the time; rather, on a probability scale, can the suggestion being made account for the unusual phenomenon of the style of Revelation and respond to potential objections?

First, does the hypothesis that John, writing in Greek, is imitating grammatical irregularities in a Hebrew style seem probable? Does the diglossic nature of the hypothesis weaken the case for imitation? In the first place, I demonstrated earlier that several scholars have proposed that John, writing in Greek, was imitating biblical Hebrew through Semitisms and Septuagintalisms more generally.³⁴⁵ Thus, the suggestion that John expected his audience to recognize something "Semitic" or "Septuagintal" about his style has already been established by numerous studies on Revelation's use of the Scriptures of Israel. In the second place, *imitatio* was taught and practiced in diglossic contexts. It was a translingual phenomenon. The practice of translation taught in Greco-Roman *paideia* encouraged students to translate works from the classic Greek past into Latin so that the minds of the students were sufficiently soaked in the Greek idiom when they wrote in Latin.³⁴⁶ The climactic example of *imitatio* in the first century—Vergil's *Aen.*—is the imitation of the Greek Homeric epics in Latin. Knauer notes that Vergil very often "translates", that is, "quotes one or several Homeric verses with such a degree of exactitude that his listeners would at once recognize the passage."³⁴⁷ Thus, the argument that

³⁴⁵ See section "Intentional Archaic Semitisms/Septuagintalisms" above.

³⁴⁶ "Latin authors admired the literary quality of Greek literature and were not hesitant to adopt a Greek literary form and imbue it with Latin characteristics, resulting in fields such as history and oratory becoming more practical and legally focused" (Adams, *Greek Genres and Jewish Authors*, 13).

³⁴⁷ Knauer, "Vergil and Homer," 876.

stylistic *imitatio* worked in a translingual fashion is not problematic against the background of the ancient practice of *imitatio*.

Second, what significance did John find in the irregular style of Ezekiel's inaugural vision? We may at once dispense with the suppositions of Zimmerli, Eichrodt, et al. who account for the style by theories of redaction and scribal transmission. Certainly, John did not approach the text of Ezekiel like a nineteenth or twentieth century redaction critic.³⁴⁸ Perhaps, per Block's proposal, John saw it as part of the prophet's emotional response to the incredible vision; a response with which John himself could identify (cf. Rev 1:17). Or perhaps, per Frederick's proposal, John understood it to be an essential component of Ezekiel's call narrative and prophetic commissioning. Whatever significance John might have seen, all one must suppose for this suggestion to be plausible is that through his intimate familiarity with the Hebrew text of Ezekiel, John attached *some kind* of significance to the irregular grammar of Ezekiel's inaugural vision and sought to imitate it. For some reason, John linked Ezekiel's unusual style to his prophetic commissioning. As demonstrated earlier, John identified significantly with the prophetic commissioning of Ezekiel. It is not a stretch to think he would express that identification through a similar style in his own work. Once the stylistic and grammatical difficulties are recognized in Ezek 1, later readers were faced with the dilemma of either smoothing out the difficulties or perpetuating them. On the one hand, the editor(s) of Ezek 10 and translators of the LXX both noted the difficulties in Ezek 1 and smoothed out the difficulties; on the other hand, John apparently noticed the difficulties and perpetuated and amplified the peculiar style.

³⁴⁸ Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 42–43.

Third, a possible difficulty is the fact that the style is only highly irregular in the first chapter of Ezekiel while the grammatical difficulties occur throughout Revelation. Perhaps this is an argument against John's imitation of Ezekiel's style. First, Moyise suggested that John's extensive employment of Ezekiel in Revelation indicates that "John has absorbed something of the character and mind of the prophet."³⁴⁹ Ozanne suggested that the grammatical abnormalities of Revelation "were deliberately devised by an author who wished to signify the solidarity of his writings with those of the Old Testament."³⁵⁰ deSilva says that John is uniting his voice with the "voices of the received tradition, allowing them to speak anew" through him.³⁵¹ Mathewson says John is "cloaking himself with the prophetic aura of his visionary predecessor" in order to provide legitimacy for his own prophetic composition.³⁵² Beale specifically argues the grammatical "howlers" are intentional Semitisms/Septuagintalisms which deliberately "create a 'biblical' effect in the hearer and thus to demonstrate the solidarity of his work with that of the divinely inspired OT Scripture."³⁵³ By employing the irregular style of Ezekiel's unique visionary experience, John is expressing his prophetic solidarity with a great prophet in Israel's Scriptures.

Secondly, John's own use of the material from Ezek 1–3 is not confined to his opening prophetic commissioning scene but is spread throughout Revelation suggesting John considered Ezekiel's commissioning to affect every aspect of his work. As demonstrated earlier, John's use of Ezek 1 is clustered in chs. 1, 4–5, and 10; however, details from Ezek 1 are also found elsewhere in Revelation (cf. 8:5; 14:2 ; 19:4, 6, 11; 21:5).³⁵⁴ The initial commissioning scene and

³⁴⁹ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 78.

³⁵⁰ Ozanne, "Language of the Apocalypse," 9.

³⁵¹ deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 158

³⁵² Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 221.

³⁵³ Beale, *Revelation*, 96.

³⁵⁴ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 504–07.

consumption of the scroll in Ezekiel's book does not fully occur until midway through Revelation in chs. 10–11. The influence of Ezekiel's inaugural vision is felt throughout Revelation rather than being confined to the opening commissioning scene. In our observations of John's structural dependence on Ezekiel, the two sections in which John appeared to most obviously use Ezekiel out of order is his use of Ezek 2–3 in Rev 10 and the allusion to Ezek 40 in Rev 11:1–2. After John's consumption of the scroll and commission to prophesy in 10:11, in Rev 11:1–2 John initiates the only sign act of the book. Bauckham says, "The pattern is again given by Ezekiel, whose prophetic commission (Ezek 3) was followed by the first of the symbolic actions in which he acted out his prophetic message (Ezek 4). By following this pattern, John indicates that in 11:1–2 he begins to divulge the contents of the scroll as prophecy."³⁵⁵ Structurally, midway through the book, John is still cloaking his work and prophetic self-identification with Ezekiel's opening commissioning scene. The measuring of the temple in 11:1–2 alludes to the temple measuring in Ezek 40, and anticipates the measuring of the heavenly Jerusalem later in ch. 21. In this way, John links the opening commissioning scene with the entirety of his Revelation. Thus, John's own use of Ezek 1 helps indicate why the style of that chapter occurs throughout Revelation. Whereas the unusual style of Ezekiel is contained in the first chapter, John uses the opening commissioning scene in Ezekiel to color his own prophetic experience throughout his revelatory work. This suggests that John's self-identification with Ezekiel's prophetic calling was not limited to any single chapter.

Additionally, it is possible to identify some specific ways Ezekiel's inaugural vision left imprints on the shape of John's grammatical irregularity. It is conspicuous that the most grammatically howling and intentional instances of irregularity occur in the opening sections in

³⁵⁵ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 266–67.

Rev 1:4 and 1:13. This may have been a strategic decision on John's part to indicate from the very beginning as a *leserkungssignal* that his opening commissioning scene, like Ezekiel's, also contains grammatical irregularity. When John reports the content of his own inaugural vision beginning in 1:12, which itself likely draws on Daniel to elaborate on the human figure in Ezek 1:26, there are several grammatical irregularities which set the stage for the irregularities which are to come. First, as noted above, the comparative adjective ὅμοιος is used with an accusative object in 1:13 (as with the same phrase in 14:14). However, the adjective is used 19 more times in Revelation with expected dative objects, including in the immediate context in 1:15. Second, in 1:15, the case and gender of the participle πεπυρωμένης are ungrammatical since they are not connected grammatically to any antecedent. This instance in John's inaugural vision prepares for other instances of inexplicable discord in case and gender. Third, the inaugural vision also prepares for irregular forms of λέγω and ἔχω which occur throughout Revelation. In 1:10 John announces that he is ἐν πνεύματι which was demonstrated earlier to allude to Ezekiel's prophetic experience in the Spirit. Immediately, in 1:10-11, the genitive participial form of λέγω should be in the expected accusative. This sets the stage for irregular participial forms of λέγω throughout Revelation, including especially the heavenly vision influenced by Ezek 1 in Rev 4-5. Approximately one-third of irregular uses of participial λέγω occur in those two chapters (cf. 4:1, 8; 5:12, 13).³⁵⁶ The irregularity in 4:1 where the participle λαλούσης should be nominative modifying ἡ φωνὴ mirrors the phrase in 1:10-11 linking these sections with Ezekiel's inaugural vision.

Rev 1:10-11	Rev 4:1
ἤκουσα ὀπίσω μου φωνὴν μεγάλην ὡς σάλπιγγος λεγούσης	ἡ φωνὴ ἡ πρώτη ἦν ἤκουσα ὡς σάλπιγγος λαλούσης μετ' ἐμοῦ λέγων

³⁵⁶ "In Revelation there are fifty-three occurrences of present participles of the verb λέγω; twelve are solecisms (4:1, 8; 5:12, 13; 6:10; 11:15; 13:14; 14:7; 15:3; 19:1, 6, 17...), while forty-one are properly used in agreement with grammatical or logical antecedents" (Aune, *Revelation*, 1: ccvi).

Elsewhere, John renders participial forms of λέγω with φωνή in the expected forms (cf. 6:6; 10:4; 12:10; 14:13) suggesting something about John's vision in these sections connected with Ezekiel's inaugural vision led to irregular grammar. Similarly, the nominative masculine participle ἔχων in 1:16 modifies the accusative ὅμοιον υἰὸν ἀνθρώπου. The articular participial form of ἔχων is used in each of the seven messages to the seven communities in the expected form (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22); however, the next two non-articular forms of ἔχων in 4:7–8 are irregular where the masculine gender does not correctly modify the neuter gender of ζῶον in 4:7 and the neuter gender of ζῶα and ἔν of 4:8. In the next occurrence in 5:6, the masculine nominative ἔχων modifies the neuter accusative ἀρνίον. However, after three occurrences of irregularity the participial form of ἔχοντες in 5:8 returns to normalcy correctly modifying οἱ πρεσβύτεροι followed by a series of grammatically correct non-articular participial forms of ἔχω (6:2, 5; 7:2; 8:3; 9:17, 19). However, the non-articular ἔχων returns to irregularity in 10:2 where it modifies the accusative ἄγγελον. As noted previously, the appearance and consumption of the scroll in ch. 10 is connected to Ezekiel's prophetic commissioning. The non-articular participle returns to normalcy in 11:6bis; 12:2, 3, 17; 13:1; 14:1, and 6. The next irregular non-articular form of ἔχων occurs in 14:14 modifying ὅμοιον υἰὸν ἀνθρώπου which alludes back to the irregularity in 1:13 in John's own inaugural vision. Then, in 14:17, John uses ἔχων in the correct form modifying ἄγγελος and correct again in 15:1–2. The next instance of irregularity with non-articular ἔχων is in 17:3 where John says he was carried away ἐν πνεύματι which alludes to Ezekiel's prophetic experience and the related irregularity in 1:10–11 involving λέγω in the inaugural vision. Thus in the majority of Revelation, the non-articular participial forms of ἔχω are only irregular with the material connected to John's experience of Ezekiel's prophetic

commissioning in Ezek 1–3.³⁵⁷ Thus, not only does John’s opening commissioning and vision report contain dramatic instances of irregularity, there are other patterns of irregularity connected with John’s later use of and intertextual connections with Ezekiel's prophetic commissioning scene and his own inaugural vision in 1:12–20.

Fourth, Moyise comes close to a similar conclusion after analyzing John’s extensive use of Ezekiel. He says, “The most obvious explanation is that John has taken on the ‘persona’ of Ezekiel.”³⁵⁸ His studied familiarity with Ezekiel allowed John to freely make such comprehensive use of Ezekiel without ever quoting it. Indeed, John “has taken on the mind of Ezekiel and writes ‘in the spirit’ (ἐν πνεύματι).”³⁵⁹ Although Moyise finds this convincing, he considers the weaknesses of this hypothesis: “First, how can it be reconciled with his extensive use of Daniel and other books like Isaiah?”³⁶⁰ He says again, “The presence of so many Old Testament traditions in Revelation undoubtedly weakens the argument that he has particularly adopted the ‘persona’ of any one of them.”³⁶¹ Moyise quotes Vanhoye approvingly: “Jean excelle à trouver les textes qui se complètent ou se corrigent mutuellement de façon à exprimer avec plus de fidélité l’accomplissement chrétien.”³⁶² An example of this eclectic use of Scriptures is found in Rev 19:17–21 where John unquestionably draws on Ezek 39, but apparently also envisions a passage like Isa 25:6 in the background as well.³⁶³

In response to this potential weakness, as discussed previously, imitation involved the eclectic use of the best features from the best sources. Imitative invention occurred through

³⁵⁷ The next irregularities do not occur until 21:11–14 which relays the measuring of the New Jerusalem which is modelled on Ezekiel’s measuring of the city and temple; see Verheyden, “Strange and Unexpected,” 168–77.

³⁵⁸ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 78.

³⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 79.

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 81; quoted from Vanhoye, “L’Utilisation,” 468.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 81.

eclecticism. Perry summarizes, “The overall implication is that, through the careful selection and use of the best qualities from the several prototypes, one can produce a work that far surpasses any single exemplum.”³⁶⁴ The metaphors of successful imitation explored previously point to how ancients thought about the practice of imitation. It is like the painter, Zeuxis, producing the beautiful Helen by choosing the most attractive features of the most beautiful women available to him as models in Croton. Similarly, *imitatio* is like bees collecting sweet nectar from the most beautiful flowers to form an even more delicious compound. Quintilian instructs, “let us keep the excellences of a number of authors before our eyes, so that one thing stays in our minds from one of them, and another from another, and we can use each in the appropriate place.”³⁶⁵ Further, those engaging in imitation felt free to adopt several modes of adaptation including elaboration, compression, fusion, substitution, alteration, etc.³⁶⁶ That John combines multiple sources and alters them fits within the ancient practice of *imitatio*. Although Vergil was primarily imitating Homer, he was also influenced by other sources such as the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes³⁶⁷, the *Annales* of Ennius, *De Rerum Natura* by Lucretius, and Catallus.³⁶⁸ Thus, John’s use of a variety of texts from Israel’s Scriptures does not lessen the identification of *imitatio Ezechielis*. In fact, the conclusion reached here conforms to the ideal practice of *imitatio*.

Fifth, this thesis raises the question of whether the audience would have known that John’s style was a stylistic imitation of Ezekiel’s style? In other words, would an audience hearing Revelation in Greek know that John was imitating a feature of the Hebrew text of

³⁶⁴ Perry, “Rhetoric, Literary Criticism, and the Roman Aesthetics of Artistic Imitation,” 162.

³⁶⁵ *Inst.* 10.2.26 (Russell, LCL).

³⁶⁶ Cf. Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 9–12.

³⁶⁷ Damien Nelis, *Vergil’s Aeneid and the Argonautica of Apollonius Rhodius*, Classical and Medieval Texts: Papers and Monographs 39 (Leeds: Francis Cairns, 2001), 1–21, 382–402.

³⁶⁸ Georg Knauer, “Vergil’s *Aeneid* and Homer,” in *Virgil: Critical Assessments of Classical Authors*, ed. Philip Hardie (London: Routledge, 1999), 95; “Introduction,” in *Vergil Aeneid: Books 1–6*, ed. Randall T. Ganiban (Newburyport, MA: Focus, 2012), 7–11; Vergil’s earlier works, *Eclogues* and *Georgics* had been modeled on other Hellenistic poems.

Ezekiel? Allen notes that some scholars have dismissed suggestions about John's use of sources on the basis of speculations about its reception by the first hearers.³⁶⁹ As an example, Allen points to Moyise's critique of his work on John's use of Zechariah. Moyise says, "...recent studies on literacy in the first century make it almost impossible to imagine how any of John's hearers (Rev 1.3) of the Greek text could have discerned his [Allen's] proposed solution and it has gone unnoticed throughout the reception history of the passage."³⁷⁰ The assumption behind Moyise's critique seems to be that audience reception and comprehension is determinative for authorial intention. Allen offers a number of responses. First, not every use of Scripture is for literary or rhetorical force. Allen's argument is not that John always appropriated sources for the benefit of the audience, "but that his usage of traditions in particular languages and forms was an innate outworking of literary composition in his specific textual culture."³⁷¹ Allen says, "The literary power of reuse does not always lie in the audience's ability to deconstruct the author's exegetical processes, nor is it always the case that the meaning of a text is determined by an audience's ability to do so."³⁷² The basic message of Revelation was still accessible even to the uninitiated who may not have been familiar with the Scriptures or the Hebrew language. Recognizing the Scriptural allusions provides added layers of meaning to the text, but they are not determinative for the comprehensibility of the book. Audience-oriented approaches are reductive in assuming that the author's only concern is the communicative strategy. Rather, Allen says it is better to see Revelation as "the product of the outworking of a long process of engagement with scriptural traditions and their exegetical instantiations by an author who is a

³⁶⁹ Allen, *Revelation*, 173–77.

³⁷⁰ Quoted from Steve Moyise, "A Response to *Currents in British Research on the Apocalypse*," in *The Book of Revelation: Currents in British Research on the Apocalypse*, ed. Garrick Allen, Ian Paul, and S. P. Woodman, WUNT 411 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 283.

³⁷¹ Allen, *Revelation*, 174.

³⁷² *Ibid.*, 175.

member of a certain literary community with established norms of composition.”³⁷³ “The goal of John’s engagement with scriptural traditions was not always for the immediate benefit of his audience or his communication strategy.”³⁷⁴ Thus, John may be imitating the irregular style of Ezekiel whether or not all (or even any) of the audience recognized the connection. Recognition and reception is not determinative for authorial intention.

The social and educational level of John’s audience and their ability to comprehend John’s complex allusion to the Scriptures of Israel is a common topic of discussion.³⁷⁵ deSilva says, “The question of whether or not the audience will recognize John’s allusions cannot be answered monolithically.”³⁷⁶ Several factors are at play. Is the reference brief or extensive? How closely does the allusion look like the source text? Is the allusion derived from familiar texts (e.g. texts used in Christian worship)? Regarding this latter question, it will be demonstrated later that Ezek 1 played a crucial role in apocalyptic texts and *merkabah* mysticism. Further, since the audience would have had different levels of familiarity with Israel’s Scriptures (in Hebrew or Greek), some might have recognized allusions that others did not. “One need not assume that John would expect most hearers to recall *all* the prophetic texts and their contexts, though most might recognize and recall a few key ones...”³⁷⁷

Beale has offered nine reasons why the audience was likely literate in the OT and thus competent to recognize allusions:³⁷⁸

³⁷³ Ibid.

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 177.

³⁷⁵ Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 367–68; deSilva, “What has Athens to Do with Patmos?,” 270–72.

³⁷⁶ deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 155.

³⁷⁷ Ibid., 156.

³⁷⁸ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament*, 69–70.

- The churches in Asia Minor were composed of a core of Jewish believers formerly associated with the Synagogue as well as Gentile godfearers who also had association with the Synagogue.
- There is still some relationship with the Synagogue (cf. Smyrna and Philadelphia) and the churches of Asia Minor, even if antagonistic.
- Specific reference to a false ‘prophet’ with an OT name (‘Jezebel’) in Thyatira suggests a teaching in that church that distorted both OT and NT tradition (2:20).
- If John knew these congregations and had a pastoral relationship with them, it is implausible that he would employ such a vast scale of OT allusions if he knew the audience would not know them.
- If John delivered this message to his fellow prophets and expected them to deliver the vision to the churches (cf. 22:16), then this circle must also be considered part of the audience and would have studied it with an attention to the OT.³⁷⁹
- John’s self–understanding as a prophet implies that he had previously taught them with prophetic authority. If so, there was probably greater awareness of the OT among some groups in the churches.
- Other evidence in the NT suggests Jewish and Gentile believers were trained in their new faith on the basis of the OT.
- It is plausible that on subsequent readings of Revelation, the audience was able to discern more allusions than on merely hearing the first reading.

³⁷⁹ Bauckham argues that if the prophets mediated John’s prophecy, they likely would have also explained and expounded on the work. The meticulous design of the book invited close study and the prophets may have learned to interpret the Old Testament in similar ways to John. Thus, they became a group of students who were capable of studying and expounding on John’s writing in the Spirit (*Climax of Prophecy*, 86).

- It seems generally acknowledged that both the majority of pagan Greeks and Jews in the Greco-Roman world gained a reading knowledge (respectively, at least, of Greek and Hebrew, and, in addition, Latin) in childhood, which even extended in varying degrees to slaves.

Sverre Bøe argues that like references to Balaam, Jezebel, Babylon, etc., when John refers to τὸν Γὼγ καὶ Μαγὼγ in 20:8 without further comment or explanation, he expects that at least some of the audience will understand the reference.³⁸⁰ The explicit reference coupled with the surrounding associations to Ezekiel in the last chapters of Revelation strengthen this probability. Bøe’s cautious approach is advisable:

We believe that John really intended to direct the attention of his readers/listeners to Ezekiel 38–39 when he included the apposition “Gog and Magog” in Rev 20,8. We believe that he thus meant to make a reference to Ezekiel, an invitation to reappropriate Ezekiel’s Gog-oracle. We are not in the position to know whether (some of) his readers/listeners actually knew Ezekiel 38–39 well enough to take up this invitation, but John apparently expected (some of) them to do so.³⁸¹

Ruiz has highlighted the important function of the hermeneutical imperatives which are efforts by the author to guide readers’ understanding.³⁸² According to Ruiz, these hermeneutical imperatives invite the audience to an “active reading” which first recognizes the author is using symbolic discourse then results in decodification of the symbol.³⁸³ Ruiz also argues that the unusual Greek grammar functions as a textual signal—to demand active reading which causes the reader to slow down and focus on the suspension of ordinary discourse. Thus, greater levels of *Schriftgelehrtheit* result in greater rhetorical payoff for John. For this reason, Karl Olav

³⁸⁰ Bøe, *Gog and Magog*, 369.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 371.

³⁸² Ruiz finds hermeneutical imperatives in the markarisms at 1:3 and 22:7; “he who has an ear, let him hear” (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22); the call for the mind of wisdom at 13:18 and 17:9 (*Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 190).

³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 220–21.

Sandnes prefers to speak of a text as “*potentially* mimetic,” especially for readers who have a more intimate knowledge of the source text.³⁸⁴

Allen offers the most confident assessment. He proceeds from the assumption that the audience was comprised of members with different levels of familiarity with the Scriptural texts.³⁸⁵ The authors of texts understood this reality and did not expect every aspect of their work to be understood by all members of the audience. Thus, the recognition of advanced literary or rhetorical techniques is not dependent on the assumption of audience recognition. However, Allen notes that Revelation is so complex that it was not intended for the uninitiated or the lowest-common-denominator reader/hearer. Authors of complex texts in antiquity expected numerous encounters with their texts which would result in deepening levels of understanding.³⁸⁶ Allen’s comments are worth producing in full:

The variety of literary ability encapsulated in early Christian communities would have made the details and significance of reuse more accessible to some community members than others. While the Apocalypse, for example, is anxious to address the whole of the community and to dissuade the faithful from blasphemous cooperation with Roman imperial power, the plenitude of significance embedded in John’s engagement with Zechariah and other traditions would only have been comprehended by those who belonged to his own peer group—scribal experts familiar with existing exegetical traditions and attuned to the processes of literary composition that John embodies. The paucity of angelic intermediaries that directly interpret Revelation’s visionary material (like those in the proto-Zechariah, *4 Ezra*, *2 Baruch*, and other works) also indicates that John composed with other experts in mind.³⁸⁷

He maintains that the book of Revelation is insider literature in at least two ways: It calls on members of distinctive communities in Asia Minor to withdraw from cooperation with imperial rulers, and the book is so complex that it appeals to scribal experts with literary sensibilities.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Sandnes, “Mimesis and Criticism,” 58.

³⁸⁵ Allen, *Revelation*, 263–64.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 264.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 264–65.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 265.

Further, the author exhibits an advanced knowledge of the production of texts and the *Sicherungsformel* of 22:18–19 both point to the reality that the book was designed for future circulation.³⁸⁹ Allen asks, if John was an advanced literati and wrote for educated ideal readers, in what way can his work be considered effective communication for the wider audience? First, Allen notes that John’s literary techniques resemble those recognized in early Jewish and Christian literature. Thus, because Revelation resembles other forms of literature, one can speak of it as effective communication.³⁹⁰ It may be regarded as effective regarding the remainder of the audiences of the seven churches since the overall message of the book is still discernible even if the details of the techniques used were not recognized. The book contains an anti-imperial message that would have been recognizable to Jewish and Gentile audiences (of all literary competencies).³⁹¹ John uses biblical and extrabiblical traditions to undermine Roman power, whether or not audiences recognized all the technicalities of John’s engagement with those texts or myths. Allen maintains that John employs this complex use of Scripture to enhance his authority and to highlight his continuity with the message of the Jewish Scriptures.³⁹² While John’s advanced literary skill is similar to Jewish literary engagement during the period, his high Christology differs from the other Jewish works.

The same problem of knowledge of audience reception exists for extrabiblical imitative works as well. Did Romans recognize every instance of Vergil’s deployment of Homer and other sources? Given the import of and broad knowledge of the Homeric epics, many readers must have been aware of Vergil’s imitation, even if the audience did not recognize every instance of Vergil’s imitative engagement with sources and techniques. Thus, in some sense, the

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid., 266.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid., 267.

identification of *imitatio* is not primarily dependent on the audience's recognition of every instance or technique of imitation. It is possible to speak of the author's compositional techniques without dependence on the audience's comprehension or reception. The author's imitative intent remains, and the text holds potentialities for the audience in the reception of the work. Subsequent engagement with Revelation would have certainly led to deeper understanding of the text. Given that *imitatio* was ubiquitous in ancient education, literature, art, and culture and that Ezekiel's inaugural vision was a key text in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic and *merkabah* mysticism, the likelihood that at least *some* hearers would have recognized the stylistic imitation increases.

Conclusion to Criterion 2: Significant Similarities— d. Verbal and Stylistic

I have sought in this section on verbal and stylistic *imitatio* to contribute to ongoing scholarly discussions of Revelation's irregular grammar by placing it within the context of a larger phenomenon of Revelation; namely, John's imitation of the style of Ezekiel's inaugural vision. The first section highlighted several scholars who have argued that John's style is due to an intentional effort to imitate Israel's Scriptures through Semitisms and Septuagintisms. These scholars argue that John is drawing generally from the Hebrew of the Scriptures, thus evoking the entirety of the biblical texts. In the second section, I analyzed the ungrammaticality of Ezekiel's inaugural vision. In scholarship on the prophet Ezekiel, the significant grammatical difficulties of the first chapter have been amply noted and discussed. These difficulties were also recognized by later editor(s) of Ezek 10 and the translators of the LXX which almost always present shorter, and thus smoother, readings. Block has provided the most systematic discussion of the problems of grammar, style, and substance in this opening chapter. Further, I demonstrated

that the redaction history of the book of Ezekiel even bears witness to the confused nature of ch. 1. The consensus on Ezek 10 is that it was created to make many of the substantive and grammatical difficulties of the inaugural vision intelligible. In the third section, I provided various proposed solutions to the problems in Ezekiel's inaugural vision. Finally, I brought these insights to bear on Revelation's stylistic and grammatical difficulties. There is significant overlap between the kinds of grammatical and syntactical difficulties in Ezekiel's text and those in Revelation. Several questions and possible objections were addressed to strengthen the plausibility of the suggested imitative relationship.

Criterion 3: Evidence of Intimate Familiarity with Source

The foregoing information has demonstrated the author had thoroughly digested the source of Ezekiel; nevertheless, a few examples are provided here to confirm this impression. This section is essential to my thesis in further demonstrating that John was intimately familiar with the details of Ezekiel's text. Because John interacted with Ezekiel on this penetrating level, the argument here supports my thesis that John was intimately familiar even with the linguistic minutiae of Ezekiel's inaugural vision.

There are several passages which contain interpretive difficulties that can best be explained by John's intimate familiarity with and use of Ezekiel. First, already in the beginning of the twentieth century, Charles suggested that the description of the living creatures as being *Καὶ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου καὶ κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου* (4:6b) was unintelligible. He conjectured that it either must be a gloss or a mistranslation of the Hebrew.³⁹³ Robert Hall argued that the throne is patterned after the ark which depicted the cherubim as forming part of the throne seat. In this

³⁹³ Charles, *Revelation*, i:118.

view, the living creatures are seen supporting the throne. Thus, when John describes the creatures as ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θρόνου, he means “within the space taken up by the throne” as the back, arms, or legs of the chair. When John describes the creatures as κύκλῳ τοῦ θρόνου, he means the creatures as the legs, arms, and back of the chair.³⁹⁴ Craig Koester understands the second phrase to be describing the first so that being “in the middle of the throne” is defined as being “around the throne.”³⁹⁵ Vogelgesang argues that the awkwardness of the description results from John’s desire to describe the creatures as being “around” the throne while at the same time alluding to Ezek 1:5 which contained the phrase “in the midst of”.³⁹⁶ Because John is describing the vision and alluding to Ezekiel’s description, the resulting phrase is clumsy.

Second, the phrase in 22:2 ἐν μέσῳ τῆς πλατείας αὐτῆς καὶ τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἐντεῦθεν καὶ ἐκεῖθεν ξύλον ζωῆς (literally: “in the middle of its street, on either side of the river was the tree of life”) has been notoriously difficult. Charles pointed out that while the phrase may not be ungrammatical, the sense is unsatisfactory.³⁹⁷ Some English translations understand “in the middle of the street” to end the sentence in v. 1 describing “the river of the water of life” as located in the middle of the street. The editors of UBS, on the other hand, understood this phrase to stand at the beginning of v. 2. This reading is difficult to understand. It might be that the street and the river run parallel to one another with trees growing in the middle. It could also be that in the area between the street and the river stands one tree of life. George Beasley-Murray suggested that in the middle of the city’s street is a single tree of life, located between both sides of the river which diverges into two branches.³⁹⁸ Koester suggests the picture is that the tree of

³⁹⁴ Robert Hall, “Living Creatures in the Midst of the Throne: Another Look at Revelation 4:6,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 609–13.

³⁹⁵ Koester, *Revelation*, 364.

³⁹⁶ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 57.

³⁹⁷ See Charles, *Revelation*, ii:176.

³⁹⁸ George Beasley-Murray, *The Book of Revelation*, NCBC (London: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1974), 331.

life grows over the river with roots extending to both banks.³⁹⁹ Vogelgesang argues that John’s familiarity with Ezek 47:7, 12 explains this difficult phrase. According to him, John’s faithfulness to his source text where the trees are “on the one side and the other” and on “both sides of the river” results in a clumsy description in Rev 22. John has used Ezekiel’s description of the location of a given object “in such a way that it does not make literal sense in the context in which it is placed, but it does become clearer when it is recognized that John is preserving an Ezekielian description.”⁴⁰⁰

Third, Vogelgesang points to an interesting example in Rev 21:13. A comparison of the order of the lists of gates with Ezek 48:30–34 is represented in the following chart:

Rev 21:13	Ezek 48:30–34 LXX	Ezek 48:30–34
ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν πυλῶνες τρεῖς.	30 Καὶ αὗται αἱ διεκβολαὶ τῆς πόλεως αἱ πρὸς βορρᾶν... 31 πύλαι τρεῖς πρὸς βορρᾶν... 32 καὶ τὰ πρὸς ἀνατολᾶς... 33 καὶ τὰ πρὸς νότον... 34 καὶ τὰ πρὸς θάλασσαν	הַעֲרִיר מִפְּאֵת צָפוֹן 30 שְׁעָרִים שְׁלוֹשָׁה צְפוֹנָה 31 וְאֶל־פְּאֵת קְדִימָה 32 וּפְאֵת־נֹגֵבָה 33 פְּאֵת־יָמָה 34

The comparison of the lists of gates reveals that the order of the direction of the gates in Revelation is: east, north, south, west. The order of the gates in the text on which John appears to be dependent is different: north, east, south, west. Of course, one might attribute the difference in order to the creative reordering by the author.⁴⁰¹ Another solution is that the signs of the zodiac affect John’s conception of the gates. Several texts in 1 En. 34–36 and 76–77 reveal similar directional orders. For example, 1 En. 34–36 describes the twelve gates of heaven, three each from each compass point, through which the sun and constellations pass in the order east, north, west, south. The only text which contains the same directional order as Rev 21:13 is 1 En. 76:3

³⁹⁹ Koester, *Revelation*, 834.

⁴⁰⁰ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 58.

⁴⁰¹ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 102.

which gives the direction through which the wind blows upon the earth; however, the Aramaic fragment differs from the Ethiopic text with a different order (east, south, north, west) suggesting the Ethiopic reading may not be the earliest.⁴⁰² Further, if John is interested in zodiacal signs, there is nothing comparable to the speculation found in 1 Enoch.

A solution proposed by J. Hugh Michael that has been subsequently accepted by several scholars is that the order in Revelation follows the same order in the Hebrew text of Ezek 42:16–19 which describes the measurement of the temple.⁴⁰³ Michael suggested that while John was dependent on Ezek 48:30–34 for the gates, he was dependent on the Hebrew text of Ezek 42:16–19 for the order of the direction of the gates.

Rev 21:13	Ezek 42:16–19 LXX	Ezek 42:16–19 MT
ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ νότου πυλῶνες τρεῖς καὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν πυλῶνες τρεῖς.	16 τῆς πύλης τῆς βλεπούσης κατὰ ἀνατολὰς... 17 καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν πρὸς βορρᾶν καὶ διεμέτρησεν τὸ κατὰ πρόσωπον τοῦ βορρᾶ... 18 καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν πρὸς θάλασσαν καὶ διεμέτρησεν τὸ κατὰ πρόσωπον τῆς θαλάσσης... 19 καὶ ἐπέστρεψεν πρὸς νότον καὶ διεμέτρησεν κατέναντι τοῦ νότου	מִקְדָּהּ הַיָּמִין 16 מִקְדָּהּ הַצָּפוֹן 17 מִקְדָּהּ הַיָּמִין הַדְּרוֹם 18 מִקְדָּהּ הַיָּמִין הַצָּפוֹן 19

If this is the solution, the mixture of these two texts is strange since John selects the order of Ezek 42 while giving the location of the gates in Rev 21:13—which Ezekiel does in ch. 48.

Michael conjectures that this mixture was caused because John’s “mind was influenced by a recollection of the order of the measuring of the sides of the Temple in 42:16–19.”⁴⁰⁴

Vogelgesang goes further noting that since John’s New Jerusalem omits the temple (21:22), elements of Ezekiel’s vision of the temple are applied to the city in Rev 21:9–22:2.⁴⁰⁵ The wall in

⁴⁰² Ibid.

⁴⁰³ J. Hugh Michael, “East, North, South, West,” *ExpTim* 49 (1937–38): 141–42; cf. Beale, *Revelation*, 1068; Koester, *Revelation*, 815; Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 61–63.

⁴⁰⁴ Michael, “East, North, South, West,” 142.

⁴⁰⁵ Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 63.

Ezekiel's vision which surrounds the temple, in Revelation surrounds the city.⁴⁰⁶ Since John is interested in appropriating the image from the entirety of Ezek 40–48, and since the New Jerusalem in John's vision lacks a temple, many of the images referring to the temple are transferred to the city in Revelation.⁴⁰⁷ Further, John frequently condenses images from two different Ezekielian passages into one.⁴⁰⁸ Vogelgesang concludes:

Such observations lead to the further conclusion that John had an excruciatingly detailed and comprehensive mastery of the text of Ezekiel as well as corresponding mastery of the interpretive possibilities of that text. John had to exercise a variety of sophisticated interpretive liberties, as well as an extremely detailed knowledge of the text of Ezekiel, in order to combine HT Ezek 42:16–19 and Ezek 48:30–35 in precisely the way he did in Rev 21:13.⁴⁰⁹

Conclusion to Criterion 3: Evidence of Intimate Familiarity with Source

The evidence presented earlier coupled with the three brief examples just reviewed suggest that John was not only intimately familiar with the overall programme of Ezekiel but also the minute details of the book.⁴¹⁰ John's familiarity with the phraseology of passages in Ezekiel helps explain some difficult phrases in Revelation (cf. 4:6; 22:2). Further, such intimate familiarity helps explain interpretative questions; namely, why does John not follow the directional order of the gates in Ezekiel's description in Rev 21:13 while clearly alluding to Ezek 48:30–35. Following Vogelgesang, these observations suggest that John "had an excruciatingly detailed and comprehensive mastery of the text of Ezekiel..."⁴¹¹ This recognition supports the

⁴⁰⁶ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 101.

⁴⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 102–03.

⁴⁰⁸ Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 63.

⁴⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴¹⁰ "Der Apk-Autor rezipiert vielschichtige Einzelmotive aus verschiedenen, sicher teils mündlichen Überlieferungen. Indes kennt er mit hoher Sicherheit außerdem das ganze Ezechielbuch und damit eine schriftliche Gestalt des Ezechieltextes und greift auch darauf zurück" ("Von der Apokalypse zu Ezechiel," 98).

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*

plausibility of my thesis that John had an intimate familiarity with Ezekiel's inaugural vision, including the grammar and style of that passage.

Criterion 4: Intelligibility of Differences

This criterion of intelligibility of differences focuses on whether there are indications that an imitative author has systematically reworked a source to improve upon or transform the source text. This criterion is not meant to deny the creativity of any imitative author. It is important to remember that the goal of *imitatio* was to say the same thing in a different way.⁴¹² Thus, in *imitatio*, dependence and transformation are of a piece. This is an impossibly large question to address in one section; however, I will provide a few representative examples. First, the previous example of the directional order of the gates in Rev 21:13 is instructive. It is representative of one of the most obvious differences between Revelation and Ezekiel. In the eschatological perspective of Revelation, there is no temple. Given John's overall familiarity with and use of Ezek 40–48, this constitutes a deliberate reworking of Ezekiel.⁴¹³ In addition to the order of the gates, other instances of the temple-to-city transference are as follows:⁴¹⁴

- In Ezek 43, the glory of God enters the temple while in Rev 21:11, the glory of God fills the city.
- In Ezek 41:8, the foundations for the temple's side chambers become the twelve foundations of the city walls in Rev 21:14.
- In Ezek 40:3f., the man is given a measuring stick to measure parts of the temple while in Rev 21:15f., the angel has a measuring rod for measuring the city, its gates and walls.

⁴¹² Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 46.

⁴¹³ Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 77.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77–78.

- Every mention of a wall in Ezek 40–48 (40:5; 41:5, 6, 9, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, 25; 42:7, 10, 12, 20; 43:8) refers to the walls surrounding the temple while the walls in Revelation refer to the walls of the city (21:14–15, 17–19).
- One of the functions of the temple wall in Ezek 42:20; 43:8; 44:1–23 is to serve as a boundary for clean and unclean. In Revelation, the walls of the city have this function (21:27; 22:14–15).

Although these instances involve difference and transformation of the source text in Ezekiel, they are intelligible since John's New Jerusalem has no temple. In addition to John's eschatological perspective, the Christological focus has resulted in radical reinterpretation and use of Ezekiel's material. The use of Ezekiel's inaugural vision applied to the throne of the Lamb in ch. 5 is a prime example. The Gog and Magog material in Ezek 38–39 is applied to the victory of the conquering Lamb in Rev 19–20.

Second, Vogelgesang has carried out a thorough examination of John's use of Ezek 40–48 in Rev 21–22 and Ezek 1 in Rev 4 in order to discover discernible patterns in John's use of Ezekielian materials. First, John radically alters and reinterprets portions of Ezekiel.⁴¹⁵ For example, God dwells with all people (Rev. 21:3) rather than only with Israel. Vogelgesang finds that the institutions and privileges exclusive to Israel in Ezek are democratized to all people in Rev 21–22.⁴¹⁶ Other scholars have recognized John's universalizing tendencies.⁴¹⁷ The omission of the temple is also notable.⁴¹⁸ Second, John simplifies and condenses Ezekiel.⁴¹⁹ The throne

⁴¹⁵ Vogelgesang notes that this pattern is also exhibited in John's use of other OT texts. For example, in Rev 21:25, there is no night contrasted with Isa 60:11. John is told not to seal up the prophecy of the book contrasted with Dan 12:4 ("Interpretation of Ezekiel," 113–14).

⁴¹⁶ Ibid., 128–30.

⁴¹⁷ Vanhoye, "L'Utilisation," 464–66.

⁴¹⁸ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 223–24.

⁴¹⁹ Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 114–17; 183; Vanhoye, "L'Utilisation," 463–64.

vision consisting of eight verses in Rev 4 is a condensation of about twenty-eight verses in Ezek 1. With this abridgement comes the omission of certain elements—most noticeable is the absence of the wheels in Revelation’s scene. The entirety of Ezek 40–48 is simplified into twenty verses of Rev 21:10–22:5. Several chapters describing temple measurements are compacted into two verses in Rev 11:1–2. The long descriptions of Israel and Judah’s abominations in Ezek 16 and 23 are condensed to several short phrases in Rev 17. Rev 18 incorporates about three chapters of Ezekiel (26–28) while two chapters of the Gog and Magog material in Ezek 38–39 appear in about five verses of Rev (19:17–18, 21; 20:8–9). Thus, one of John’s general tendencies is the abridgement of Ezekielian material.⁴²⁰

Another tendency recognized by Vogelgesang is that while John condenses and omits material from Ezekiel, his use of Ezekiel can be described as comprehensive and unified.⁴²¹ For example, although John makes no mention of the wheels from Ezek 1 in his vision in ch. 4, the description of “filled with eyes” is transferred to the living creatures (4:6, 8). Similarly, the sounds of the movement of the wings in Ezek 1 are transferred to the lightning, sounds, and thunders in Rev 4. Although brief, Rev 4 presents a comprehensive unity of almost all the constitutive elements of Ezekiel’s vision: open heaven, seizure by the Spirit, throne, the one seated on the throne, thunder, sounds, lightning, torches of fire, firmament, four living creatures (lion, ox, man, eagle), wings (although the number is different), heavenly worship, etc. While much of the temple material is omitted from Ezek 40–48, all the constitutive elements and major motifs are present in Revelation. Since Revelation omits the temple entirely from the New Jerusalem description, it would have been perfectly understandable for John to omit those

⁴²⁰ Although Vogelgesang notes one general exception—namely, the elaboration on the jewels of the foundation in Rev 21:13, 19–20 suggesting he wanted to give extra emphasis to the role of the apostles and the Lamb (“Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 116).

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 117–21.

descriptions from his visions; however, because much of the temple material is transferred to the city, it suggests that John intended the material from Ezek 40–48 in a comprehensive (albeit condensed) fashion.

A final pattern discerned throughout Revelation is that although major sections are modeled largely on Ezekiel, the vision amplifies Ezekiel as model text with elements from other texts from Israel's Scriptures. Much more could be said here; however, like the cherubim of Isa 6, the living creatures of Revelation have six wings and worship God with the trisagion (4:8) and features of the throne appear to be influenced by Dan 7:9–10. In addition to Ezek 40–48, chs. 21–22 contain allusions to Isaiah⁴²², Exodus⁴²³, Genesis⁴²⁴, Zechariah⁴²⁵, et al. This is a consistent feature of Revelation where almost every verse contains an allusion to some text from Israel's Scriptures. After his careful study of the use of the OT in Revelation 21:9–22:5, Mathewson uses three metaphors to describe John's use of sources. First, like a magician spinning plates, John simultaneously keeps several plates from the OT spinning at the same time. While Ezek 40–48 is the primary text which serves as the model for the whole vision, he keeps other plates spinning such as Isa 40–66 and Zech 14. Second, like an orchestra performance, John has used some OT texts to carry along the melody line while other instruments are brought in to add harmony and volume. Third, the final vision can be compared to a painting where the broad strokes constitute the primary features of the painting while other colors and smaller strokes are brought in to add depth to the world. Mathewson's metaphors for John's use in the concluding vision are apt for John's deployment of the OT elsewhere in Revelation: "...several

⁴²² cf. 43:18 (21:4); 52:1 (21:2); 60:1–2 (21:11, 23); 65:17 (21:1, 5); the nuptial imagery of Isa 61:10; 49:18; 54:11–12 influences Rev 21:2, 9–10, 18–21.

⁴²³ The stones adorning the city allude to the stones of the breastplate of the high priest in Exod 28:19–20 (21:18–21).

⁴²⁴ The descriptions of paradise allude to Gen 2:9, 11–12; 3:24 (ch. 22).

⁴²⁵ Several analogies between Zech 14:7–8, 10–11, 16–21 suggest it may have influenced Rev 21:24–26 (see Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 164–65).

primary texts provide the dominant voices, while other texts provide added color, or complement and supplement the dominant voices with greater or lesser degrees of volume.”⁴²⁶

Conclusion to Criterion 4: *Intelligibility of Differences*

Although John exhibits considerable creativity in his reappropriation of Ezekiel, several general observations widely recognized in scholarly literature are possible. First, John makes some radical alterations to Ezekiel’s vision. In John’s eschatological vision, the New Jerusalem has no temple. Similarly, much of the Ezekiel material is Christological in focus. Second, John generally simplifies and condenses his material in Ezekiel which results in numerous omissions. Third, despite his simplification, John generally uses Ezekiel in a comprehensive and unified manner. Thus, although John condenses the material from Ezekiel’s inaugural vision into a few verses, almost all the elements of Ezekiel’s vision (with the exception of the wheels) are present. Fourth, John universalizes themes from Ezekiel such as widening access to the eschatological city beyond Israel to all the nations. Finally, Revelation amplifies the overarching use of Ezekiel by incorporating elements from other texts from the Scriptures. All of these differences are intelligible from the perspective of observable imitative practice (e.g. Vergil’s use of Homer).⁴²⁷

Criterion 5: Analogy

The criterion of analogy places the proposed parallels within the tradition of imitations of the same model. If it can be demonstrated that another work used Ezekiel in an analogous way suggested in this dissertation, it would certainly strengthen the case for the proposed imitation.

⁴²⁶ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 234–35.

⁴²⁷ The patterns of Revelation’s transformation of Ezekiel are similar to patterns recognized in other works. See Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 9–12.

Since this dissertation proposes that the irregular Greek syntax in Revelation is due to John's imitation of Ezekiel's irregular visionary style, this issue will be the primary focus of the application of this criterion. Analogy forces the question of whether comparable texts exist which draw from Ezekiel's vision *and* exhibit irregular grammatical syntax. This section will begin more generally by examining the import of Ezekiel's inaugural vision in early Judaism, apocalyptic writings, and early Christianity and then will transition to discuss the possibility of similar texts which are influenced by Ezekiel and contain grammatical and syntactical irregularity.

First, Ezekiel's inaugural vision was a central text in Judaism and developing Jewish mysticism. While Ezekiel never uses the term "chariot" (*merkabah*) to describe what he sees, Joshua ben Sira wrote, "It was Ezekiel who saw the vision of glory, which God showed him above the chariot [*merkabah*] of the cherubim" (Sirach 49:8). Scholars refer to the stream of Jewish mysticism focused on the first chapter of Ezekiel as *merkabah* mysticism. Numerous Second Temple works are influenced by Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision including: Qumran fragments of Enoch (4Q204); the Aramaic *Testament of Levi* (4Q213); Pseudo-Ezekiel (4Q385); the *Book of the Watchers*; *Similitudes of Enoch*; the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Dramatist; the *Apocalypse of Abraham*; the *Testament of Levi*; the *Ladder of Jacob*; the Latin *Vita of Adam and Eve*; the *Testament of Abraham*; the *Testament of Isaac*; the *Fourth Book of Ezra*; and the *Testament of Job*.⁴²⁸ The *merkabah* was also influential on rabbinic Judaism, *merkabah*

⁴²⁸ This list provided by Daphna Arbel, "'A Chariot of Light Borne by Four Bright Eagles': Eve's Vision of the Chariot in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*," in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Eilior*, ed. Daphna Arbel and Andrei Orlov (Boston: De Gruyter, 2011), 271–72.

mysticism, and the later *hekhlot* literature. Within Judaism, the *merkabah* was not only a subject of study but also a catalyst for visionary experience.⁴²⁹

In rabbinic Judaism, strict restrictions were placed around the reading and interpretation of difficult texts, with emphasis on Ezek 1 (*ma'aseh merkabah*) and Gen 1 (*ma'aseh bereshith*).⁴³⁰ In *M. Megillah* 4.10, the *merkabah* vision is forbidden to be read as *haftarah* or translated into Aramaic. The meaning of the difficult word מַשְׁמַל in Ezek 1:4 provided a launching point for speculation. In *b. Hag.* 13a, the following warning on meditating on this word is given:

The rabbis taught: There was once a child who was reading at his teacher's house the Book of Ezekiel and he apprehended what *hashmal* was, whereupon a fire went forth from *hashmal* and consumed him. So they sought to suppress the Book of Ezekiel, but Hananiah said: If he was a sage, all are sages. What does the word *hashmal* mean? Rab Judah said: Living creatures speaking fire. In a baraita it is taught [*hashmal*] means at times they are silent; at times they speak. When the utterance goes forth from the mouth of the Holy one Blessed be he, they are silent and when the utterance goes not forth from the mouth of the Holy One, they speak.⁴³¹

This passage ties together the meditation and interpretation of Ezek 1 (apprehending the *hashmal*) with an experience of the consuming fire. There is also evidence that R. Johanan b. Zakkai, the leader of the post-70 reform at Javneh, was interested in speculation on the *merkabah*. This puts interest on Ezek 1 at the heart of post-70 Judaism.⁴³² One story of R. Eleazar b. Arak expositing the chariot vision before Johanan occurs in four versions (*Tos. Hag.*

⁴²⁹ Christopher Rowland, Patrician Gibbons, and Vicente Dobroruka, "Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity," in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick, SBLSS 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 47–48.

⁴³⁰ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 276.

⁴³¹ *b. Hag.* 13a [trans. Soncino]

⁴³² "It would, however, be wrong to dismiss these elements as merely an aberration of a few eccentric teachers or an irrelevant extravagance on the periphery of the essentially legalistic rabbinic religion. The fact that one of the architects of early rabbinic Judaism, R. Johanan b. Zakkai, played such a prominent part in the meditation on Ezekiel 1 suggests that we are not dealing here with a subject which was only of peripheral importance. What is more, it is clear from our examination of developments in rabbinic interest in apocalyptic matters in the decades after Johanan's death that it had assumed a position within rabbinic Judaism out of all proportion to its importance within the whole gamut of Jewish faith" (Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 346–47).

2.1; *j. Hag.* 77a; *b. Hag.* 14b; *Mishpatim* 21.1). The accounts in the Tosefta and two Talmuds contain similar descriptions. R. Eleazar b. Arak asks Johanan to teach him the story of the chariot in Ezek 1. Johanan warned Eleazar that only the sage is able to understand and teach the chariot. Eleazar began to tell and expound on the story of the chariot. Three of the accounts record that upon Eleazar's exposition, "fire came down from heaven" and surrounded them. Angels began dancing before them and confirmed that Eleazar had accurately expounded the story of the chariot. The account ends with Johanan blessing Eleazar for expounding and performing the *merkabah* chapter well. In *b. Hag.* 13a as well as the accounts of Eleazar's exposition of the chariot to Johanan, the result of the reflection on Ezek 1 resulted in fire. In one case, the fire consumed one unworthy to expound on the chapter and in the other, the fire functioned as a seal of approval on the exposition.

There was an attempt in multiple rabbinic passages to restrict uninitiated people from meditating on the secrets of God's heavenly chariot which could have very tragic consequences. Because Ezek 1 revealed God's throne and the appearance of the glory of YHWH, this passage contained a description of one of the most important mysteries of God. The danger of the text required a sage to understand. *M. Hagigah* 2.1 makes this point clear: "The forbidden degrees [Lev. 18.6ff.] may not be expounded before three persons, nor the story of creation [Gen. 1] before two, nor the chariot-chapter [Ezek. 1 and 10] before one alone, unless he is a sage that understands of his own knowledge." There were not many passages restricted like these texts indicating that the rabbis considered the content of these passages as more significant than other passages because of the secrets they revealed about God.⁴³³ Because there are so many difficulties and obscurities involved in Ezek 1 and the description of the *merkabah*, this allowed

⁴³³ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 277.

the possibility of filling in the gaps. “It was here, above all, that care was required. A student who did not have a long background of training in rabbinic methods and Jewish beliefs could easily be tempted to provide answers to questions not given in Scripture...”⁴³⁴ It is this impulse, to fill in the gaps and difficulties, that led apocalyptists to draw on passages like Isa 6 to understand God and his throne.⁴³⁵ Similarly, the Scriptures said that looking on God would result in death; therefore, it is not difficult to see how the vision in Ezek 1 would be considered dangerous for the possibilities it raises about the character of the unseen God.⁴³⁶ What we see in these passages and the restrictions placed around explanation of Ezek 1 was the belief that exposition of the passage could result in (potentially dangerous) experience of the *merkabah*.⁴³⁷

The inaugural vision of Ezekiel was also significant in Jewish apocalypticism. The earliest apocalyptic *merkabah* vision occurs in 1 En. 14:8ff which contains an account of Enoch’s ascent into the heavenly world as he mediates to ask God for forgiveness of the sins of the Watchers.⁴³⁸ The most obvious indicator that the vision of Enoch is the *merkabah* is in 14:18, “And I observed and saw inside it a lofty throne—its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun...” Other points of contact are the frequent mention of fire (14:9, 12, 15, 17, 19, 22; Ezek 1:4, 13, 27); description of lightning (14:11, 17; Ezek 1:13–14); and crystal (14:10, 18; Ezek 1:22). As Ezekiel struggled to describe the vision and was forced to use the language of

⁴³⁴ Ibid., 278.

⁴³⁵ For a similar phenomenon at Qumran see Devorah Dimant and John Strugnell, “The Merkabah Vision in *Second Ezekiel (4Q385 1)*” *RevQ* (1990): 331–48. “It appears, then, that the author is interpreting Ezekiel’s *merkabah* vision in the light of other scriptural passages (2 Chr 3; Isa 6; and Ezek 10) that describe the interior of the holy of holies and the angelic beings who draw the chariot of the ark” (Christopher Morray-Jones, “The Temple Within” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick, SBLSS 11 [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006], 152).

⁴³⁶ Ibid., 280.

⁴³⁷ “... it must be noted that the very act of interpreting Ezekiel’s chariot, as is attested by some of the legendary accounts of rabbinic authorities engaged in homiletic speculation on the Merkavah, was capable of producing states through which the historic even of revelation was relived” (Elliot Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997], 122).

⁴³⁸ Rowland, “The Visions of God in Apocalyptic Literature,” *JSJ* 10 (1979): 140–44.

analogy (“the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord”; Ezek 1:28), similarly, Enoch struggles to express the awesomeness of the “Great Glory” he beholds (“to the extent that it is impossible for me to recount to you concerning its glory and greatness”; 1 En. 14:16). In response to the vision, Ezek 1:28 describes his reaction of falling on his face and hearing the voice of the one speaking. Similarly, Enoch shakes with fear (14:14) and he falls on his face and the Lord speaks to him (14:24).

Despite the obvious resonances to Ezek 1, there are also several differences. The living creatures are not mentioned; instead, Enoch sees cherubim (which do however occur in the parallel vision in Ezek 10). There is no mention of the movement of the chariot in Enoch’s vision. There are also elements of transference of details. For example, the throne in Enoch’s vision is crystal whereas the throne in Ezek 1:26 is compared to sapphire and the firmament above the heads of the living creatures is described as crystal (Ezek 1:22). Rowland suggests the sapphire pavement in Exod 24:10 might have offered a bridge between Ezek 1:22 and 26.⁴³⁹ Ezekiel’s vision compares the wheels to bronze (1:16) while Enoch’s vision compares them to the shining sun (14:18). Enoch’s vision also bears influence from other texts. For example, while fire is described in Ezek 1:13 as going forth like lightning, the reference to “streams of flaming fire” (14:19) appears to be developed with Dan 7:10 in mind. The description of God’s flowing garment (14:20) alludes to the description of God’s robe filling the temple in Isa 6:1. This vision which is dated to the third or second century BCE forms one of the earliest extra-canonical accounts of a *merkabah* vision in an apocalyptic text. Like Revelation, the vision is clearly dependent on Ezekiel’s visionary experience in Ezek 1, but there are also significant differences including indebtedness to elements of other texts like Dan 7 and Isa 6.

⁴³⁹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 221.

Another apocalyptic text heavily influenced by Ezekiel's inaugural vision is the Apoc. Ab. 17–19. In this passage, Abraham is taken up to the seventh heaven and sings a heavenly song which leads to a vision of the throne of God. The vision in ch. 18 stands closer to Ezek 1 than either 1 En. 14 or Rev 4–5. Abraham hears “the sound of many waters” (17:1; Ezek 1:24) and sees the living creatures having each four faces of a lion, man, ox, and eagle (18:4–5; Ezek 1:10). He sees the chariot and its wheels, and the wheels are said to be full of eyes (18:12; Ezek 1:18). Fire proceeds from the throne (18:2–3, 13; Ezek 1:4, 13, 27) and both describe bright, flashing lights (18:13; Ezek 1:13–14). Like Ezekiel, Abraham wants to fall on his face to the earth (17:3, 5) at the experience of the vision. However, there are also differences. Like Revelation's description, the living creatures each have six wings (Apoc. Ab. 18:6) which is a development from Isa 6. The most unusual feature of Abraham's vision of the living creatures is that they threaten one another, and Abraham has to intervene to teach them the song of peace so that they will not hurt one another (18:8–11). This feature of the hostility between the living creatures is unique in apocalyptic literature.

This brief survey suggests that the first chapter of Ezekiel was the source of considerable speculation and exposition in Judaism of the first and second centuries. The interest would continue to develop into *merkabah* mysticism and the later *hekhalot* texts which have their origins in this early apocalyptic tradition. The use of Ezek 1 in these apocalyptic visions suggests that Ezekiel's inaugural vision served as a significant backdrop for visionary experience; however, none of these texts incorporate Ezekelian materials in a rote way. The visions bear witness to a developing tradition of speculation and visionary experience associated with Ezekiel's visionary experience but creatively supplemented with other visionary details, most notably from Isa 6. Rowland notes that while Ezek 1 is clearly the starting point for these

visions, the changes and alterations demonstrate that the intent is not to merely parrot Ezekiel.

Rowland’s provocative conclusion is worth representing in full:

It seems, therefore, a reasonable hypothesis to suppose that the visions in these apocalypses are in fact what they purport to be: the descriptions of visions of visionaries who believe that it was possible for them to pierce the vault of heaven and be shown the most intimate secrets of God and his world. The visions would have arisen within a situation, where an individual started with the scriptural description of God’s glory in Ezekiel 1 and, on the basis of this passage, believed that he saw again the vision which had once appeared to the prophet Ezekiel by the banks of the river Chebar. Thus although the details of Ezekiel’s vision marked the launching-pad for this new vision, the imagination of the visionary enabled him to transcend the original, for other elements colour his reflections, notably, of course, relevant scriptural passages, so that an entirely new view of the character of God and his world is produced.

If a man believes that the God who had appeared to Ezekiel had been seen by him also, it is not too difficult to see how he could then go on to take the next step of supposing that the revelation of the divine purposes which followed on from Ezekiel’s call-vision should also follow his experience.⁴⁴⁰

J. W. Bowker, Alan Segal, Dale Allison, and Gilles Quispel have argued that the NT bears witness to the fact that the Apostle Paul was familiar with the practices of *ma’aseh merkabah*.⁴⁴¹ These scholars have called attention to the accounts of Paul’s conversion in Acts (chs. 9, 22, 26) and Galatians (1:13–17) and Paul’s own description of “visions and revelations of the Lord” in 2 Cor 12:1–4 which has significant parallels to *merkabah* tradition. Segal suggests that Luke has structured the call narrative of Paul in Acts based on parallels with Ezekiel. These parallels are represented in the following chart:⁴⁴²

Parallels	Ezekiel	Paul in Acts
Sees the divine glory	1:28	22:11
Hears heavenly voice	1:28–2:8	9:4–6; 22:7–10; 26:14–18
Falls to the ground	1:28	9:4; 22:7; 26:14
Stands on their feet	2:1–2	9:6–8; 22:10–11; 26:16

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 226–27.

⁴⁴¹ J. W. Bowker, “‘Merkabah’ Visions and the Visions of Paul,” *JSS* 16 (1971): 157–73; Alan Segal, *Paul the Convert: The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 11, 36–56; Dale Allison Jr., “Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel,” *JBL* 135 (2016): 807–26; Gilles Quispel, “Ezekiel 1,26 in Jewish Mysticism and Gnosis,” in *Gnostica, Judaica, Catholica: Collected Essays of Gilles Quispel*, ed. Johannes van Oort, NHMS 55 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 461–74; cf. N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, (London: SPCK, 2003), 391; Ibid., *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (London: SPCK, 2013), 415.

⁴⁴² Produced from Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 9–11.

Charged with mission	2:3–7	26:16–18
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Segal concludes that Luke presents Paul’s calling this way to indicate that the mission to the gentiles was contained in the calling experience.⁴⁴³ Segal does not believe Luke fabricated Paul’s dependence on Luke since the evidence suggests Paul participated in *merkabah* mysticism with speculation on Ezekiel’s inaugural vision.⁴⁴⁴ Allison follows on these observations by confirming the allusion in Acts 26:16 to Ezek 2:1.⁴⁴⁵ He demonstrates that Luke’s account in Acts 26 contains a string of parallels with verbal similarities that occur in the same order as Ezek 1–2.⁴⁴⁶

Acts 26	Ezekiel 1–2 LXX
13 Paul sees (εἶδον) in heaven (οὐρανόθεν) a bright light that is identified as Jesus or his glory (“a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me”), or as the “Lord” (κύριε, κύριος)	1:26–28 Ezekiel sees (εἶδον) in heaven (οὐρανοί) a divine man of fire and splendor (“something that looked like fire, and there was splendour all around”) who is the Lord (κυρίου)
14 Paul falls (καταπεσόντων) to the ground	1:28 Ezekiel falls (πίπτω) on his face
14 He hears a voice, that of the Lord, speaking to him: ἤκουσα φωνὴν λέγουσαν πρὸς με	2:2 He hears a voice, that of the Lord, speaking to him: ἤκουον αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος πρὸς με; cf. 1:28, ἤκουσα φωνὴν λαλοῦντος
16 The voice tells him to stand on his feet: στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου	2:2 The voice tells him to stand on his feet: στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου
17 The voice commissions Paul with the words, ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω σε	2:3 The voice commissions Ezekiel with the words, ἐξαποστέλλω ἐγὼ σε

Allison concludes, “While Ezek 1–2 is far from being the only biblical text that has gone into the making of Acts 26:12–18, it has clearly influenced the structure, content, and phrasing of the New Testament passage.”⁴⁴⁷ Allison further finds an explicit allusion to Ezek 3:22 in Acts 9:6.⁴⁴⁸ Allison explores why Luke structures Paul’s calling in Ezekelian terms. “Perhaps that is all that the text is designed to say: Paul’s call was like that of a biblical prophet.”⁴⁴⁹ Allison believes that

⁴⁴³ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁴⁵ Allison, “Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel,” 812.

⁴⁴⁶ Chart reproduced from Allison, “Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel,” 815.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 815.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 816.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 820.

Luke had a single source tradition of Paul's call which he has spread out into three points in the narrative (chs. 9, 22, 26) making it difficult to see the allusions to Ezekiel although the original source was colored by Ezekiel's call narrative.⁴⁵⁰ Allison provides example of Paul's allusions to Ezekiel and suggests it likely that Paul's relationship to Ezekiel's call narrative extends past Luke's depiction to the historical Paul.⁴⁵¹ Moreover, Allison even suggests that Paul could have "imagined his vision to be like Ezekiel's..."⁴⁵² He concludes:

So did Paul liken his call to that of Ezekiel, and did he identify his Lord with the anthropomorphic form of the Lord in Ezekiel? I am inclined to suppose that he did both, that he thought of the Lord who called him as the same Lord who called Ezekiel. We can be fairly confident that someone before Luke likened Paul's Damascus road experience to Ezekiel's inaugural vision and prophetic call, and from what we otherwise know of Paul, he could well be that someone.⁴⁵³

Thus, Ezekiel's inaugural vision played a key role in both Jewish and Christian visionary experience.⁴⁵⁴ Analogously, I suggest that it is plausible that John had an intimate familiarity

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 823.

⁴⁵¹ Allison cites Ezek 36:20–23 in Rom 2:24; Ezek 5:11 in Rom 14:11; Ezek 11:19 in 2 Cor 3:3; Ezek 37:37 in 2 Cor 6:16; and Ezek 20:34 in 2 Cor 6:17 ("Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel," 824).

⁴⁵² Ibid., 825.

⁴⁵³ Ibid., 826.

⁴⁵⁴ Thomas Sappington's conclusions that the main issue addressed in the Colossian correspondence is the ascetic-mystical piety of Jewish apocalypticism. The main error involves the reception of revelation in the Jewish apocalypses. If correct, Colossians along with Revelation, places apocalypticism and mystical speculation at the heart of Christianity in Asia Minor (*Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, JSNTSup 53 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991). Asia Minor continued to be a hotbed for the apocalyptic spirit. The Montanist movement arose toward the end of the second century in Phrygia. The movement focused on prophecy and the possibility of ongoing revelations from God. The preserved accounts indicate the Montanists believed in revelation through inspired charisma. Eusebius reports a tradition that a Montanist, Theodotus, allegedly "was sometimes taken up and raised to Heaven, when he fell into a trance and trusted himself to the spirit of deceit" (*Hist. eccl.* V. 16.14). Eusebius also reports that Apollonius says that Montanus made use of the Apocalypse of John (*Hist. eccl.* V. 18.14). The defection of Tertullian to Montanism shows that its influence was not limited to Asia Minor. Tertullian details the story of a sister in the church who had visionary experiences during the worship gatherings of the church. He reports:

We have now amongst us a sister whose lot it has been to be favoured with sundry gifts of revelation, which she experiences in the Spirit by ecstatic vision amidst the sacred rites of the Lord's day in the church: she converses with angels, and sometimes even with the Lord; she both sees and hears mysterious communications; some men's hearts she understands, and to them who are in need she distributes remedies. Whether it be in the reading of Scriptures, or in the chanting of psalms, or in the preaching of sermons, or in the offering up of prayers, in all these religious services matter and opportunity are afforded to her of seeing visions. It may possibly have happened to us, whilst this sister of ours was rapt in the Spirit, that we had discoursed in some ineffable way about the soul. After the people are dismissed at the conclusion of the sacred services, she is in the regular habit of reporting to us whatever things she may have seen in vision

with the text of Ezek 1 which caused him to imitate the style due to his own self-identification with Ezekiel. This is consonant with the phenomena examined in other Jewish and apocalyptic texts. The interest in the *merkabah* in rabbinic Judaism, Second Temple Jewish texts, apocalypses, and early Christianity strengthens the probability that John intensely studied this text in the process of achieving his own visionary experience and that the text of Ezek 1 left an indelible mark on the resulting revelation.

The central thesis of this dissertation would be significantly strengthened if another text was heavily dependent on Ezek 1 and exhibits similar irregularities in grammar and style. One is immediately confronted with the reality that in most cases, the extracanonical texts have not been preserved in their original languages and have been transmitted with less concern for exactitude.⁴⁵⁵ This makes the quest to compare the literary techniques of John with other apocalyptic works difficult. For example, in the two comparable *merkabah* vision reports noted above, the Apocalypse of Abraham only survives in six manuscripts in Old Slavonic translations, and the history of redaction and translation of 1 Enoch is even more difficult. The only complete fragment of 1 Enoch is in the Ethiopic version; however, fragments exist in Aramaic, Greek, and Latin.

Despite the general state of extant apocalyptic texts, two possible analogies do exist. First, one possible analogous stylistic use of Ezekiel occurs in the prophetic corpus itself. Michael Stead has studied the intertextual use of Scripture in Zech 1–8.⁴⁵⁶ Stead seeks to demonstrate that the prophet Zechariah worked at a time when the classical prophets (e.g.

(for all her communications are examined with the most scrupulous care, in order that their truth may be probed). (*De Anima* 9, trans. Peter Holmes).

⁴⁵⁵ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, 37; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 250; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 107–08.

⁴⁵⁶ Michael Stead, *The Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8*, LHBOTS 506 (New York: T&T Clark, 2009).

Jeremiah and Ezekiel) were circulating in written (rather than oral) forms and how Zechariah made use of those prophetic writings. His thesis is that “Zech 1–8 takes up formerly disparate streams of tradition—especially various streams of the prophetic tradition—and creatively combines these traditions in applying them to a post-exilic context.”⁴⁵⁷ Stead notes:

Zechariah 1–8 understands itself to be a genuine revelatory new word from Yahweh, which—paradoxically—comes via a reiteration of (some of) the things that Yahweh has already said through “the former prophets.” However, this reiteration occurs in a radically different (i.e. post-exilic) context, and that recontextualization causes various shifts in how those former words were understood to apply.⁴⁵⁸

That this description could equally apply to John’s prophetic self-conception and use of “the former prophets” to recontextualize God’s message for the churches in Asia Minor might suggest the possibility that the impulse to use the Scriptures in the way John has was inspired by the methods of inner-biblical exegesis already inherent in the Scriptures.⁴⁵⁹

Next, Stead turns to analyze Zechariah’s intertextuality. The opening phrase of Zech 1:1 (“the word of the LORD came”; *הַיְהוָה דְּבַר־יְהוָה*) has numerous parallels to several prophets (e.g. Jeremiah and Ezekiel) which serves to place Zechariah in continuity with the prophetic tradition.⁴⁶⁰ Stead notes that beginning at Zech 1:2, the verses become “grammatically odd.”⁴⁶¹ The text says that “Yahweh wrathed wrath upon your fathers” without explaining who is the audience of the text. Who is denoted by “*your fathers*”? Then, in v. 3, there is a sudden shift from referring to the audience in the second person plural to the third person plural (“you must say to them”). Stead notes that v. 3 is grammatically awkward for another reason—most translators use an imperative (“say to them” or “you must say to them”) when the “rules of

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 2–3.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁴⁵⁹ Zechariah was an important source for John’s Revelation. See Marko Jauhiainen, *Use of Zechariah in Revelation*.

⁴⁶⁰ Stead, *Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8*, 75–76.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 76.

grammar seemingly dictate that it should be translated as a simple past-tense...⁴⁶² Stead argues that “there is an intertextual basis for these grammatical peculiarities.”⁴⁶³ He says, “Clearly, parts of Zech 1:2–3 are grammatically awkward. But perhaps this is deliberately so, because the phrases in question are allusions to other texts.”⁴⁶⁴ He deploys M. Riffaterre’s concept of “ungrammaticality” to define “an awkward grammatical construction in one text which points the reader to another text to resolve the apparently ‘ungrammaticality.’”⁴⁶⁵ He suggests the phrase in Zech 1:3 is “ungrammatical” because it is a quote. The closest semantic parallel to Zech 1:3 is Ezek 2:3–4 which addresses “they and their fathers.” Additionally, Ezekiel is told, “You say to them, thus says Lord Yahweh” (וַאֲמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה). Stead submits that Zech 1:3 is grammatically odd because it is a quotation of Ezek 2:4 which becomes grammatically difficult in its new context.⁴⁶⁶ Thus, in the opening phrase of Zechariah, “The grammatical peculiarities of Zech 1:2–3 are an intertextual pointer to the wider prophetic critique of the sins of the father” particularly found in Ezekiel and Jeremiah.⁴⁶⁷

Stead’s conclusion regarding Zechariah’s intentional deployment of ungrammaticality to point to an allusion to other Scriptural texts is similar to Beale’s suggestion for John’s deployment of ungrammaticality in Revelation to point to allusion. However, Stead’s arguments, if accepted, do not seem substantial enough to constitute a significant analogy to Revelation’s use of ungrammaticality. Stead only posits that Zech 1:2–3 is “grammatically awkward” not necessarily grammatically erroneous. His main issue is the absence of identification of the audience in the switch from second to third person pronouns. However, because the audience of

⁴⁶² Ibid., 76–77.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid.; see M. Riffaterre, *Semiotics of Poetry* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 82.

⁴⁶⁶ Stead, *Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8*, 78.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 78.

Zechariah was familiar with prophetic critiques and the intergenerational concept of sin found in the Scriptures, this switch could simply be understood as a reference to the ancestors. Further, while the beginning verb in Zech 1:3 has elicited debate, there are examples elsewhere in the prophetic corpus where the phrase וְאַמַּרְתָּ אֲלֵיהֶם begins a prophetic message without a previous imperative (e.g. Jer 7:27–28; 13:12–13) where allusion to other texts is not suspected. Thus, it appears that the opening phrase in 1:3 is not a continuation of the speech in 1:2, but rather a separate address to the prophet.⁴⁶⁸ Stead does not detect the presence of ungrammaticality elsewhere in Zech 1–8, and the one place where he does suspect this rhetorical and literary device, there are other probable explanations. Further, his identification of grammatical awkwardness is too subtle to have explanatory force. Thus, while this text is an intriguing possible use of grammatical irregularity due to intertextual use of Ezekiel, it does not seem likely this text represents a significant analogy to the use of grammatical irregularity in Revelation.

Second, a more plausible analogy occurs in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* which were influential for the Qumran community. To date, eight copies have been recovered from Cave 4, one from Cave 11, and one copy at Masada.⁴⁶⁹ These texts are a cycle of thirteen texts that were recited on each of the first thirteen Sabbaths of the year.⁴⁷⁰ The songs offers praise and summon the heavenly angels to worship, and they apparently functioned as a ritual to facilitate communion with the angels among the Qumran worshippers.⁴⁷¹ Presumably, the songs were recited by the Maskil to the assembled community indicated by the first-person plural pronouns

⁴⁶⁸ See discussion in Mark Boda, *The Book of Zechariah*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 73–75.

⁴⁶⁹ Carol Newsom, “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Two Case Studies,” in *Linking Text and Experience*, ed. Colleen Shantz, Rodney Werline, and Frances Flannery, vol. 2 *Experientia* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 220; Morray-Jones, “The Temple Within,” 153–54.

⁴⁷⁰ Newsom, “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 216.

⁴⁷¹ The experience of communion with angels is alluded to in the Hodayot and Serek Ha-Yahad (Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, HSS 27 [Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985], 17).

in 4Q400 2, 6–8.⁴⁷² The songs are fragmentary with some surviving more intact than others. Little is preserved from the third through the fifth Shirot. The fragmentary nature of the text leaves any observations hypothetical.⁴⁷³

Carol Newsom notes that the three distinct sections of the Shirot evince different literary styles. The first five songs appear to be composed in a heightened, parallelistic prose and poetry. Finite verbs are frequent, and grammatically complete sentences are typical.⁴⁷⁴ The first five songs, although fragmentary, apparently provide information about the role of angelic armies and priests in the eschatological battle within a framework of praise. The central three songs (6–8) have a different literary style. They are highly repetitive with an “almost obsessive” repetition of the number seven.⁴⁷⁵ Newsom postulates that repetition was a standard technique in Jewish mystical practice to induce meditative states of consciousness. The purpose of the middle songs is to inculcate experience.⁴⁷⁶

The central song shifts to invoke praise from the architectural structures of the heavenly temple as well as the *merkabot* (chariots), the *ophannim* (wheels), and the *cherubim* (heavenly creatures) that occupy the inner sanctums of the seven heavenly temples. Newsom notes, “The description of the merkabah in the Shirot draws heavily on Ezekiel 1 and 10...”⁴⁷⁷ The songs describe a plurality of *merkabot* presumably due to the need for chariots in the various levels of the seven heavens. The final five songs contain a different linguistic and poetic strategy. Although fragmentary, songs 9–11 describe the heavenly temple. Song 12 describes the

⁴⁷² Ibid., “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 216.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 14–15.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 217.

⁴⁷⁵ Newsom, “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 217; Morray-Jones, “The Temple Within,” 155.

⁴⁷⁶ Newsom, “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 218.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid., *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 45; “The Qumran sectarians, who believed the temple in Jerusalem to have been defiled and its cult perverted by a corrupt and legitimate priesthood, evidently attached great significance to the prophecies of Ezekiel” (Morray-Jones, “The Temple Within,” 149–50).

merkabah. Song 13 focuses on the angelic priests and their vestments. Newsome notes, “In these songs the linguistic style undergoes yet another radical transformation. There are virtually no finite verbs, only participial and nominal sentences.”⁴⁷⁸ Elsewhere, she says, “Even in relatively well preserved sections, it is extremely difficult to distinguish the beginnings and ends of sentences or to translate the expressions with any sense of certainty.”⁴⁷⁹

One of the irregular stylistic features of the songs influenced by the *merkabah* is confusing alteration of singular and plural terms to describe the heavenly temple. For example, in 4Q403 I ii 10–16, there are multiple heavens but singular and plural terms occur inconsistently. First, Newsom considers the possibility that since there are seven heavens, one might assume that one sanctuary (referred to in the singular) is superior to the others of lesser sanctity (referred to in the plural). She grants this could be the case for 4Q405 15 ii–16,3, and 5; however, this cannot explain other instances where singulars and plurals occur simultaneously without explanation (e.g. 4Q405 15–15 I 7–8). Newsom concludes:

While it is probably the case that one of the seven sanctuaries is exalted over all the others, that does not seem to provide an adequate explanation for the fluctuation between singular and plural forms in the text of the *Shirot*. Instead it seems more likely that one is often dealing with plurals of majesty and even with intentional violations of ordinary syntax and meaning in a text which is attempting to communicate something of the elusive transcendence of heavenly reality.⁴⁸⁰

Curiously, Newsom does not consider the possibility that the grammatical and stylistic irregularities which constitute “intentional violations of ordinary syntax” were caused by familiarity with the grammatical irregularities of Ezekiel’s *merkabah* vision. Newsom contends that the irregular style of the songs is a “careful manipulation of language” which “constructs an

⁴⁷⁸ Newsom, “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 218.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 15–16.

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 49.

invitation to certain kinds of numinous religious experience.”⁴⁸¹ These “deformations of ordinary syntax” are part of the linguistic strategy to generate an experience of the heavenly realm and its wonders.⁴⁸² She conjectures that the repetitious nature of the language coupled with the vividness of the descriptions and unusual syntax allowed the worshippers to “feel the power of the language” in order “to create a sense of the presence of the heavenly temple” in their midst.⁴⁸³ Thus, despite the brokenness of the text, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* offers a tantalizing analogy of a text heavily influenced by the *merkabah* vision of Ezek 1 which also apparently employs “intentional violations of ordinary syntax” within the context of providing worshippers a numinous religious experience.

Conclusion to Criterion 5: Analogy

The criterion of analogy does not constitute a primary argument for the imitation of a text since novelty does not necessarily rule out the possibility of imitation; however, analogy can strengthen the argument for imitation. Two claims were made in this section. First, more generally, it was demonstrated that in rabbinic Judaism, *merkabah* mysticism, apocalyptic texts, and early Christianity, the inaugural vision of Ezek 1 played a disproportionately central role. Rabbinic texts warned of meditation on the first chapter of Ezekiel since it often produced experiences that could be very dangerous (even deadly) to the novice. Two texts (1 En. 14 and the Apoc. Ab. 17–19) provide parallel *merkabah* visions in apocalyptic texts. Finally, several scholars have argued that the *merkabah* was significant for Paul. This suggests that my thesis that John was heavily dependent on Ezek 1 and that Ezekiel’s vision has left an indelible mark

⁴⁸¹ Ibid., “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 219.

⁴⁸² Ibid., 221.

⁴⁸³ Ibid., *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 71–72.

on the shape of John's text is part of a rich tradition of ongoing Jewish and Christian speculation on this text. Second, I raised the specific question of whether an analogous text exists which draws heavily from the *merkabah* of Ezek 1 and exhibits similar grammatical and stylistic irregularity. The state of preservation of many apocalyptic texts like 1 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Abraham makes comparing literary techniques difficult. Stead's argument regarding ungrammaticality in Zech 1:2–3 due to allusion to Ezekiel's commissioning scene was examined and found to be an inadequate analogy. However, one tantalizing analogous text is the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* discovered at Qumran. Newsom has argued that these songs are heavily dependent on the description of the *merkabah* in Ezek 1 and exhibit irregular grammar and "intentional violations of ordinary syntax."

Criterion 6: Weight of Combined Criteria

While the positive identification of even one of the criteria to determine if an author is employing imitation might suffice to demonstrate *imitatio*, the case for *imitatio* is strengthened significantly when multiple criteria are satisfied. If it can be shown that there are significant similarities in themes and content, details and actions, organizational structures, and verbal and stylistic similarities which all point to an intimate familiarity with the source, this strengthens the case for *imitatio*. Additionally, if there are intelligibility of differences (similar patterns of transforming the source) and analogous texts, this strengthens the case for identifying *imitatio*. These criteria have been satisfied at every point of the investigation providing the most convincing argument for the *imitatio Ezechielis* in Revelation. "These similarities in theology, structure, form, linguistic features, and authorial self-conception" lead to the conclusion that

“John could identify closely with Ezekiel’s personality and theology.”⁴⁸⁴ “That Ezekiel’s prophecy exerted enormous influence on John is indisputable.”⁴⁸⁵

EMULATION OR VENERATION?

I maintain that John’s use of sources from Israel’s Scriptures can be understood as *imitatio Ezechielis* that the author employed to speak in the voice of an authoritative prophet of Israel’s past. Previously in chapter 3, I demonstrated that the practice of emulation (ζῆλος/*aemulatio*) often accompanied imitation. Emulation refers to the practice of *imitatio* with a certain spirit of rivalry with the past. The goal of emulation was to be as good as or even better than one’s model(s). Ancients could often speak of emulation as sparring in athletic contests with rivals in the hopes of besting them. If John is imitating Ezekiel, this raises the question of whether John views his work as rivaling through emulation or venerating his source text.

Robert Royalty in “Don’t Touch *This* Book!” uses postmodern ideological criticism and poststructural literary theory to show that John “subversively reinscribes the Hebrew scriptures” for his own ideological purposes to eliminate “alternative Christian voices” through force.⁴⁸⁶ He seeks to read against the grain of “the hermeneutics of acceptance” which characterizes so much of NT scholarship that automatically confers inviolability upon NT texts.⁴⁸⁷ Rather, he contends the strong warnings, particularly in 22:18–19, seek to silence rival voices by threatening extreme violence on offenders. The warning draws on language of Deut 4:2 and 29:19 which depicts “a violent God who kills those who disobey.”⁴⁸⁸ Representative of the outlook of the rest of the

⁴⁸⁴ Kowalski, “Transformation of Ezekiel,” 301.

⁴⁸⁵ Russell S. Morton, *The One Upon the Throne and the Lamb: A Tradition Historical/Theological Analysis of Revelation 4–5*, StBibLit 110 (New York: Lang, 2008), 88.

⁴⁸⁶ Robert Royalty, “Don’t Touch *This* Book!: Revelation 22:18–19 and the Rhetoric of Reading (in) the Apocalypse of John,” *BibInt* 12 (2004): 282–99.

⁴⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 290.

⁴⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 292.

Apocalypse, in 22:18–19, John usurps Moses as the giver of statutes.⁴⁸⁹ “Writing (the Apocalypse) entails exclusion, repression, and destruction.”⁴⁹⁰ Royalty refers to John’s digestion of the scroll in ch. 10 as the “destruction of the Hebrew scriptures.” He says, “The author swallows the word of God and digests it for the audience, and then tells them not to play with their food (22:18–19).”⁴⁹¹ According to Royalty, the warning in 22:18–19 coupled with the author’s deconstruction of the Hebrew Bible is John’s attempt to take over the voice of God for himself and circumscribe the way all future readers encounter his text. John, a slave and prophet, warns the churches to keep the words of *this* book (cf. 1:3) which is intended to exclude “what God has written before through other slaves and others prophets.”⁴⁹² Royalty’s argument raises the question of whether or not John is attempting to replace the Scriptures with his own revelation.

Royalty’s argument seems to contradict John’s use of the Hebrew Bible. First, John’s repeated reference to the phrases, places, people, and events in the Hebrew Bible mitigates any suggestion that he is trying to erase the Scriptures and encourage the audience to stop reading them. For example, when John refers to the two olive trees and the two lampstands with the definite article in 11:4, he seems to assume that hearers will already have encountered the images in Zech 4. When John refers to the false prophets as “Balaam” and “Jezebel”, he expects the audience to engage with the authoritative traditions to compare their own communal prophets to those biblical figures. By modeling so much of his work on Ezekiel, John’s intertextuality ties these two works together. Only a community without prior knowledge of Ezekiel could read Rev

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 292–93.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 293.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid., 294.

⁴⁹² Ibid., 293.

21–22 without seeing allusions to Ezek 40–48.⁴⁹³ “The genius of Revelation is not that it borrows Old Testament language or that it has created something completely new—but in the dynamic intersection of shared language, imagery and style.”⁴⁹⁴ Second, John’s self-conception is as a slave and prophet (1:1; 22:9). In 10:7, an angel announces the mystery of God “as he announced to his own slaves, the prophets” and in 15:3 Moses is referred to as a “slave of God.” As slave and prophet, John stands within the line of slaves and prophets to whom God had previously spoken. He expects his readers to join in the song of Moses (15:3), not replace it. In 10:7, John indicates his own understanding that the angel is pointing to those texts which pre-announce the mystery of God.⁴⁹⁵ As the prophets of old announced the τὸ μυστήριον τοῦ θεοῦ (10:7), so John reveals God’s mysteries (1:20; 17:5, 7). Third, John refers the audience to “the commandments of God” in 14:12 which presupposes acquaintance with those commandments in the Law and prophets. These features indicate that John expected the audience to continue to look to the Scriptures in order to fully understand John’s new text. John speaks from within the tradition rather than from the outside.

Further, deSilva has pointed out that Royalty’s assertions do not follow his observations. For example, Royalty rightly asserts that John’s words become the words of the prophets; however, he makes the unsupported assertion this indicates John is trying to erase those prophetic books.⁴⁹⁶ On the contrary, John’s repeated allusions to the words of the Scriptures helps preserve their voice and increases attention given to those texts. Additionally, deSilva notes that Royalty’s observation that John expects hearers to obey his voice leads to the

⁴⁹³ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 136.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 138.

⁴⁹⁵ deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 153–54.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 154.

unsupported assertion that the hearers are no longer to heed the words of the other prophets.⁴⁹⁷

deSilva says that John's command to listen to his voice is complementary to his use of the voice of Israel's prophets. This is "the far more natural understanding in a traditional culture where one's innovations add to the cultural heritage without eliminating the earlier tradition."⁴⁹⁸

John's revelation, like other prophetic utterances, was subject to testing. In other words, in order for John's message to be received authoritatively by the Christian community, John's prophecy must be derivative of the received tradition of God's prior revelations. The larger Christian tradition shows that the words of the prophets were to be tested and either accepted or rejected (cf. 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1–3; 1 Thess 5:20–21). John himself praised the Ephesian church for examining and rejecting "those claiming themselves to be apostles and they are not, and you have found them to be liars" (2:2). John places himself within the circle of prophets (22:9, 16), and thus, acknowledges other prophets who stand with him under the authority of the Scriptures and the Jesus tradition.⁴⁹⁹ deSilva shows that John's own theology aligns itself with voice of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Jesus tradition, and the apostolic tradition.⁵⁰⁰ It seems improbable that John's extensive use of Israel's Scriptures is an effort to merely get his audience to listen to him. Thus, the evidence favors deSilva's conclusion that John understands himself to stand under the authority of the Hebrew Bible as he exercises his own authoritative prophetic ministry.⁵⁰¹ He does not, contra Royalty, stand against his predecessors through mimetic rivalry.

Conclusion to Chapter 4

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., 155.

⁴⁹⁹ deSilva, "What has Athens to do with Patmos?," 270.

⁵⁰⁰ See deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 159–74.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid., 157.

Imitatio was the primary means of incorporating older source material into a new text in Greco-Roman *paideia* and provided the foundation for rhetoric, literature, art, and ethics. As such, it is apt to apply mimetic criticism to Revelation's use of sources since it is incontrovertible that Revelation makes extensive use of the Scriptures. In this chapter, I applied the six criteria determined in the previous chapter to Revelation's use of Ezekiel. First, I demonstrated that Ezekiel pre-existed Revelation, and John could have had access to both the Hebrew text and Greek text of Ezekiel. The majority scholarly opinion is that John used both texts, although he was primarily influenced by the Hebrew text. Second, I explored the significant similarities between Revelation and Ezekiel. There are several themes and content which are primarily dependent on Ezekiel. Next, John's own commissioning, sign act, and self-conception as a prophet are influenced by Ezek 1:1–3:14. Further, numerous studies have convincingly proven that Ezekiel exhibited a significant impact on the organizational structures of Revelation.

The investigation of significant verbal and stylistic similarities revealed key insights into the possibility of John's influence by the irregular grammar and style of Ezekiel. It was noted that several scholars have argued that the irregular constructions of Revelation are due to imitation of (all) the prophets and Scriptures through Semitisms and Septuagintalisms. These scholars hold that the irregularities are intentionally crafted to give Revelation an archaic and Semitic biblical style. What has been overlooked in scholarly discourse is the fact that Ezekiel's inaugural vision, a text which exerted considerable influence on John, exhibits the worst grammar and syntax in the entirety of the Hebrew Bible. This observation is a commonplace in scholarship on Ezekiel. These grammatical and syntactical difficulties involve confusion of gender and number, inconsistency in adverbs and prepositions, inconsistent morphology, unexplained asyndeton, repetition and tautology, and problems of substance where it is difficult

to understand what the Ezekielian text is describing. Even the redactional history of Ezekiel bears witness to the difficulties of this chapter. I demonstrated that the scholarly consensus regarding Ezek 10 is that it was added at a later date to smooth over the difficulties of ch. 1 which had become fixed in the text. Similarly, I showed that the LXX translators apparently knew the difficulties and sought to smooth over them through omission of difficult phrases and emendation in translation. Several theories have been advanced to explain the difficulties of Ezek 1 including redactional theories. Block argued that the extraordinary experience of the vision left its mark on the shape of the text. Fredericks has argued that it is part of a larger motif found in biblical call narratives of the rectification of speech impediments of the prophets at their commissioning which manifests differently in several commissioning scenes.

Taking into account that John wrote in Greek and Ezekiel's difficulties are primarily in the Hebrew text, the categories of grammatical and syntactical irregularities overlap significantly. The primary confusion in Ezekiel's text observed by scholars is confusion of gender where masculines and feminines appear to be used in a totally arbitrary way. In chapter 1, I established that confusion of gender, number, and case is the primary category of grammatical irregularity in Revelation. My argument is that the main categories of grammatical and stylistic irregularity in Ezekiel left an impression on John which was then creatively imitated throughout his own prophecy. Admittedly, this thesis raises a number of questions and possible objections which I addressed. First, *imitatio* was a translingual phenomenon. Second, without having direct access to John's mind, my thesis presupposes that John attached *some kind* of significance to the irregular style of Ezekiel's inaugural vision without knowing exactly what significance he saw in it. Other apocalyptists and early Jews and Christians attached great significance to this chapter. Third, although the irregular style is limited to the first chapter of Ezekiel, John alludes to

material from Ezekiel's call narrative throughout Revelation. Fourth, because so much is unknown about the social matrix of the churches in Asia Minor, it is impossible to know with certainty whether the audiences recognized the intricacies of John's use of Ezek 1. Audience reception should not be the determinative criteria for recognizing literary and rhetorical techniques since an author may not expect his audience to recognize every detail. Further, there are indications that John may have expected at least some in the audience to understand his complex employment of Israel's Scriptures.

The third criterion is evidence of intimate familiarity with the source text. In addition to the extensive similarities listed in the second criterion, several passages in Revelation can only be explained by John's intimate familiarity with specific texts from Ezekiel. The descriptions in 4:6b and 22:2 are nearly incomprehensible in their present context until one recognizes that John is preserving Ezekielian phrases. The most interesting example is in 21:13 which draws upon Ezek 48:30–34 but evinces clear influence from the directions listed in Ezek 42:16–19. These examples led Vogelgesang to the conclusion, "John had an excruciatingly detailed and comprehensive mastery of the text of Ezekiel as well as corresponding mastery of the interpretive possibilities of that text."⁵⁰²

The first three criteria for determining *imitatio* lays the foundation for recognizing the phenomenon of *imitatio* in literary works. The final three provide confirmatory evidence which supports the conclusions reached in the first three. The fourth criterion is intelligibility of differences. Differences with a source text might indicate that the author is not imitating a text; thus, it is important to discover if some principle of intelligibility might explain differences. In general, it is possible to recognize certain patterns of transformation in John's use of Ezekiel

⁵⁰² Vogelgesang, "Interpretation of Ezekiel," 63.

including condensation, omission, addition, alteration, universalization, eschatological perspective, etc.

Fifth, the criterion of analogy seeks to discover whether another author or work has imitated a text in a similar way. Analogy was explored in two ways. First, more generally, Ezekiel's inaugural vision played a key role in rabbinic Judaism, *merkabah* mysticism, apocalyptic texts, and early Christianity. This observation makes my suggestion that John is drawing heavily on Ezek 1 more plausible. Second, since my central thesis regards stylistic imitation, if another work existed which was heavily dependent on Ezek 1's *merkabah* vision and also exhibited irregular grammar and style, this would constitute significant support for the thesis advanced here. While analogous apocalyptic works like 1 Enoch and the Apocalypse of Abraham are only preserved in later translations making comparison difficult, one possible analogous text is the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* at Qumran. Newsom has demonstrated that the songs are heavily dependent on Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision and were designed to provide a powerful experience of angelic heavenly worship. Newsom notes the stylistic changes in each of the three sections of the songs, and in some places, there is confusion of number, repetition, and phrases which make little grammatical sense. After exploring possible explanations, she concludes these are instances of "intentional violations of ordinary syntax" which are part of a style which seeks to give worshippers a numinous experience of the divine.⁵⁰³ Finally, the weight of the findings in the first five sections is significant. John's use of Ezekiel satisfies all of six of the criteria.

The chapter ends with a discussion of whether John's use of Ezekiel was due to mimetic rivalry which sought to supplant Ezekiel or whether John saw himself as standing under the

⁵⁰³ Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 71–72.

authority of the prophets. Rivalry was a key component of *imitatio* in the Greco-Roman world. Royalty has argued that John intended his own work to be “the death of Scripture.”⁵⁰⁴ However, John’s overall use of the Scriptures points to the fact that he views himself as standing *under* the authority of the prophets, not *against* them.

By applying mimetic critical methodology to Revelation, this chapter seeks to make a contribution to exploring John’s use of the Scriptures more broadly. However, recognition of imitation also has implications for the specific issue of John’s irregular grammar and style which has vexed biblical scholarship. While many arguments have been advanced regarding the irregular grammar and style as an independent phenomenon, I argue that it is part of a complex and comprehensive effort on John’s part to imitate the prophet Ezekiel. The observation that Ezekiel’s inaugural vision is the most grammatically irregular text in the MT has hitherto not been brought to bear on Revelation’s grammatical irregularity. In other words, I concur that John was truly “was writing as a Christian Ezekiel... in the phrase of the old.”⁵⁰⁵ In the next chapter, I will attempt to take John’s claim to visionary experience seriously. In order to do that, I explore apocalyptic visionary phenomenology to see whether the identification of *imitatio Ezechielis* can be understood as a component of the purported mystical experience rather than merely the result of John’s literary creativity and invention.

⁵⁰⁴ Royalty, “Don’t Touch *This Book!*,” 294.

⁵⁰⁵ Farrer, *Rebirth of Images*, 24.

CHAPTER FIVE
IMITATIO AND APOCALYPTIC VISIONARY EXPERIENCE

Preliminary Remarks

Scholars have oft discussed whether apocalyptic texts are best conceived as literary works produced by creative minds or the literary remains of real visionary experiences. How exactly did John's Revelation originate? Are we to imagine that this book is the record of an actual ecstatic experience seen and heard by a first-century prophet while in an altered state of consciousness such as a trance or dream? Or, are we to envision John seated at his desk like a poet with scrolls of Israel's Scriptures and other apocalyptic texts unfurled before him consciously creating an imaginative literary composition? Does the hypothesis of John's imitation of Ezekiel at the level of theme, content, structure, details, and style indicate literary dependence only, or is it possible that the *imitatio* occurred at the level of John's prophetic experience? Could something about the visionary experience have led John to identify with the persona of Ezekiel?

In academic literature on Revelation, this topic is not always explicitly addressed. Frequently, readers are left to guess the author's presuppositions based on embedded comments. For example, the first line in Bauckham's influential collection of essays, *The Climax of Prophecy*, says, "The Apocalypse of John is a work of immense learning, astonishingly meticulous literary artistry, remarkable creative imagination, radical political critique, and profound theology."¹ Without explanation, how are we to understand such a statement? John's own self-presentation is that the "profound theology" and "radical political critique" was received from God and the exalted Christ mediated by angels (i.e. 1:1–2, 11, 19; 10:4; 14:13; 19:9; 21:5). What was written was given to him. The potential problem with not addressing the

¹ Bauckham, *Climax of Prophecy*, ix.

compositional process is that one's presuppositions might reflect more about the commentator's own worldview than John's or the inaugural audiences located in the first-century world of Asia Minor.

Moyise has offered a serious attempt to root John's indebtedness to Ezekiel in the visionary experience. After concluding that Ezekiel has significantly impacted John's work, he seeks a rationale to better understand such expansive use of the prophet:

The most obvious explanation is that John has taken on the 'persona' of Ezekiel. Through meditation and study (of which there are ample precedents), John has absorbed something of the character and mind of the prophet. This is why he can make so many allusions to the book without ever actually quoting it... It is possible that he does not quote it as Scripture because he does not see it as an external source. He has taken on the mind of Ezekiel and writes 'in the spirit' [ἐν πνεύματι].²

Moyise supports this hypothesis by pointing to the practices of those who wrote apocalypses. Most apocalypses, Revelation and Hermas excluded, are pseudonymous and place the visions pseudonymously in the experience of an ancient predecessor. Furthermore, Moyise notes that meditation on Scripture for the purpose of achieving visions is well documented in *merkabah* mystical texts.³ These observations provide the launching pad for the issues investigated in this chapter. This chapter is essential to my overall thesis because it represents an attempt to take John's claim to visionary experience seriously. My thesis would be weakened if there were no indications that John's visionary experience led him to imitate Ezekiel; however, as Moyise noted, I will show in this chapter that "there are ample precedents" of apocalyptic authors meditating on Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision as a catalyst for visionary experience. I will argue that scholars working in the area of mystical phenomenology have provided ready-made explanations to account for why Revelation appears to be an *imitatio Ezechielis*.

² Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 78–79.

³ *Ibid.*, 79.

Framing the Issue

There are a several reasons why solving the question—real experience or literary artifice?—has proven difficult, if not impossible, to answer. First, a lack of definitional clarity has dogged this investigation. For example, when someone asks whether Revelation is the result of a “real experience” or an “actual experience”, how does he or she define the term “experience” and what would the adjectives “real” or “actual” mean when modifying “experience”?⁴ Typically, it appears scholars are asking whether the experience was real to the one supposedly seeing the vision. Did he or she believe it to be real?⁵ For the historian and scholar, this is a valid question: Do the apocalyptists or mystics believe themselves to be receiving a message from a heavenly figure? However, the claim that God revealed visions to an ancient prophet is a faith claim.⁶ The naturalistic worldview of many Western interpreters precludes the possibility of supernatural revelation from a divine being based on the principle of analogy. We must keep in mind, however, that accounts of ecstatic experiences are known from Greco-Roman, Second Temple Jewish, and early Christian sources as well as in most non-Western societies, ancient and modern.⁷ April DeConick reminds us that early Jews and Christians reading these texts believed they were the result of actual encounters with God, and

⁴ It is difficult to define “experience”. Bernard McGinn avoids the term “experience” because of its association with ecstatic phenomena which he believes do not reflect the essence of the encounter with God. He prefers the term “consciousness.” See G. R. de Villiers, “Apocalypses and Mystical Texts: Investigating Prolegomena and the State of Affairs,” in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter de Villiers, Adela Yarbro Collins (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 50–51.

⁵ David Halperin, “Heavenly Ascent in Ancient Judaism: The Nature of the Experience” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, ed. Kent Harold Richards (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987), 220–22.

⁶ Dan Merkur, “Cultivating Visions Through Exegetical Meditations,” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel, Andrew A. Orlov (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 90.

⁷ David deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 123.

the texts deeply affected the way ancient audiences described and interpreted their own perceived experiences.⁸

Second, we do not have access to the psyche of the purported seers. Bernard McGinn, one of the foremost experts on mysticism, points out “that there can be no direct access to experience for the historian.”⁹ Historians only have access to the written records of the experience. This makes it difficult, if not impossible, to know anything about an apocalyptic seer’s psychology at the time of the experience.¹⁰ The written records themselves often undergo transformations through copying, translation, redaction, further reflection, and editing. In many cases, other apocalyptic texts close to the time of Revelation are only extant in translations which significantly postdate the original document and may have been edited heavily by later translators and redactors.

A third difficulty concerns the methodological validity of comparing John’s experience in Revelation to other texts in the same milieu. To say that the author of 4 Ezra had a real experience is not to claim that the author of 2 Enoch or the Apocalypse of Abraham did; however, other apocalyptic texts are the only extant texts available for comparison. Although acknowledging there was not a monolithic “apocalyptic experience,” unitive elements in apocalyptic texts make comparison a valuable enterprise.¹¹ As Rowland points out, to claim that

⁸ April DeConick, “What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?,” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick, SBLSS 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 7.

⁹ Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, vol. 1 of *The Presence of God: A History of Western Christian Mysticism* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), xiv.

¹⁰ John J. Collins, “Is there Mysticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls?,” in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter de Villiers, Adela Yarbro Collins (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 61; Adela Yarbro Collins, “Paul, Jewish Mysticism, and Spirit Possession,” in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter de Villiers, Adela Yarbro Collins (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 81–82; April DeConick, “What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?,” 6.

¹¹ Dan Merkur, *Gnosis: An Esoteric Tradition of Mystical Visions and Unions*, SUNY series in Western Esoteric Traditions (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 4–11; Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 54.

a text results from real visionary experience is not to claim every aspect of the work results from the experience.¹² The same work may contain a mixture of both real experience and literary reflection.

Merkabah mysticism refers to Jewish esoteric practices beginning in the Tannaitic period of meditating on the throne vision in Ezek 1. Over the next millennium *merkabah* mysticism endured, especially in the form of the *hekhalot* texts. As accounts of mystical experience, these texts provide fertile comparative ground for their earlier ancestor—apocalyptic texts. The same debate over real experience versus literary creation has plagued scholarship on *merkabah* mysticism and *hekhalot* texts.¹³ For some, the apocalyptic texts are seen as the record of actual mystical experiences while the goal of the *hekhalot* literature is to prescribe how to repeat those experiences. This view holds that both literatures are ultimately representing the same experiential paradigm.¹⁴ These debates provide further possibilities for understanding first-century apocalyptic mystical experience. As DeConick notes, since Christianity understood itself primarily as a revealed religion, mysticism cannot be far removed.¹⁵ Thus, discussions about the origins of *merkabah* mystical and *hekhalot* texts may shed fresh light on the origin of apocalypses such as Revelation.¹⁶

¹² cf. Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 237–38; 246–47.

¹³ Adela Yarbro Collins “Paul, Jewish Mysticism, and Spirit Possession,” 82; James Davila “The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature,” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick, SBLSS 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 108; James Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation: Major Texts of Merkavah Mysticism, Supplements to the Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 20 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 9–13.

¹⁴ Ra’anana Bousthan and Patrick G. McCullough, “Apocalyptic Literature and the Study of Early Jewish Mysticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 92.

¹⁵ April DeConick, “Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism,” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel, Andrew A. Orlov (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 299.

¹⁶ Michael Stone, “Apocalyptic Literature” in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*, ed. Michael Stone, vol. 2 CRINT (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 436.

Two final difficulties in discussing the experience of ancient apocalyptic writers is the traditional character of the genre and the pseudepigraphic framework of Jewish apocalypses. First, different apocalypses describe ecstatic experiences in very similar terms and much of the language is taken from the Scriptures and common apocalyptic traditions.¹⁷ Does the traditional character and repeating *topoi* indicate the visions are not spontaneous and arising from real experience?¹⁸ For example, in Rev 19:9–10, John describes hearing the voice of an angel instructing him to write a message to the churches. At the conclusion of the angel’s instruction, speaking in the first person, John says, “Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your comrades who hold the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Aune notes parallels to this scene in other apocalyptic works.¹⁹ Ascension of Isaiah 7.21 says:

And I fell on my face to worship him, and the angel who conducted me did not allow me, but said to me, “Worship neither angel nor throne which belongs to the six heavens—for this reason I was sent to conduct thee—till I tell thee in the seventh heaven.

Similarly, in the Apoc. Zeph. 6:11–15 we find this description by the apocalypticist:

Then I arose and stood, and I saw a great angel standing before me... And when I saw him, I rejoiced, for I thought that the Lord Almighty had come to visit me. I fell upon my face, and I worshipped him. He said to me, “Take heed. Don’t worship me. I am not the Lord Almighty, but I am the great angel Eremel, who is over the abyss and Hades.”

Thus, the *topoi* of the apocalyptic seer falling at the feet of the angel and receiving a correction to worship God alone is common. Aune comments thusly:

First of all, the motif of the angel who refuses worship from a seer in the context of an angelic revelation (as in Rev 19:10 and 22:9) is a *literary* motif with many parallels in apocalyptic literature, though the motif is not restricted to apocalyptic. As a *literary* motif, it is difficult if not impossible to claim that the constituent motif of the *fear*

¹⁷ Michael Stone, “A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions,” *HTR* 96 (2003): 179.

¹⁸ Thomas Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, 86.

¹⁹ Aune, *Revelation 17–22*, WBC 52c (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 3:1034

attributed to the recipient of angelic revelations is anything more than a form part of this literary motif...²⁰

Does the recognition of literary motifs and common *topoi* between apocalypses mitigate the possibility of real visionary experience in these texts?

Second, most ancient apocalypses are pseudonymous. They tell first-person accounts of the experiences of long-deceased authorities in Israel like Moses, Abraham, Enoch, Baruch, Ezra, and others. This complicates investigation of apocalyptic experience on two accounts. First, it seems to make it *a priori* unlikely that these pseudonymous accounts represent the real experiences of the unknown authors.²¹ Second, pseudepigraphy is a barrier to knowing anything about the author and his social situation. In most cases, we know very little about the originating circumstances of these documents.²² Several attempts have been made to rescue the ancient apocalyptists from the charge of cynical forgery. D. S. Russell,²³ Hindy Najman,²⁴ Christopher Rowland,²⁵ David Meade,²⁶ Michael Stone,²⁷ and others have attempted to provide nuanced accounts of apocalyptic pseudonymity demonstrating that fictitious authorship does not necessarily indicate fabricated experience. Modern scholars have simply not been able to solve the mystery of Jewish apocalyptic pseudonymity fully.²⁸ It continues to be in the words of

²⁰ Ibid., 3:1036 [emphasis his].

²¹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 214.

²² Martha Himmelfarb, "From Prophecy to Apocalypse: the Book of the Watchers and Tours of Heaven," in vol. 1 of *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green (New York: Crossroad, 1986), 154.

²³ Russell, *Method and Message*, 128–39.

²⁴ Hindy Najman, *Past Renewals: Interpretative Authority, Renewed Revelation, and the Quest for Perfection in Jewish Antiquity*, JSJ 53 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 63–67, 73–86, 194–95.

²⁵ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 61–70, 240–47.

²⁶ David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition*, WUNT 39 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

²⁷ Michael Stone, "Apocalyptic—Vision or Hallucination?" *Milla wa-Milla* 14 (1974): 47–56; Ibid., "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions," 167–80; Ibid., "Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered," *The Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 9 (2006): 1–15; Ibid., *A Textual Commentary on the Armenian Version of IV Ezra*, SCS 34 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990): 121, 326–27, 429–31; Ibid., "Apocalyptic Literature," 427–33.

²⁸ David Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 69; Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 109.

Martha Himmelfarb, “the darkest mirror which we least understand.”²⁹ Although it is widely acknowledged that Revelation is not pseudonymous—it is written by a first-century prophet named John known to the Christian communities in Asia—the pseudonymity of Jewish apocalypses obfuscates the comparison of underlying phenomena. I will now turn to provide the major categories found in the scholarly literature for answering these important questions.

“There is No Way to Decide”

First, several scholars remain agnostic about the possibility of knowing about the situation surrounding the origination of these documents.³⁰ In the 2018 work *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, the editors John J. and Adela Yarbro Collins and Pieter G.R. de Villiers state in the introduction, “There is a long-standing discussion as to whether the accounts of their visions nonetheless reflect real human experiences and visions... There is no way, however, to decide whether the authors actually had such visions or only imagined them, if indeed we can even make such a distinction.”³¹ Similarly, in 1989, Jean-Pierre Ruiz critiqued R. H. Charles’s view that the use of highly symbolic language is due to the fact that no other language is adequate for the task of relaying what is seen in a vision. Ruiz notes that this approach requires criteria for determining genuine visionary experience from literary fiction, since if all authentic vision requires vivid imagery, it would be equally possible to manufacture such vivid imagery. Ruiz concludes that all such criteria would be conjecture: “Whether genuine visionary experience ultimately underlies the literary expression or not is

²⁹ Martha Himmelfarb, “Revelation and Rapture: The Transformation of the Visionary in the Ascent Apocalypses,” in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. John J. Collins, James H. Charlesworth, JSPSup 9 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 88.

³⁰ cf. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 31.

³¹ “Introduction,” in *Apocalypticism and Mysticism in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. John J. Collins, Pieter de Villiers, Adela Yarbro Collins (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 2.

inaccessible to the investigator and is relatively unimportant. However, the literary expression itself is eminently accessible.”³² In Ithamar Gruenwald’s influential *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, he writes of Revelation, “The question of the genuineness of the vision is quite a difficult one... Generally, though, discussions of this kind do not lead very far in any attempt to understand and evaluate the experience once it is cast as a literary document.”³³

One of the most thorough attempts to articulate the agnostic view is found in Lars Hartman’s 1966 *Prophecy Interpreted*. He notes that the author of 4 Ezra at least appears to have known techniques for inducing hallucinations.³⁴ Hartman then discusses the well-established, conventional literary forms of apocalyptic literature. Does convention negate real experience? Hartman concludes that convention does not negate the possibility of experience since the visionary must communicate his experience in the words of the tradition of which he is a representative.³⁵ He says, “This means that, as regards what has been seen and written down, we cannot draw any clear distinction between texts whose authors reproduce visions and texts whose ‘ordinary’ author describes visually what he wishes to say.”³⁶ Although Hartman ultimately doubts the possibility of arriving at an answer to the question, he does not find the investigation to be superfluous. The inquiry reminds us that authors worked with different degrees of consciousness and differing modes of inspiration.

³² Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 216–17.

³³ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 101.

³⁴ Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse Mark 13 par.*, ConBNT 1 (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1966), 105.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Apocalypses as the Results of Literary Creativity

A second major approach is to see the apocalypses as conscious literary creations. In his 1927 commentary on Daniel, James A. Montgomery asks whether we have in apocalypses genuine vision or artificial creations.³⁷ Montgomery maintains that apocalypses are the result of both the intellect and artistry of the authors. The artistic element of the apocalypses appears to be the same kind as Dante or Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.³⁸ They are all literary art. Ascribing the vision to the ancient Daniel pseudonymously was part of the literary artifice. Montgomery maintained that apocalyptic developed from its elder brother prophecy, which was more oral and spontaneous. The composers of apocalyptic texts might leave hints in the text which indicate an "intensity" and "gravity" which could be interpreted as true ecstasy or vision. For example, Montgomery said, "One feels a genuineness, subjectively speaking, in the visions of the Apocalypse and 2 *Esdras*, even as in Paul's ascent to the third heaven... In all these three bks. there is discovered a genuine personal touch which appears to reveal actual spiritual experience."³⁹ It is clear from Montgomery's comments that his decisions on the genuineness of a visionary account is based on his own subjective intuitions.

In his 1938 book *Christian Beginnings*, Morton Scott Enslin says of Revelation, "the book is solely the product of study and reflection. No living man, even in the wildest vision or nightmare, actually saw the things he describes. They are simply paper descriptions."⁴⁰ For Enslin, even allowing that these visions were actually seen, the mind of a man could not have remembered them in this extensive detail. Enslin concludes:

³⁷ James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927), 103.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 103–04.

⁴⁰ Morton Scott Enslin, *Christian Beginnings* (New York: Harper, 1939), 363–64.

This is no hastily thrown off pamphlet or chronicling of some weird dreams, but a carefully studied product of tremendous, if sensational, imagination. Furthermore... although he has used freely earlier materials, much of which may well be pre-Christian, and has not always revamped or revised them thoroughly, he is not to be viewed as an editor or compiler. The only just term is author.⁴¹

Martha Himmelfarb has done the most in the last few decades to advance the view that apocalypses are textual constructions. Responding to Gershom Scholem's view that the apocalypses reflect actual experiences similar to the way later *merkabah* mystics achieved their visions, Himmelfarb says, "At this point we need to confront head-on a crucial fact that Scholem and others have ignored: the apocalypses are literature, indeed one might even say fiction."⁴² She maintains that it is misguided to strip away the revelatory core from the narrative framework.⁴³ While pseudonymity and the traditional character of apocalypses might mitigate against actual experience, this must not necessarily be so since the way in which a mystic would relay a genuine mystical experience would be shaped by the mystic's tradition.⁴⁴ Citing Russell, Rowland, Meade, and Stone, Himmelfarb notes that cases have been made seeing pseudepigraphy as an organic part of an author's activity rather than a convention, or worse, deception.⁴⁵ However, even though Himmelfarb finds these theories attractive, she argues the apocalypses are better understood as literary creations that are acts of the imagination "with its specifics determined by the author's manipulation of conventions, rather than as a literary representation of the author's own experiences."⁴⁶

Himmelfarb argues that the prevalence of pseudepigraphy in a particular time in a particular point in history suggests a social phenomenon, but because pseudepigraphy hides the

⁴¹ Ibid., 364.

⁴² Himmelfarb, "Revelation and Rapture," 87.

⁴³ Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 102.

⁴⁴ Ibid., "Revelation and Rapture," 88.

⁴⁵ Ibid., *Ascent to Heaven*, 96–97.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 98.

author and the social circumstances, all that is left for analysis are the texts and how they were composed.⁴⁷ The pseudonymous attribution of Enoch's ascent cannot be taken as the unknown author's own experience.⁴⁸ Further, the pervasive allusions to the Bible and other apocalyptic works and the prominence of scribes in apocalyptic literature indicates authorial self-consciousness.⁴⁹ All of the most vivid descriptions of apocalyptists—falling on their faces waiting for angels to raise them—turn out to be governed by convention. Although Stone has argued extensively that 4 Ezra is based on real experience, Himmelfarb argues Ezra's reactions to the revelations he receives are conventional. Stone takes Ezra's fear after the angel raises him in 10:34 to indicate the presence of "real experience" because fear is a common element in apocalypses. However, as Exod 33:20 says, no one could see the Lord and live; thus, the fear of death would be the only appropriate response. Himmelfarb notes that 4 Ezra 6:13–17, 29 describes Ezra hearing a sound like many waters and the ground rocking. Similarly, in the Apocalypse of Abraham, Abraham hears a sound like rushing waters and cannot fall to worship because of the firmament beneath him rises and falls (17:1–3); thus, both authors share a repertoire of imagery to describe reactions to revelation.⁵⁰ Similarly, since the ascent account in 1 En. 14 is based on Ezekiel's throne vision in Ezek 1, the author of Enoch knew what the a vision of God on His throne was supposed to be like, making it impossible to know whether he had such experiences.⁵¹

Himmelfarb notes that there is very thin evidence for the existence of small groups of ascetics encouraging visionary experiences. We know very little about the authors' own situation

⁴⁷ Ibid., 98–99.

⁴⁸ Ibid., "From Prophecy to Apocalypse," 153.

⁴⁹ Ibid., *Ascent to Heaven*, 99.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 111.

⁵¹ Ibid., "From Prophecy to Apocalypse," 153–54.

from the pseudepigraphic narratives.⁵² Further, Himmelfarb maintains that the evidence for practices to induce visions such as mourning is even thinner. It is an unwarranted leap to assume that notices in the texts of weeping was a technique to induce visions.⁵³ “Rather, weeping and mourning in the apocalypses demonstrate the piety of the visionary, **who feels deeply the sinfulness of humanity and the travails of his people**. The cause of weeping and mourning is the crisis that vision or ascent is intended to resolve.”⁵⁴ “Fasting, mourning, and related practices are understood to make the visionary fit for experience, but not to cause it.”⁵⁵ Thus, “Despite their first-person accounts of the visions and ascents of ancient heroes, then, there is little to suggest that the authors of the apocalypses were themselves visionaries.”⁵⁶ Himmelfarb concludes:

What can be known by studying the texts is how these authors worked as authors. Taking account of how they worked argues for reading the apocalypses not as fictionalized accounts of personal experiences but as works of fiction from start to finish, although the authors themselves would never have accepted this anachronistic labeling of the genre in which they wrote.⁵⁷

For Himmelfarb, then, pseudepigraphy and the use of convention points to the apocalypses as imaginative literary creations.

Apocalypses as the Results of Psychological Phenomena

A third approach exemplified by Halperin and Dan Merkur analyzes visionary experience from Jungian analytical psychology and Freudian psychoanalysis. For both of these scholars, the visionary experiences are “real” insofar as they reflect psychic states created by the author’s

⁵² Ibid., *Ascent to Heaven*, 105; Ibid., “From Prophecy to Apocalypse,” 154.

⁵³ Ibid., *Ascent to Heaven*, 107.

⁵⁴ Ibid. [emphasis hers]

⁵⁵ Ibid., 110.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., *Ascent to Heaven*, 113; see also Idem., “Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature,” *HUCA* 59 (1988): 100.

conscious and subconscious visualizations. Merkur, noted psychoanalyst of religious experience, in his 1993 book *Gnosis*, uses the term ecstasy to refer to “religiously interpreted alternate state experiences.”⁵⁸ What makes an alternate psychic state religious is its personal or cultural valuation since a vision of Jesus will only be intrinsically religious to one who believes in Jesus. In two articles, Merkur employs psychoanalysis to solve the historical problem of whether the texts are based on visionary experiences; and if so, how these visions might have been produced.⁵⁹ Citing Susan Niditch’s work, he argues that the visionary reports in the apocalypses contain accurate references to techniques of inducing ecstasy demonstrated by anthropologists.⁶⁰ Merkur draws on Freud to demonstrate the spectrum of consciousness—on one end dreams which involve minimal conscious input and on the other, creative inspiration which involves maximal conscious contribution. Along the spectrum lies a variety of psychological phenomena.⁶¹ He suggests that vision literature should be interpreted in terms of hypnagogic phenomena which produces images similar to the process detailed by Jung called active imagination. Apocalyptic visions were induced and known to be visions both during and after occurrence which means they are not nondissociative states characteristic of psychosis.⁶² While many assume that mystical experiences happen in states of dissociation or trance, psychology shows that some religious ecstasies do not involve dissociation.⁶³

Merkur makes four relevant observations about the process of inducing visionary experience. First, the apocalypses portray states in which the ego was active, unlike the

⁵⁸ Merkur, *Gnosis*, 11.

⁵⁹ Merkur, “The Visionary Practices of Jewish Apocalyptists,” in *Psychology and the Bible: A New Way to Read the Scriptures*, vol. 2 *From Genesis to Apocalyptic Vision*, ed. J. Harold Ellens, Wayne G. Rollins (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004), 318–19; *Ibid.*, “Cultivating Visions Through Exegetical Meditations.”

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, “Cultivating Visions Through Exegetical Meditations,” 62.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 87–88.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 87.

unconscious states experienced in dreams.⁶⁴ Second, mystics used a variety of practices to induce visions including prayer, solitude, and fasting. The practice of mourning as a preparatory technique for vision has a long history. Mourning functioned affectively to induce a mood of uncontrollable anxiety which could lead to alternate states of consciousness.⁶⁵ Third, visionary experience often involved fear before, during, and after the vision. Fourth, it is widely acknowledged that apocalyptists expressed their visions in traditional themes and motifs found in older apocalypses, the Bible, and other oral traditions. Merkur notes Rowland's thesis that meditations on older texts may have caused their contents to be replicated within the seers' visionary experiences. "These seers rehearsed what they knew in order to encourage their psychic states to manifest further and unknown matters on the same topics."⁶⁶ Merkur concludes, "It is, I submit, untenable that ancient authors, writing fictions, could have invented a psychological syndrome that anticipated superego theory so very well. The theoretical coherence of their visionary practices is a testament to its reality."⁶⁷

While Halperin's work has mostly focused on rabbinic literature, *merkabah* mysticism, and the *hekhalot* texts, he also considers apocalypses. Halperin believes that the question of "real ecstatic experience" has been based on an unstated fallacy that "genuine" ecstatic experience somehow comes to the visionary from the outside, another external world.⁶⁸ Halperin reveals his presuppositions:

I would not dogmatically deny that such worlds exist, simply because none of the astronauts managed to see them. But I do need to know how they are to be fit into the scientific view of the universe. In the absence of such explanation, I will stand on one premise: that the things described in an account of heavenly ascension (or of any other visionary experience), insofar as they are not ordinary objects in the material world, are

⁶⁴ Ibid., "The Visionary Practices of Jewish Apocalyptists," 322.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 326–27.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 339.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 343.

⁶⁸ Halperin, "Heavenly Ascent in Ancient Judaism," 218; Idem., *Faces of the Chariot*, 68.

the creations of the author of that account (or of his ultimate human source). It was he who shaped them, consciously or unconsciously.⁶⁹

Since the visions are all created by the visionaries, the dichotomy between objectively “real” vision and “unreal” vision is false. The more appropriate categories are between fantasy and hallucination, the former involving the conscious realization that it has no existence outside his imagination and the latter being constructed in the unconscious.⁷⁰ A hallucination constructed in the unconscious may be misperceived as being given from the outside.

Similarly, Halperin refuses the dichotomy between visionary experience and later reflection. Since the same mind that produced the vision is the same mind interpreting the vision, the interpretation cannot be separated from the vision.⁷¹ Finally, Halperin challenges the false dichotomy of “real” versus “literary”. Since the picture that Rowland paints of apocalyptic writers meditating on Scripture in order to have the same visionary experiences is plausible, then the chasm between experience and literature shrinks dramatically.⁷² Thus, the real question is whether these visions are imaginative fantasy or unconscious hallucination. The only valid criterion Halperin recognizes for differentiating fantasy and hallucination is this: “Do the images used by the writer have symbolic meanings which, when deciphered, yield a more or less coherent and convincing interpretation, but which the writer gives no indication he is consciously aware of?”⁷³ When applied to Revelation, Halperin finds in Revelation 12:13–18 an example of an unconscious sexual symbolization. He says, “But, when I hear of a dream or vision or fantasy in which a snake chases a woman and squirts water at her out of his mouth, I cannot doubt that

⁶⁹ Ibid., “Heavenly Ascent in Ancient Judaism,” 222; see also Idem., *Faces of the Chariot*, 68–69.

⁷⁰ Ibid., “Heavenly Ascent in Ancient Judaism,” 222.

⁷¹ Ibid., 222–24.

⁷² Ibid., 225–26.

⁷³ Ibid., 226.

one of the things the dreamer or visionary has on his mind is sex.”⁷⁴ Halperin believes that the mystical accounts of ascent in Jewish literature reflect the adolescent fantasy of surpassing and displacing adult figures of authority. The *hekhalot* texts reflect the child’s fantasy of climbing to the lofty and forbidden realms of adult sexuality. The mystical ascents depict the endlessly repeating struggle of the younger generation against the old. The ascents into the heavenly realm are thus rather understood as invasions of heaven involving the displacement of the powers by young upstarts. Halperin finds the son’s struggle for the father’s power to be a motif in the book of Revelation (cf. 3:21; 5:6, 9, 12; 21:9; 22:1–3) which might provide the context for the vivid sexual imagery in 12:15.

Halperin prefers to view the apocalypists as exegetical interpreters of Scripture. He gives the example of Rev 10:8–11 for which the source is clearly Ezekiel 2:8–3:3 and asks, “Who, then, is the ‘I’ who ate the sweet and bitter scroll, and who speaks in Revelation? It is, of course, the putative author, John of Patmos. But it is also Ezekiel. Better: it is Ezekiel as he would have spoken had he fully understood the implications of what had been revealed to him.”⁷⁵ However, in Revelation, Ezekiel does not typically stand alone. Other sources are drawn from Isaiah, Zechariah, and Daniel. John, using midrashic processes, creates a composite prophetic personality, and when he says he “sees” something that looks like Ezekiel’s throne vision, “we may assume that he is seeing the merkabah vision as he has persuaded himself it really was, as Ezekiel would have seen it had he been inspired wholly and not in part.”⁷⁶ Thus, Halperin is inclined to see the apocalyptic writers, and John in particular, as creating conscious fantasies based on the exegesis of authoritative texts but which are also influenced by unconscious

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 228.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, *Faces of the Chariot*, 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

dynamics of power and sexuality.⁷⁷ These fantasies are real in the sense that they are produced by the visionary's unconscious mind that is then taken by the one constructing them as something real coming from the outside.⁷⁸

Apocalypses as the Results of Visionary Experience

Fourth, several scholars have maintained that real experience stands behind the apocalypses generally and Revelation in particular. Perhaps the most influential commentary on Revelation of the twentieth century was that of Charles. Charles wrote that the psychological experiences of seers also involved reflection and embraced the powers of insight, imagination, and judgment.⁷⁹ Charles specifically addresses the question of whether these psychological experiences were real. He writes, "Of the reality of such psychological experiences no modern psychologist entertains a doubt."⁸⁰ Concerning Revelation, Charles says:

But in our author the visions are of an elaborate and complicated nature, and the more exalted and intense the experience, the more incapable it becomes of literal description. Moreover, if we believe, as the present writer does, that behind these visions there is an actual substratum of reality belonging to the higher spiritual world, then the seer could grasp the things seen and heard in such vision, only in so far as he was equipped for the task by his psychological powers and the spiritual development behind him.⁸¹

The things which John saw were clothed in the symbols and literary forms with which his memory was soaked.⁸² At every level of the experience, the seer's reason was involved. Reason involves the use of insight, imagination, and judgment. John had to create the symbols, arrange the materials, and adapt the traditional material to interpret his own vision. At various points,

⁷⁷ Ibid., 451.

⁷⁸ Wolfson rightfully critiques Halperin's view as "psychoanalytic reductionism" which allows for no perceptual basis in reality. The mystic merely projects his own feelings and impulses onto reality (*Through a Speculum that Shines*, 114–19).

⁷⁹ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:civ.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 1:cv.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1:cvi.

⁸² Ibid., 1:cvi–cvii.

Charles appeals to the seer's experience to explain peculiar features. For example, Charles finds an oddity in the notice in 4:2 that John was εὐθέως ἐγενόμην ἐν πνεύματι since John was already in the ecstatic state referring back to 1:10. Further, in 1:10, being "in the Spirit" comes before the address of Christ, whereas in 4:2, the heavenly address precedes the notice of the prophet being "in the Spirit." Charles says, "The text, therefore, is peculiar. But the difficulty can, I think, be adequately explained by the hypothesis that the Seer is here combining visions received on different occasions."⁸³ Thus, for Charles, 4:1–8 records an independent vision of the Seer which was inserted here to connect the material in chs. 1–3 with what follows.

Perhaps no one has argued so pervasively for the possibility of religious experience behind Jewish apocalypses as Michael Stone, professor of Armenian Studies and Comparative Religion at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. In 1974, Stone published an article, "Apocalyptic, Vision, or Hallucination?" arguing that actual visionary activity or analogous religious experience lay behind pseudepigraphic Jewish apocalypses.⁸⁴ Stone noted an unease of scholars in biblical studies to acknowledge that the prophets, psalmists, stories in Samuel, or the visionary reports in Ezekiel could be attributed to things believed to have been seen in an alternate state of consciousness.⁸⁵ He says,

In some fields of learning, religious experience is simply part of the evidence, freely considered and utilized by scholars endeavoring to understand the past. One need only think of the history of medieval Western spirituality to realize this, or of Hasidism, or a dozen other instances. Yet in study of the apocalyptic literature, indeed of biblical literature overall, religious experience is not usually taken into account, though sometimes its presence is acknowledged.⁸⁶

⁸³ Ibid., 1:110.

⁸⁴ Michael Stone, "Apocalyptic, Vision, or Hallucination?," 47–56; repr. in *Selected Studies in Pseudepigrapha and Apocrypha with Special Reference to the Armenian Tradition* SVTP 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 419–28.

⁸⁵ Stone, "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions," 168.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 169.

In Stone's work on 4 Ezra, including his commentary in the *Hermeneia* series, he has argued that the only way to understand the structure and content of 4 Ezra is to see it as the result of a complex religious experience. He demonstrates that in the first three visions, the dialogue between Ezra and the angel present the author's own internal debate and agony over the destruction of the temple. In the subsequent visions, there is a radical change in Ezra. The change is not literary artifice but was a profound religious conversion experienced by the author. The fourth vision of the woman produced a powerful psychological experience.⁸⁷ Stone says:

I am not maintaining that an identical psychological dynamic must necessarily be at play in any other work. I do claim, however, that *4 Ezra* is a good example of a case where a factor outside the theological or propositional consistency of the statements provides a potent key to the understanding of the book. This is religious literature; it consistently describes religious experience, and the mere possibility that such religious experience has an authentic foundation profoundly affects its interpretation.⁸⁸

Stone does not find the pseudepigraphic framework and traditional character of the apocalypses to preclude real experience. Pseudepigraphy, like the experience itself, was complex. It was a way of seeing the present in the context of received, authoritative tradition.⁸⁹ Regarding the conventional nature of apocalypses, Stone maintains that scholars have overemphasized the similarities between apocalypses neglecting the fact that every apocalypse is unique. The fourth vision of 4 Ezra is very distinctive, not simply a plagiarized forgery. Similarly, these visionaries are too familiar with the psychological mechanics of producing altered states of consciousness to have invented these works out of whole cloth.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid., 171–77.

⁸⁸ Idem., "On Reading an Apocalypse" in *Mysteries and Revelations: Apocalyptic Studies Since the Uppsala Colloquium*, ed. John J. Collins and James H. Charlesworth, JSPSup 9 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 74.

⁸⁹ Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra, Hermeneia* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 38; Idem., "Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered," 9–13.

⁹⁰ Ibid., "A Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions," 177.

One of the most influential discussions of the topic occurs in Johannes Lindblom's 1968 book *Gesichte und Offenbarung: Vorstellungen von Göttlichen Weisungen und Übernatürlichen Erscheinungen im Ältesten Christentum*. Lindblom's most notable contribution was his recognition that all previous attempts to address whether John's apocalypse was the result of real vision had lacked a method.⁹¹ In ecstatic visions, the visionary has a mental state different than the everyday consciousness. The images come to the subconscious, and the visionary sees with the inner eye and hears with the inner ear. The visions are real to the one experiencing them, but they do not have a material or empirical reality.⁹²

Lindblom gave eight characteristics for methodologically determining whether experience lays behind a visionary text:⁹³

1. Spontaneity: The visions suddenly come as a miracle. Although sometimes one might physically and psychically prepare for a vision, they are never considered to be the creations of the visionary.
2. Concentration: The visions are relatively limited and have a compositionally unified content which is only expanded later in the conscious reproduction in the memory and the recording.
3. Dreamlike Character: The visionary is quite clear on the details of the vision, but as a whole, it has an unrealistic or fantastic quality.
4. Impressionistic: The vision has the character of immediate, fresh, living perceptions. The thoughtful perceptions of the vision only come later when the visionary begins to reflect on what has been seen.

⁹¹ Johannes Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen: Vorstellungen von göttlichen Weisungen und übernatürlichen Erscheinungen im ältesten Christentum* (Lund: Gleerup, 1968), 211–12.

⁹² My translation. *Ibid.*, 218–19.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 219.

5. Supernatural: The vision concerns things on an otherworldly plane where supramundane events are possible.
6. Inexpressibility: The visionary has difficulty relating the experience because what has been seen and heard supersedes all comprehension and thus refuses retelling with human words.
7. Sensitivity: The visionary expresses emotional side-effects such as astonishment, joy, gratitude, but also horror, fear, sadness, etc.
8. Dating and Localization: The visionary relates the date, location, and circumstances of the experience.

Lindblom cautions that these criteria are only meant to be suggestive; the application of these criteria will involve the sensitivity and artistry of the researcher.⁹⁴ Lindblom then moves to an analysis of the passages of Revelation and finds evidence of actual experience in a small number of passages (1:9–20; 4:1–5, 8; 11:19; 12:1–12, 13–18; 15:1–4; 15:5–8; 19:9–10, 11–16, 17–18; 22:8).⁹⁵ The rest of the material derives from more conventional literary activity. Thus, Revelation is neither completely literary product nor entirely real vision; however, Lindblom maintained that the visionary was still under the ecstasy of the experience and remained in the psychic exaltation while recording the vision. The visionary still experienced *elevatio mentalis* in later reflection and recording; thus, the entirety of the completed document could be said to proceed from the visionary experience.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 220.

⁹⁵ Based on these criteria, Rowland is incredulous that Lindblom did not identify more material from Revelation as original (*Open Heaven*, 235, fnt 48).

Preliminary Conclusions

This brief survey has sought to put forward some of the major possibilities for understanding the origins of apocalyptic literature. Some scholars are content to maintain that because we have no direct access to the psychology of the seer and only possess texts which are largely couched in pseudepigraphy and traditional *topoi*, we do not possess critical tools sharp enough to know whether real experiences lay behind these works. Another group of scholars maintain that apocalypses are literary phenomena. They are largely attributed pseudonymously to literate scribes like Baruch and Ezra, and their traditional character make it unlikely that they represent experiences resulting from altered states of consciousness. A few scholars find psychoanalysis as a profitable tool for understanding apocalypses as resulting from various psychological phenomena. Finally, some scholars believe that real experiences do lie behind at least some apocalypses, pseudonymity and conventionalism notwithstanding.

These categories provide a helpful framework for exploring John's employment of *imitatio* in his apocalypse. In what sense can one speak of John identifying with the work of the prophet Ezekiel? One possibility is to reject our ability to know. Since we know so little about John on the island of Patmos and the workings of his mind at the time of writing, any commentary is speculative. Another approach might be to suggest that John identifies with Ezekiel and the other prophets in literary terms. John has consciously created a literary *imitatio*, the Christian version of Vergil's *Aen*. A hermeneutic of acceptance takes John's claim to be presenting a revelation from the Lord to be *prima facie* true. Understanding apocalyptic origins should begin with the apocalypses themselves. Unless it can be proven false, the authors own designations should be treated seriously. Perhaps John's identification with Ezekiel is related to the practice of pseudonymity whereby the apocalyptists identified with ancient biblical figures.

The final two possibilities maintain the reality of the psychology and visionary experience reported in the texts.

In the remainder of this chapter, I seek to better understand how John's use of *imitatio* might have occurred as part of a complex visionary experience. It is important to demonstrate that the argument made in previous chapters that John is imitating Ezekiel is substantiated at the level of apocalyptic experience. In order to do this, I will investigate the phenomenological evidence in other apocalypses in order to better understand John's own apocalyptic visionary experience and his identification with Ezekiel. As I will demonstrate, there are substantial reasons to believe that apocalypses report visionary experiences. Meditation on Scripture often served as a catalyst for a seer's reception of a vision. As we will see, the *merkabah* vision of Ezekiel was one of the most common texts which led seers to have remarkably similar mystical experiences.

THE POSSIBILITY OF VISIONARY EXPERIENCE IN APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS

The Experience of Vision

a. The Qualifications of the Seer

Throughout the apocalypses, the worthiness of the seer was a prerequisite to achieving visions. The apocalyptic archetype, Daniel, is pictured as righteous (e.g. 1:8). Daniel and the three youths resist the king's testing, and God rewards Daniel by giving him "understanding in all visions and dreams" (1:17). This pattern is repeated later in the book when the angel Gabriel comes to give Daniel "insight and understanding" (9:22) because Daniel made "pleas for mercy" and is "greatly loved" by God. Because of Daniel's uprightness, the Lord grants him the vision

of the seventy weeks. At 12:10, the angelic figure explains that only those who purify themselves by shunning wickedness can be made wise to understand visions.

Enoch is repeatedly referred to as a righteous man. He is “the blessed and righteous man of the Lord” (1 En. 1:2). Later, Enoch blesses the Lord and the Watchers cry out calling Enoch the “scribe of righteousness” (1 En. 12:4). After the *merkabah* vision of 1 En. 14, Enoch is lifted up and called a “righteous man, scribe of righteousness” (1 En. 15:1). Because Enoch alone stands as righteous among the people of the earth, only he is worthy to receive the heavenly visions (1 En. 19:3). Similarly, in 4 Ezra 6:32–33, the heavenly voice tells Ezra that “the Mighty One has seen your uprightness and has also observed the purity which you have maintained from your youth.” Because of Ezra’s righteousness, the Lord sent his messenger to show Ezra visions. In Baruch’s prayer to the Mighty One, he says that the Lord only reveals “the secrets to those who are spotless, to those who subjected themselves to you and your Law in faith” (2 Bar. 54:5) and then prays for the exposition of the vision he has been shown. As Abraham seeks to understand the vision of creation given to him, the Lord promises to make the meaning of the vision known to him because “you have been pleasing before my face” (Apoc. Ab. 23:3). The Lord repeatedly affirms that Abraham is beloved and worthy to receive heavenly secrets (cf. 9:6; 10:7). The primary emphasis on Abraham’s righteousness is his rejection of idolatry.⁹⁶ These repeated references serve to substantiate the genuineness of the revelation as well as provide the necessary criteria for achieving visionary experience. Righteousness, uprightness, and wisdom often appear as necessary requirements. Righteousness is sometimes indicated by notices of prayer, fasting, and confession of sin which serve as preludes to visionary experience. Thus,

⁹⁶ George Nicklesburg, *Jewish Literature Between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 297–98.

Ezra's prayer is typical of apocalyptic perspective: "If I have found favor in your sight, and if it is possible, and if I am worthy, show me this also..." (4 Ezra 4:44–45).

b. Details of Visionary Experiences

Often the accounts of visionary experience involve details about the location of the experience. In T. Ab. 2, the angel Michael appears to Abraham at the oak of Mamre. The seer in 2 Bar. 6:1 also sits next to an oak to grieve over Zion before being lifted up and carried to Jerusalem by a strong spirit (cf. 2 Bar. 55:1). Later, the seer writes two letters under the inspiration of God after describing sitting down under an oak tree (2 Bar. 77:18–19). Other visions occur near bodies of water,⁹⁷ in fields,⁹⁸ and on mountains.⁹⁹ Many apocalyptic visionary experiences occur in the form of a dream while the seer sleeps.¹⁰⁰ Thus, in some cases, visions are given to seers during sleep while in other cases, the revelations comes as the result of the seer praying, fasting, or mourning at sites that were already associated with revelatory experience.¹⁰¹

The earliest Christian apocalypses, Revelation and Shepherd of Hermas, are not pseudonymous. In the Apocalypse, the revelation of Jesus Christ is given to a prophet named John (1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). He writes to seven churches in Asia Minor in the first century (1:4, 11). He claims to be a "brother and partner in the tribulation" while being on the island of Patmos "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (1:9). He describes being a member of a circle of prophets (22:9). The seven oracles in chs. 2–3 are a complex interweaving of revealed material mixed with knowledge of the local situation in each church.¹⁰² John (and the Lord) are

⁹⁷ cf. Dan 10:4; 12:5; 1 En. 13:7–8.

⁹⁸ cf. 4 Ezra 9:23–26; 10:58; 12:51; 14:37.

⁹⁹ cf. Apoc. Ab. 9:8; 12:3–10; 2 Bar 13:1; 20:5–6; 21:1–2; 47:2; 76:3.

¹⁰⁰ cf. Dan 9:18; 10:9; 1 En. 13:7–8; 2 En. 1:2–3; 4 Ezra 3:1–3; 10:58–11:1; 2 Bar. 52:7–53:1.

¹⁰¹ Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, 68.

¹⁰² Colin Hemer, *Letters to the Seven Churches*.

aware of the relations between Jesus-believing Jews and the local synagogues (2:9; 3:9), the teaching of rival prophets (2:14, 20–23), the presence of false apostles (2:2), and the martyrdom of one named Antipas (2:13). These types of details provide realism to the visionary account; however, it is unlikely these details are included merely to give the accounts verisimilitude.

The Shepherd of Hermas was a Christian apocalypse written somewhere between the end of the first century and the first half of the second century CE.¹⁰³ The book has been considered part of the apocalyptic genre although it contains several differences.¹⁰⁴ Hermas is presented as a historical character. He is a moderately wealthy freedman with a wife and children who experiences the images and visions of the book.¹⁰⁵ In Herm. Vis. 1–4, Hermas is guided by the female church while the rest of the book presents Hermas as guided by the Shepherd (with the exception of *Sim.* 10).¹⁰⁶ In Herm. Vis. 2.4.3, Hermas names Grapte, the woman responsible for the instruction to widows and their children, who receives one of the initial copies of the revelation. Hermas mentions his wife several times although she is not named (Herm. Vis. 2.2.3; 2.3.1). The very first vision contains numerous personal details of Hermas's life:

The one who raised me sold me to a certain Rhoda at Rome. Many years later, I became reacquainted with her and began to love her as a sister. After some time, as she was bathing in the river Tiber, I saw her, gave her my hand, and brought her out of the river. Seeing her beauty, I thought in my heart: "How happy I would be if I had such a wife, both in regard to beauty and manner." I wanted only this, nothing more. After some time, as I was on my way into the countryside and glorying in the greatness, splendor, and power of God's creatures, I became drowsy as I walked along. A spirit took hold of me and brought me through a place off the road, humanly impassible. It was very steep and eroded by running water. When I had crossed that stream I came to level ground and kneeling, I began to pray to the Lord and confess my sins. As I was praying, heaven opened, and I saw that woman upon whom I had set my heart, greeting me from heaven with: "Hello, Hermas!"¹⁰⁷

20. ¹⁰³ Carolyn Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary, Hermeneia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999),

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 10–12.

¹⁰⁵ The family of Hermas is referenced multiple times (cf. I.1, 9; 1.3,1; II.2,2–3; II.3,1; III.1,6; V.3,9).

¹⁰⁶ Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 12.

¹⁰⁷ Herm. Vis. 1.1.1–4; Osiek, *Shepherd of Hermas*, 41.

In this description, details of Hermas's life—being raised as a slave in Rhoda's house—give way to a visionary experience of a heavenly Rhoda.¹⁰⁸ Rather than functioning as mere window dressing for an otherwise fictional account, the details of Hermas's sexual sin represent a real problem in the work and appear repeatedly throughout the book.¹⁰⁹ In Herm. Vis. I, he writes autobiographically. In Herm. Vis. V, he describes himself as handed over to the Shepherd. In all twelve Mandates, Hermas is addressed in the second person singular.¹¹⁰ In other words, Hermas references himself in all five Visions and in nine of the twelve Mandates. These details seem to provide historical anchors which tether the visions to the real experiences of the visionary.

c. Practices for Achieving Visionary Experience

One of Lindblom's criteria for detecting authentic vision was "spontaneity" by which he referred to the visions coming on to the visionary unexpectedly as a miracle, although, Lindblom immediately qualifies that visions could be prepared for to some extent.¹¹¹ This criterion is called into question by the widespread evidence which suggests visionaries often prepared for visions with specific practices. The purpose of these practices or rituals in some cases was for achieving vision.¹¹² Contra Lindblom, visions that were prepared for should not be considered less authentic than spontaneous visionary experiences.¹¹³ Merkur has demonstrated that the criterion of unconscious spontaneity versus conscious control has no basis in either experimental or

¹⁰⁸ Martin Dibelius argued these details were fictionalized accounts borrowed from Roman literature and presented in autobiographical form to draw in the audience (*Der Hirt des Hermas*, [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1923], 427–30).

¹⁰⁹ Arthur Strock, "The Shepherd of Hermas: A Study of his Anthropology as Seen in the Tension Between Dipsychia and Hamartia" (PhD diss. Emory University, 1984), 184–85; 196–209.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 195–96.

¹¹¹ Lindblom, *Gesichte und Offenbarungen*, 219.

¹¹² Rowland, Gibbons, Dorbroruka, "Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity," 51–54; Russell, *Method and Message*, 169–73; Sappington, *Revelation and Redemption at Colossae*, 63–70.

¹¹³ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 236; Halperin, "Heavenly Ascent in Ancient Judaism," 226.

clinical psychology.¹¹⁴ There is a spectrum of experiences which range from more unconscious dream experiences to hypnagogic states where the person is in conscious control. In psychological terms, exegetical meditations within the context of hypnagogic states are no less rational, nor more phantasmagorical.¹¹⁵ Gruenwald summarizes the experience represented in apocalyptic and developing *merkavah* mysticism: “Ezekiel was for a very long time the model for visionaries to follow and imitate. Various practices were adapted and introduced in order to bring about the realization of mystical experiences like those Ezekiel was thought to have had.”¹¹⁶

Prayer was one of the most common activities associated with the reception of visions. The visions received by Daniel only occur after prayer (Dan 2:18–19). Later, Daniel’s prayers, fasting, and confession result in the reception of vision (Dan 9:3, 20–21). Similar accounts are described in other apocalypses. In 4 Ezra, the seer is told to pray, weep, and fast in order to be shown greater visions (cf. 4 Ezra 5:13; 6:31, 35; 9:24–25). In 2 Baruch, the prerequisite for receiving vision and exposition is requesting from the Lord (2 Bar. 54:6–7; 56:1; 76:1). In 3 Baruch, the Lord sends an angel to explain Israel’s exile because “both your tears and your voice entered the ears of the Almighty God” (3 Bar. 1:1–5). These passages also reveal that prayer was often coupled with fasting as a means of achieving vision.¹¹⁷ The clearest example of fasting for the reception of a vision occurs in Shepherd of Hermas where Hermas is confused by the first two visions. In the first vision he sees an old woman and in the second vision he sees a youthful beautiful woman. He “longed to understand this revelation” and the ancient woman speaks to

¹¹⁴ Merkur, “Cultivating Visions through Exegetical Meditations,” 63–64.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 90–91.

¹¹⁶ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 4.

¹¹⁷ cf. Dan 10:2–3; 4 Ezra 5:13, 20; 6:31, 35–37; 9:23–28; 12:51; Apoc. Abr. 9:4, 7; 12:1–2; 2 Bar. 5:7; 9:2; 12:5; 20:5–6; 21:1–2; 43:3; 47:2; see P. R. Arbesmann, “Fasting and Prophecy in Pagan and Christian Antiquity,” *Traditio* 7 (1951): 1–71.

Hermas saying: “Every request needs humility: fast therefore and you shall receive what you asked from the Lord. So I fasted one day and in the same night a young man appeared to me.”¹¹⁸ In this instance, the seer’s preparation through fasting was a necessary requirement to receive the divine answer to his question. Although visions are sometimes given to a seer as an unexpected gift as a result prayer, most of the time, visions come as the result of the seer’s request to receive a vision. The commander of the heavenly armies tells Aseneth that she is receiving the vision because the Lord heard the words of her confession and prayers.¹¹⁹ Aseneth also spent seven days fasting from food and water before receiving her vision.¹²⁰

Confession and mourning are also common practices associated with visionary experience. In Dan 9, in addition to prayer and fasting, Daniel confesses his sins and the sins of the people (Dan 9:3–4, 20). His mourning, confession, and humility are the primary cause of the reception of visions (Dan 9:23; 10:12). Before the *merkabah* vision of Enoch, the seer is weeping and praying (1 En. 14:7). Mourning also appears four times in 4 Ezra as a preparatory act for visions (5:13, 20; 6:30–31, 35) as well as three times in 2 Baruch (5:6–6:4; 9:2–10:1; 81:2–4). Merkur has noted that mourning has a history of being used to induce moods of grief and anxiety. When these moods are coupled with fasting and sleep deprivation, they often cause light-headedness and agitation within one’s spirit.¹²¹ After a long prayer of sin and repentance, Aseneth receives a vision of a star in heaven which gives way to heaven being torn apart and seeing a vision of an unutterable light.¹²² The “chief of the house of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High” appears to Aseneth. When she looked at the man, she sees an

¹¹⁸ Herm. Vis. 3.10.3.

¹¹⁹ Jos. Asen. 15:2–3.

¹²⁰ Jos. Asen. 10:17; 13:9; 18:3.

¹²¹ Merkur, “The Visionary Practices of Jewish Apocalyptists,” 323–27.

¹²² Jos. Asen. 14:1–2.

appearance similar to Joseph's, but he had a face like lightning, eyes like sunshine, the hairs of his head were like a flame of fire of a burning torch, his hands and feet like iron shining forth from fire, and sparks shooting forth from his hands and feet.¹²³ The angelic figure tells Aseneth:

Happy are you, Aseneth, because the ineffable mysteries of the Most High have been revealed to you, and happy [are] all who attach themselves to the Lord God in repentance, because they will eat from this comb. For this comb is [full of the] spirit of life.¹²⁴

One of the most interesting passages is the description of Ezra's consumption of a special drink which induces a state of inspiration. Ezra prays to God to be able to restore the Scriptures and write down the law of God (4 Ezra 14:19–26). In 4 Ezra 14:38–47, Ezra takes five men out into the field and a voice instructs him to open his mouth and drink. A full cup was offered him and it was “full of something like water, but its color was like fire.” Ezra drinks the liquid and immediately, he says, “my heart poured forth understanding, and wisdom increased in my breast.” The Most High gave understanding to the five men, and they turned to write what was dictated to them. They wrote for forty days resulting in the production of ninety-four books. These books contain the twenty-four books of sacred Scripture and seventy apocalyptic writings.¹²⁵ As a result of drinking the liquid, Ezra's memory is strengthened so that he can remember the sacred writings, and his inspiration is infectious as it spreads to the five men to dictate for him. While this practice is not associated with any practice found in the Hebrew Bible, consuming liquids for achieving ecstasy was well-known in the Greco-Roman world. For

¹²³ Jos. Asen. 14:9–10.

¹²⁴ Jos. Asen. 16:1; interestingly, Allison argues that the scene in Jos. Asen. 14–16 is another example of a revelatory experience colored by the commissioning scene in Ezek 1–2 (“Acts 9:1–9, 22:6–11, 26:12–18: Paul and Ezekiel,” 817–19).

¹²⁵ Russell, *Method and Message*, 85–88.

example, the priestess of Delphi drank from mystical water from the sacred spring beside the temple which caused her to talk.¹²⁶

c. Effects of the Visionary Experience

In several descriptions, the seer expresses the tremendous effect the visionary experience had on his body and mind. Daniel describes being overtaken with fear and falling prostrate in response to the appearance of the angel Gabriel (Dan 8:17; cf. 10:19–10). As Gabriel speaks to Daniel, he falls on the ground in a trance-like state until Gabriel touches him and lifts him back on his feet (Dan 8:18). Daniel describes trembling (10:11), being speechless (10:15), and says, “I am shaking, no strength remains in me, and no breath is left in me” (10:17). In 1 En. 71:11, the seer describes his reaction to the vision of the Antecedent of Time: “I fell on my face, my whole body mollified and my spirit transformed. Then I cried with a great voice by the spirit of the power, blessing, glorifying, and extolling.” In 4 Ezra 6:29, after the Lord speaks to Ezra, he says “the place whereon I stood rocked to and fro.” Ezra describes his heart being greatly troubled and his spirit being inflamed causing his soul to be in distress (4 Ezra 6:36–37). Later, the seer describes laying down as though a corpse in response to a revelation (4 Ezra 10:30). Three times in Revelation, John describes falling down in response to his vision (1:17; 19:10; 22:8). In the *merkabah* vision of Apoc. Ab. 17–18, Abraham sees fire coming forth and hears a voice speaking. Abraham describes his reaction: “I wanted to fall face down on the earth... Since there was no ground to which I could fall prostrate, I only bowed down...” (17:3, 5). In 1 En. 14:13, the seer describes feeling sensations of hot like fire and cold like ice.¹²⁷ Aseneth describes falling

¹²⁶ Ibid., 172.

¹²⁷ Rowland points out that other mystical texts describe sensations of hot and cold. For example, in *Life of St. Teresa* 20, she describes experiencing “natural heat” and then as it diminishes, a gradual cold comes over her (Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 232).

at the feet of the commander of the angelic armies appearing to her and “was filled with great fear, and all of her limbs trembled.”¹²⁸ These descriptions indicate the emotional and physiological impact of the visions was significant and overwhelming for the purported seers.

One of the more incredible descriptions of the visionary’s state occurs in *Ascen. Isa.*

6:10–17:

And while he was speaking with the Holy Spirit in the hearing of them all, he became silent, and his mind was taken up from him, and he did not see the men who were standing before him. His eyes indeed were open, but his mouth was silent, and the mind in his body was taken up from him. But his breath was (still) in him, for he was seeing a vision and the angel who was sent to show him (the vision) was not of this firmament, nor was he from the angels of glory of this world, but he came from the seventh heaven. And the people who were standing by, apart from the circle of prophets, did [not] think that the holy Isaiah had been taken up. And the vision which he saw was not from this world, but from the world which is hidden from the flesh. And after Isaiah had seen this vision he recounted it to Hezekiah, and to Josab his son, and to the other prophets who had come. But the officials, and the eunuchs, and the people did not hear, apart from Samnas the secretary, and Jehoiakim, and Asaph the recorder, for they (were) doers of righteousness, and the fragrance of the Spirit was in them; but the people did not hear, for Micah and Josab his son had sent them out when the wisdom of this world was taken from him as if he were dead.

This vision offers a rare window into the consciousness of a seer.¹²⁹ While his body remains still and silent, his mind is taken from his body in a vision. Those standing around him did not see his ascent for his body remained. In the following account, when the angel takes Isaiah on a journey through the seven heavens, it is described as a separation of body and soul (*Ascen. Isa.* 7:5; 8:11). Can all of these descriptions, which overlap significantly, be attributed to attempts to provide verisimilitude? Even if one rejects the supposition that these descriptions are textual remains of real experiences, that the descriptions are pervasive and often overlap in detail,

¹²⁸ *Jos. Asen.* 14:10.

¹²⁹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 230.

demonstrates that these authors were familiar with mystical technique and visionary experience.¹³⁰

Meditation on Scripture and Visionary Experience

The process of re-working and re-telling older Scriptural traditions can already be found in the Scriptural books like Isaiah, Deuteronomy, and Chronicles. There is already a rich history of “inner-biblical exegesis.”¹³¹ Meditation on Scripture as a means of achieving vision is amply attested in Israel’s Scriptures as well as Jewish literature. Alex Jassen has shown that Daniel’s apocalyptic programme is fashioned as an “allusive anthologizing” of Isaiah and Ezekiel.¹³² These claims allowed Daniel to indicate his continuity with the ancient prophets as he reinterprets the prophetic tradition for a new setting. For example, Dan 9 provides an example of inner-biblical exegesis. It is a reflection and reinterpretation of the seventy-year prophecy in Jer 25 and 29. Daniel reinterprets the seventy years of exile in Jeremiah to refer to seventy weeks of years (490 years). The author of 2 Chron 36:20–23 had proclaimed the fulfillment of the prophecy of Jeremiah at the end of the Babylonian exile at the hands of Cyrus the Persian. However, to an apocalyptic seer writing in the second century BCE, what did Jeremiah’s prophecy mean for his own situation? Daniel presents his reinterpretation not as one more possible interpretation, but, rather, as a divinely given interpretation mediated by an angel. In other words, the meaning which Daniel gives is the meaning that God himself had intended.¹³³ Further, Dan 12:2–4 makes use of passages from Isaiah and Amos. The latter prophets like

¹³⁰ Ibid., 234.

¹³¹ This description has been developed by Michael Fishbane, *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 3–18.

¹³² Alex Jassen, “Scriptural Interpretation in Early Jewish Apocalypses,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 76.

¹³³ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 215.

Zechariah and Micah make use of earlier prophets.¹³⁴ Similarly, the genre of rewritten Bible (e.g. *Jubilees*, *Genesis Apocryphon*, *Testament of Moses*, Josephus's *Jewish Antiquities*, Qumran *Temple Scroll*) displays an apocalyptic view which does not view the Scriptural texts as fixed canon; rather, they felt free to re-work, reinterpret, and re-write.¹³⁵ "Creative reinterpretation ensures the adaptability of ancient Israelite literature to manifold new contexts."¹³⁶

The impulse to reinterpret ancient traditions was a standard feature of ancient Judaism. Jews affirmed two realities: God's Sinaitic revelation was authoritative and God's revelation required clarification through exegesis.¹³⁷ These two realities sometimes produced tension. One way to deal with the tension was through claims to divine revelation. Rachel Elijor notes that mystical experience in essence breaks boundaries by asserting direct divine revelation. Radical breaking of traditional norms requires justification. "This is obtained through mystical, ecstatic, or visionary experiences that are integrated into the traditional system, in order to gain legitimacy and authority."¹³⁸ The Jewish people were not alone in this trend—all Ancient Near Eastern peoples reappropriated cultural traditions and myths in creative ways. As cultures shifted from oral to textual, the culture inculcated its values by what it received as authoritative and transmitted to successive generations.¹³⁹ The Deuteronomic repetitions of earlier recorded laws demonstrate that Sinaitic laws were subject to further interpretation (e.g. Lev 19:19 in Deut 22:9–11; Lev 25:3–7 in Exod 23:10–11).¹⁴⁰ As Michael Fishbane notes, exegesis does not result

¹³⁴ Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted*, 110–11.

¹³⁵ Fishbane, *Garments of Torah*, 3–18; Brodie, *Birthing of the New Testament*, 29; Daniel J. Harrington, "Palestinian Adaptations of Biblical Narratives and Prophecies: The Bible Rewritten," in *Early Judaism and Its Modern Interpreters*, ed. Robert Kraft and George W.E. Nickelsburg (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 239–47.

¹³⁶ Jassen, "Scripture Interpretation in Early Jewish Apocalypses," 82.

¹³⁷ Fishbane, *Garments of Torah*, 4.

¹³⁸ Rachel Elijor, *Jewish Mysticism: The Infinite Expression of Freedom* (Portland: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007), 61.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 8–11.

from mere curiosity or playfulness but out of some sort of predicament—the meaning of a word, phrase, or prophecy, or the failure to see how the Scriptural tradition functions in a contemporary crisis.¹⁴¹ The exegetes attempted to solve the perceived crisis by employing various strategies—allusion, scribal editing, transformation, clarification, etc. This is a particularly foundational aspect of the apocalyptic genre. Many of the apocalypses, so far as we can determine their *Sitz im Leben*, were intended for a group in some kind of theological or physical crisis for the purpose of providing exhortation by means of divine authority.¹⁴² Many of the Jewish and Christian apocalypses are literature designed to encourage resistance to empire and deal with major existential crises (persecution, the destruction of Israel’s temple, etc.). Yet, the apocalypses take a radical step forward in presenting the revelation as coming directly from God, mediated by angels; however, even in this radical innovation, there is still a strong desire to link the revelation of God to the received written tradition. The characters chosen for pseudepigraphic attribution—Baruch, Ezra, Abraham—are chosen to help tie God’s modern-day revelation and the contemporary crisis to the authoritative covenantal tradition. Apocalyptic texts engage with the ancient texts directly through rewriting, quotation, allusion, and echo.

Rowland has made the most convincing case for the meditation on Scripture as a catalyst for the reception of visions.¹⁴³ In Daniel, the seer’s reflection on the prophecy of Jeremiah is the event that leads to the revelation of the angel.¹⁴⁴ In 4 Ezra 6, Ezra receives a third vision after weeping and fasting for seven days. His soul was greatly distressed, and Ezra addresses God. In

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 16–17.

¹⁴² Hellholm, “Problem of Apocalyptic Genre,” 27.

¹⁴³ “We probably have no way of knowing whether the descriptions of God’s throne in the apocalypses with their amalgam of various biblical passages are the product of conventional exegetical activity, carried on according to normal patterns of interpretation. But the possibility should not be ignored that in the study of Scripture creative imagination could have been a potent means of encouraging the belief that the biblical passages were not merely written records of past events but vehicles which enable latter-day visionaries to enjoy contemporary manifestations of the divine” (Rowland, “Things into Which Angels Long to Look,” 85).

¹⁴⁴ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 215.

4 Ezra 6:38–54, Ezra recounts his own version of the creation story in the Genesis account. He quotes from Genesis (“let heaven and earth be made”; 4 Ezra 6:38). His account is a creative retelling that sticks closely to the contours of the Genesis text. The culmination of Ezra’s retelling of the creation story is the role given to Adam “as ruler over all the works which you had made; and from him we have all come, the people from whom you have chosen” (6:54). The purpose of the retelling becomes clearer in 4 Ezra 6:55–59. The biblical account of Adam is retold to assert Adam’s lordship over all creation. The nations that descended from Adam are but a small drop in the bucket before God (cf. Isa 40:15); yet, the nations domineer over God’s covenant people. Ezra says, “But we your people, whom you have called your first-born, only begotten, zealous for you, and most dear, have been given into their hands” (6:58). If the world is created for God’s people, why do the nations possess God’s people? This is the theological crisis that Gen 1 is invoked to solve—“How long will this be so?” (6:59). Immediately following Ezra’s monologue, an angel appears to give Ezra a vision (7:1–2). It is not immediately clear how the vision is a response to the seer’s question (7:1–9); however, it becomes clearer as the angel explains that because of Adam’s sin, the way of Adam has become sorrowful, toilsome, and involves great hardship. Thus, unless the living endure hardship, they cannot accept what has been reserved for them (7:14). The angel’s response indicates that Ezra has recounted Genesis faithfully but has failed to take account of the great effects of Adam’s transgression.¹⁴⁵ As demonstrated earlier, Gen 1 was one of the texts forbidden for interpretation in rabbinic literature for fear that the exposition of the chapter might result in a dangerous experience (cf. *M. Hagigah* 2.1). In this text, Ezra’s recounting and exposition of the meaning of Gen 1 leads to an encounter with an *angelus interpretis* and the reception of a vision.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 216.

The last two visions of 4 Ezra are heavily influenced by Dan 7. In 4 Ezra 11, the seer witnesses a vision of an eagle but is greatly confused and does not understand the meaning (12:3). Ezra asks the Lord for the interpretation of the vision. The Lord explains, “The eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel” (12:11). The vision of the four beasts from the sea in Dan 7 becomes the basis for the explanation. Analogous to the way Daniel updated Jeremiah’s prophecy for his own day, the vision given to Ezra updates Dan 7 for his situation. “Since Daniel was written before the might of Rome was involved in Jewish political life, the significance of Daniel’s vision had to be more closely integrated with the political realities of the apocalypticist’s day.”¹⁴⁶ Thus, this is an example of Scripture used as the basis for a vision as well as influencing later reflection and interpretation of the vision.

The next vision of the man coming up from the sea who flies “with the clouds of heaven” appears to also allude to Dan 7, especially v. 13. In the original vision, the four beasts come out of the sea (Dan 7:3) while in 4 Ezra 13:3, the man came “up out of the heart of the sea.” Thus, although the vision contains allusions to Dan 7, the images of the beasts from the sea have been combined with the vision of the one like the son of man coming on the clouds. Rowland says:

With a passage like Daniel 7 as the basis for his understanding of eschatological matters it is not beyond the realms of possibility that elements which existed separate in that chapter were, in the circumstances of a vision, reorganized to bring about the combination which we find in the opening verses of 4 Ezra 13.¹⁴⁷

Thus, there are indications within 4 Ezra that Scripture served not only as the catalyst for visionary experiences but also in later reflections on the vision.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 217.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 217–18.

That texts served as the catalyst for new visionary experiences is demonstrated foremost by the apocalyptic passages which appear to be the result of meditations on the *merkabah* vision of Ezek 1 (Rev 4–5; 1 En. 14; Apoc. Ab. 17–18). As I demonstrated in the previous chapter, these visions contain many similarities and allusions to Ezek 1 while also exhibiting influence from other traditions, particularly Isa 6. As the earliest example of a *merkabah* vision dating to the beginning of the second century, 1 En. 14 clearly evinces an indebtedness to Ezek 1 and Isa 6. “The vision offers us indications of the growth in the interest in subjects which were not mentioned in the biblical visions as well as neglect of elements which featured prominently there.”¹⁴⁸ Similarly, the vision in Rev 4 involves imagery from Ezek 1 and Isa 6. “This short chapter in the New Testament apocalypse resembles 1 Enoch 14 only in offering further evidence of the way in which a passage like Ezekiel 1 has provided the basis for further developments in the understanding of the nature of God and his world.”¹⁴⁹

The similarities between these three texts are remarkable. They are clearly visions of the divine throne chariot motivated by Ezek 1 and elements from Isa 6; however, each vision contains numerous idiosyncrasies. None of these texts reveal an interest in systematic exegesis of Ezek 1 nor do they reveal a uniform kind of speculation on the chapter. As Rowland notes, “If we were dealing with an exegetical tradition which has been put in the form of a vision, we would surely expect signs of an ordered discussion of the various elements of Ezekiel’s vision. Of this, there is no sign, however.”¹⁵⁰ The divergent use of elements from Ezek 1 shows no desire to conform these apocalyptic accounts to fixed tradition. Rowland’s provocative suggestion is that meditation on Ezek 1 served as the launching point for diverse visionary

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 222.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 225–26.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 226.

experiences. As the visionaries reflected on Ezek 1, they believed that they “saw again the vision which had once appeared to the prophet Ezekiel...”¹⁵¹ Thus, the Scriptural text of Ezek 1 became the basis of the new experience, but because the prophet experienced his own vision of the *merkabah*, the imagination of the visionary allowed him to transform the original.¹⁵²

Although different, rabbinic legends suggest an experiential dimension of exposition on Ezek 1. Rabbis were interested in expounding on the meaning of the word *hashmal* in Ezek 1:7, 27; 8:2. In the *merkabah* vision, it refers to the divine figure that sits on the throne. Because the term occurs only in the prophecy to Ezekiel, looking for analogous uses of the word in other texts is not possible.¹⁵³ One passage in the Babylonian Talmud warns against expounding on the *hashmal* (bHag 13a–b). There, the cautionary tale is told of a child who tried to understand the *hashmal* but was not equipped and was consumed by fire. The Mishnah and Tosefta forbade reading and translating the *merkabah* vision into Aramaic (cf. M. Megillah 4.10; M. Hagigah 2.1). Rowland theorizes that the trepidation about interpreting the creational account in Gen 1 and the *merkabah* vision in Ezek 1 is due to the enigmatic nature of these texts. Both chapters conceal more than they reveal thus creating the temptation to fill in the gaps. A naïve interpreter without the proper training might fill in those gaps in inappropriate ways.¹⁵⁴ The legend of R. Eleazar b. Arak expounding Ezek 1 to his teacher, R. Johanan b. Zakkai which occurs in four accounts, most closely links the exposition of Ezek 1 with experience.¹⁵⁵ After Eleazar expounds on the *merkabah*, fire descends on them and angels appear to confirm his successful exposition. In another account, other pupils of b. Zakkai attempt to expound on the *merkabah* (cf. j. Hag.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 227; see also Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 123–24.

¹⁵³ Rowland, “Things into Which Angels Long to Look,” 87.

¹⁵⁴ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 278.

¹⁵⁵ Jerusalem Talmud (j. Hag. 77a); Babylonian Talmud (b. Hag. 14b); Tos. Hag. 2.1; Mishpatim 21.1; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 282–305.

77a; b. Hag. 14b). Immediately after the pupils expound on the *merkabah*, supernatural phenomena occur. In both accounts, a cloud and a bow appear which are allusions to Ezek 1:4,

28. Rowland explains:

This reference is not meant to indicate a change in the meteorological situation at the time of the exposition, but to suggest that in the experience of the two rabbis the precise phenomena which Ezekiel himself experienced in his vision by the river Chebar were re-created all over again.¹⁵⁶

These rabbinic legends reveal that the exposition of the chariot vision of Ezekiel was not merely for the purpose of intellectual and midrashic exercise. The impression given in these stories is that the recitation and exposition of the text resulted in first-hand experiences similar to that of the prophet Ezekiel himself.¹⁵⁷

These realizations have led scholars to reject the dichotomy between phenomenological experience and later interpretation. The two cannot be separated. The experience itself shapes the interpretation, but the text and tradition has a profound influence upon the experience. The details of the text point to other levels of reality opening the possibility for similar experience of related realities. The text provides for the seer a gateway into his own experience of the hidden God. The seer is thus part of a rich tradition of interpretation and experience. The seer is impacted by preceding texts while enriching that tradition with personal experiences. Elliot Wolfson says, "...insofar as the visionary experience is hermeneutically related to the text, it may be said that the way of seeing is simultaneously a way of reading."¹⁵⁸ The past text and the new vision exist together in a dialectical relationship making the new experience a re-envisioning of a prior event.¹⁵⁹ He notes:

¹⁵⁶ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 296.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 196–97.

¹⁵⁸ Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 53.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

The vision is itself informed by extant literary and oral traditions; thus, the interpretative process is already operative at the level of experience. Naturally, there can be postexperiential interpretation of the contents of the vision that deviate from the actual revelation; however, in the shaping of the vision itself there is clear evidence of interpretation of earlier visions recorded in authoritative documents.¹⁶⁰

Lieb describes:

What is true of Ezekiel's vision is true of John's.... If the text generates the vision, the vision generates the text.... Text within text, vision within vision: such is the basis of the visionary mode as an experience that is forever replicating itself, (re)generating itself, transforming itself, seeing itself again.¹⁶¹

In this way, mystical experience is similar to all human experiences. All human experience can only be understood by the frameworks already present in the human mind. Thus, in the very act of experience, the individual is already using the tools available at the precritical level of cognition.¹⁶²

This feature of mystical experience could help explain the traditionalism of apocalyptic texts. For scholars like Himmelfarb, the traditionalism of apocalypses mitigates against the possibility of these works containing accounts of real experience; however, Wolfson has provided a powerful critique to the dichotomy between tradition and experience. The minds of the mystics are shaped by cultural and religious factors, and thus, there is an "essential convergence of tradition, revelation, and interpretation" in apocalyptic and *hekhlot* literature.¹⁶³ It would be a mistake to separate these categories from one another in discussing mystical

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 120.

¹⁶¹ Lieb, *Visionary Mode*, 187–88.

¹⁶² Rowland, Gibbons, Dobroruka, "Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity," 45; Steven T. Katz, "The Conservative Character of Mystical Experience," in *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. Steven T. Katz (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1983), 4–5, 41; Katz says, "It is my view, argued in detail elsewhere, that mystical reports do not merely indicate the postexperiential description of an unreportable experience in the language closest at hand. Rather, the experiences themselves are inescapably shaped by prior linguistic influences such that the lived experience conforms to a preexistent pattern that has been learned, then intended, and then actualized in the experiential reality of the mystic" (Katz, "Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning," in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz [New York: Oxford University Press, 1992], 5).

¹⁶³ Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 121.

phenomenology.¹⁶⁴ Wolfson thus takes issue with scholars who distinguish “exegetical mysticism” from “experiential mysticism”. He says:

In response to this position it must be noted that the very act of interpreting Ezekiel’s chariot, as is attested by some of the legendary accounts of rabbinic authorities engaged in homiletic speculation on the Merkavah, was capable of producing states through which the historic event of revelation was relived.¹⁶⁵

Modern interpreters must beware of imposing our dichotomy of the natural world and the supernatural world onto ancients. Jews and Christians were “religious people whose texts are filled with feelings about and hopes for religious experience as they understood and imagined it.”¹⁶⁶

Thus, rather than asserting that John was a literary artist creatively inventing a vision based on Israel’s Scriptures, it is entirely plausible to attribute John’s heavy use of the Scripture, Ezekiel in particular, to the phenomenological level of visionary experience. If John’s preconscious was sufficiently soaked in the authoritative texts of Israel’s tradition—Daniel, Isaiah, Ezekiel—then these texts do not merely influence the interpretation of the vision but the visions themselves. G. B. Caird described the OT writings as “the permanent furniture of his well stocked mind.”¹⁶⁷ The use of language and conceptual categories are already part of the sense-making process. In his subconscious, John makes intelligible what he sees by drawing on literary precursors.¹⁶⁸ Perhaps the best metaphor to describe this process is the digestion of the scroll. As John digests the text of Ezekiel, it results in a new prophetic experience which is at once the same experience of Ezekiel firmly rooted in the authoritative textual tradition but also

¹⁶⁴ April DeConick, “What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?,” 7–8.

¹⁶⁵ Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 122.

¹⁶⁶ April DeConick, “What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?,” 6.

¹⁶⁷ G. B. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, HNTC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 74.

¹⁶⁸ deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way*, 124; Witherington, *Revelation*, 35–36.

reinscribed as a new visionary experience of the *merkabah* and heavenly visions. The digestion of Ezekiel by John results in the production of a new scroll, Revelation, through a new visionary experience. Thus, the text of Ezekiel generates the vision for John, and the (re)visioning process of John generates the text of Revelation.

*Visionary Experience in Comparative Study*¹⁶⁹

Within Judaism, *merkabah* mysticism continued to be practiced and developed into the *hekhlot* texts which contain mystical alphabetic speculations, meditations, spells, magical incantations, and instructions for how to achieve visionary experience. These texts are a disparate collection of documents in Hebrew and Aramaic which prescribe control over the angels and descriptions of the heavenly throne chariot (*merkabah*).¹⁷⁰ The two most prominent themes are how the practitioner may ascend to the heavenly realms and how the practitioner can gain control over the angels.¹⁷¹ Outside Judaism, there are also examples of heavenly journeys in the Hellenistic world (e.g. Mithras Liturgy and the *Corpus hermeticum*).¹⁷² Segal asks, “Are all of these documents in non-Jewish contexts equally literary frauds or hallucinatory mental illnesses?”¹⁷³ For the occurrence of heavenly journeys to appear in so many different cultures and genres, there must have been social credibility structures available for people to believe

¹⁶⁹ See the essays in *The New Testament in Comparison: Validity, Method, and Purpose in Comparing Traditions*, ed. John Barclay and B. G. White LNTS 600 (London: T&T Clark, 2020); “A comparison is a disciplined exaggeration in the service of knowledge. It lifts out and strongly marks certain features within difference as being of possible intellectual significance, expressed in the rhetoric of their being ‘like’ in some stipulated fashion. Comparison provides the means by which *we* ‘re-vision’ phenomena as *our* data in order to solve *our* theoretical problems” (Jonathan Z. Smith, *Drudgery Divine: on the Comparison of Early Christianities and the Religions of Late Antiquity* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990], 52 [Smith’s italics]).

¹⁷⁰ James Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation*, 1.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² Segal, “Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self,” in *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, ed. April D. DeConick, SBLSS 11 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 31.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

these phenomena possible. Frances Flannery argues cross-disciplinary methods should feature prominently in the search to understand the visionary elements of apocalyptic texts. First, there are close parallels between rituals described in apocalyptic texts and ancient Near Eastern and Mediterranean incubation cults.¹⁷⁴ Second, neurophysiological studies have demonstrated the close coherence between altered brain states and descriptions of apocalyptic visionary traditions.¹⁷⁵ Third, the descriptions of apocalyptic experience too closely relates to genuine psychological mechanisms.¹⁷⁶

Jewish mysticism was an attempt to describe the secrets of the hidden structure, depth, and meaning of revealed reality.¹⁷⁷ The so-called *hekhalot* texts refer to the pre-kabbalistic mystical texts which provide detailed instructions for how to ascend to the heavenly palaces (*hekhal*) or divine chariot throne (*merkabah*). The earliest surviving literature comes from the 5th–6th centuries CE.¹⁷⁸ These texts contain legendary traditions about the techniques Tannaitic rabbis (e.g. R. Ishmael, R. Akiba, R. Nehuniah b. Hakanah) used to achieve *merkabah* visions.¹⁷⁹ One of the main features of *hekhalot* experience was the use of ascetic techniques “including fasting, dietary restrictions, temporary celibacy, purification rites, isolation and sensory deprivation, and songs and words of power (recitation of numinous hymns and repetition of *nomina barbara* and divine names).”¹⁸⁰ These practices led to otherworldly journeys through the

¹⁷⁴ Frances Flannery, “Dreams and Visions in Early Jewish and Early Christian Apocalypses and Apocalypticism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 116.

¹⁷⁵ Flannery, “Dreams and Visions in Early Jewish and Early Christian Apocalypses and Apocalypticism,” 116; see Colleen Shantz, *Paul in Ecstasy: The Neurobiology of the Apostle’s Life and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 67–109.

¹⁷⁶ Flannery, “Dreams and Visions,” 116.

¹⁷⁷ Elior, *Jewish Mysticism*, 3.

¹⁷⁸ Davila, “The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature,” 105.

¹⁷⁹ Ra’anan S. Boustan, “The Emergence of Pseudonymous Attribution in Hekhalot Literature: Empirical Evidence from the Jewish “Magical” Corpora,” *JSQ* 14 (2007): 18–38.

¹⁸⁰ Davila, “The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and The *Hekhalot* Literature,” 106.

seven heavens which were filled with obstacles and tests. While the apocalypses often narrate first-person accounts of visionary experience, the *hekhalot* texts by and large are instruction manuals for achieving *merkabah* visions. While there are differences between apocalyptic and *hekhalot* texts, there is significant overlap between the ritual practices and experiences described.¹⁸¹ Like the apocalyptic texts, these rituals appear to have been prescribed for generating visionary experiences.¹⁸² Interestingly, *hekhalot* texts are normally attributed pseudepigraphically to Tannaitic rabbis such as R. Akiva, R. Ishmael, and R. Nehuniah ben HaQanah.¹⁸³ The *hekhalot* traditions “survive as literary compositions based on profound meditation on the scriptures” and “they also preserve evidence in some cases of rituals and, arguably, even the experiences of real practitioners.”¹⁸⁴ Davila summarizes:

The Hekhalot literature assumes a complex web of scriptural connections that include not only Ezekiel’s vision, the Sinai event, and Psalm 68, but also the Sinai vision of God on the sapphire pavement in Exod 24:9–11; Isaiah’s vision of God in chapter 6; the divine silence of 1 Kgs 19:12; the camps of God in Gen 32:1–2; the vision of the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:9–10; the divine chariot and fiery angels of Ps 104:1–4; and the earthly temple and temple cult of 1 Chronicles 28–29 as a template for the celestial throne room and the angelic liturgy.¹⁸⁵

These Scriptural connections were already present in earlier developing Jewish mysticism.¹⁸⁶

Davila has argued the experiences in *hekhalot* texts are not monolithic but lie on a spectrum from active imagination during meditation but might also include trance states and altered states of consciousness.¹⁸⁷ Davila’s comments are worth reproducing in full:

The question of “experience” is to my mind largely a red herring. What the practitioners who used these rituals saw or experienced is simply not available to us. It is possible that with our ever-increasing technological sophistication in brain scanning, the internal state

¹⁸¹ Ibid., 124–25.

¹⁸² James Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People Behind the Hekhalot Literature*, *Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism* 70 (Boston: Brill, 2001), 302–04.

¹⁸³ Davila, *Hekhalot Literature in Translation*, 1.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 13.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 13.

of having a visionary experience may become more accessible to us. But even then, this will be for living people, not long dead ones. The most that I can say about their experience is first that, cross-culturally, people who use similar ritual praxes tell us they have certain experiences involving direct access to a supernatural realm whose details cohere with the visionaries' cultural expectations of that realm. When the writers of the Hekhalot literature make the same claim, we must take it seriously, even if their experiences are profoundly alien to us.¹⁸⁸

Other scholars have conducted comparative studies which sets the experiences described in apocalypses next to experiences described in other texts. Elijah calls attention to the comparative experience of mystical initiation. The nineteenth-century mystic Isaac Safran described his initiation to Hasidic mysticism. While he was studying and meditating on the Talmud, suddenly a great light fell on him and the Shekinah glory came to rest on him.¹⁸⁹ Niditch compares experiences described in the pseudepigraphic apocalypses to shamans and concludes, "What I can say with assurance is that comparison with non-Jewish material leads me to conclude that these writers at least have a genuine notion of what visionaries do, how they experience visions... and so on."¹⁹⁰ Merkur has demonstrated that apocalyptic vision descriptions cohere with techniques known from psychology to induce vision.¹⁹¹ Merkur (based on the suggestion of Stone) also pointed to the *Hymns of Paradise* written by St. Ephrem the Syrian in the fourth century. There, Ephrem describes reflections on the creation story in Genesis 1–3 which led to visions of paradise which form the basis of the hymns. In stanzas three and four, Ephrem writes:

¹⁸⁸ James Davila, review of *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, by Peter Schäfer, *DSD* 19 (2012): 111.

¹⁸⁹ Elijah, *Jewish Mysticism*, 62; She says, "The study, reading, and memorization of mystical works, recitation of halakhic and aggadic books, as well as prayer and ritual imbued with mystical intentions, induce new life in mystical symbols and in hidden beings. These activities occur during wakefulness or in a dream, in conjunction with seclusion, mortification, abstinence, and purification. They disengage the visionary from daily routines and create a holy space in which spiritual experiences take place. Study and seclusion turn the archaic written text into a 'speaking text' which one hears, experiences or envisages in one's mind" (Elijah, *Jewish Mysticism*, 73).

¹⁹⁰ Susan Niditch, "The Visionary" in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms*, SCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1980), 158.

¹⁹¹ Merkur, "Cultivating Visions through Exegetical Meditations," 62.

3. Joyfully did I embark
 on the tale of Paradise—
 a tale that is short to read
 but rich to explore.
 My tongue read the story's
 outward narrative,
 while my intellect took wing
 and soared upward in awe
 as it perceived the splendor of Paradise—
 not indeed as it really is,
 but insofar as humanity
 is granted to comprehend it.
4. With the eyes of my mind
 I gazed upon Paradise.¹⁹²

This text is explicit testimony that Ephrem's meditation on the Genesis text led to visions of Paradise.¹⁹³ Violet MacDermot dedicated an entire study to the ascetic practices of the later Church Fathers and Christian monks which included isolation, self-mortification, food and sleep deprivation, etc. which often resulted in heavenly visitations or heavenly journeys.¹⁹⁴ In the *merkabah* vision of 1 En. 14.13, the visionary describes sensations of heat like fire and cold as ice. Rowland observes that physical sensations like the experience of heat or coldness was described by various mystical texts centuries removed. For example, when St. Teresa of Avila describes her experience, she says, "In these raptures the soul no longer seems to animate the body; its natural heat, therefore, is said to diminish and gradually gets cold, though with a feeling of great joy and sweetness."¹⁹⁵ This brief section points to comparative studies detailing practices

¹⁹² Cited from Merkur, "Cultivating Visions Through Exegetical Meditations," 65.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Violet MacDermot, *The Cult of the Seer in the Ancient Middle East: A Contribution to Current Research on Hallucinations Drawn from Coptic and Other Texts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971).

¹⁹⁵ *Life of St. Teresa* 20; the description of the experience of heat in response to seeing the *merkabah* is also described in *Sefer heikhalot* (Book of Heavenly Sanctuaries= 3 Enoch):

Rabbi Ishmael said:
 Metatron, the ministering Angel of the Countenance
 who resides above all, told me:
 because the Holy One, blessed be He,
 took me by fire to serve the Throne and the wheels of
 the chariot and the needs of the Shekinah
 immediately my flesh turned into a flame

for achieving visionary experience and the effects of visionary experience in non-Jewish and later Jewish mysticism and Christianity. The testimony of widespread claims across centuries to the experience of heavenly journeys and visions of divine beings represent attempts to report actual encounters with God.¹⁹⁶ There is a historical and cultural chasm between the authors of mystical texts and the scholars who study them. Comparative study reminds us of the many voices in the human experience and makes us aware of the creative imaginations of those at a temporal and cultural distance.¹⁹⁷ Instead of dismissing these claims to experience, “we must take an imaginative leap into the mystical mindset and accept that reality is relative.”¹⁹⁸

Visionary Experience, Pseudonymity, and the Alter Ego

The pseudonymity of most apocalypses has proved one of the greatest barriers to the willingness of scholars to find visionary experience behind these texts. That the visions are attributed to legendary figures like Enoch, Abraham, Baruch, and Ezra increases the probability that these works are literary constructions, rather than the report of actual visions. “The stories of the heavenly journeys of patriarchs and prophets is so obviously fictitious that one is tempted to

and my veins into a burning fire
and my bones into hot coals of a broom tree
and the light of my eyes into the splendour of lightning
and the orbs of my eyes into a torch of fire
and the hairs of my head into a blaze and flame
and all my limbs into wings of burning fire
and all my body into blazing fire
and on my right burning flames of fire
and on my left a burning torch
and around me stormy gusty winds were blowing
and clamorous sounds in front of me and behind me. (Cited from Elior, *Jewish Mysticism*,

78–79)

¹⁹⁶ Elior, *Jewish Mysticism*, 3.

¹⁹⁷ Elior, *Jewish Mysticism*, 15, 102; Flannery, “Dreams and Visions,” 115.

¹⁹⁸ Frances Flannery, “The Consideration of Religious Experience in the Work of Rachel Elior” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrew A. Orlov (New York: De Gruyter, 2011), 7; Colleen Shantz attributes the negative view of religious experience in New Testament studies to cognicentric, ethnocentric, and confessional biases (*Paul in Ecstasy*, 27–37).

regard the whole corpus of apocalyptic literature as little more than flights of fancy of certain individuals with a particular theological axe to grind.”¹⁹⁹ While the Revelation of John is not pseudonymous, the question of pseudepigraphy does have bearing on the larger question of apocalyptic experience.

The figures chosen for pseudepigraphic attribution were not random. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, the choice of Abraham is not arbitrary. Since this apocalypse responds to the crisis of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the choice of Abraham brings to the fore questions of covenant and God’s faithfulness to the covenant people. Further, Abram was the recipient of visions of God. In Gen 15, the Lord gives Abram a vision (v. 1). Abram falls into a deep sleep and a dreadfulness falls on him (v. 12). After the sun had gone down Abram sees a vision of a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passing between the pieces of the sacrificial animal (v. 17). It is in the context of this visionary experience that God makes the covenant with Abram (v. 18). Chapters 1–8 in the Apocalypse of Abraham tell the story of Abraham’s departure from idolatry. In chs. 9–13, the theophany of Gen 15 becomes the basis for Abraham’s visions in the Apocalypse.²⁰⁰

The figure of Enoch is also not arbitrary.²⁰¹ As visionaries desired to receive divine wisdom revealed from the vaults of heaven, the man who “walked with God and was not for God took him” (Gen 5:24) was a natural choice. First, Enoch was a righteous man during an unrighteous age.²⁰² Second, as a reward for his faithfulness, Enoch was “taken” (לקח) which

¹⁹⁹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 240.

²⁰⁰ Nicklesburg, *Jewish Literature*, 285.

²⁰¹ Stone, “Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered,” 5–7.

²⁰² Nicklesburg, *Jewish Literature*, 43.

provides the basis for Jewish belief that Enoch had been taken to the presence of God (e.g. 1 En. 14:8–25; 71:1–17).²⁰³ This enabled Enoch to share heavenly secrets with the righteous on earth.

The figures of Ezra and Baruch are chosen for different reasons. Both characters are scribes set in the period of the exile. Both 2 Baruch and 4 Ezra were probably written at the end of the first century CE to respond to the crisis of the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem. Both works use the fictitious setting of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in the sixth century BCE to respond to the questions of theodicy raised by similar events in the first century. Baruch was the scribe to the prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jer 32:12–13; 36:4, 8, 10, 13). Ezra was the scribe who led Israel through a rededication to the Torah and national renewal in the fifth century BCE. The situation of Ezra after the exile is chosen because of the reorganization and rededication of God’s people after the crisis of the fall of Jerusalem. Thus, these two figures are chosen to help the people of God in the first century understand their own national disaster and begin the process of renewal and rebuilding.²⁰⁴ Further, as scribes (Ezra 7:6; Jer 45:1), both were expected to write and interpret the Scriptures for the people. It was in their capacity as scribes that enabled them to accurately communicate the wisdom of God to the people through writing. “In 4 Ezra 14.38f. it is quite clear that the same expertise which enabled Ezra to dictate the canonical scriptures also equipped him to communicate the secret teaching which was to be reserved for the elect.”²⁰⁵

One obvious possibility for the decision to use pseudonymity is that these characters were chosen to lend authority to the work.²⁰⁶ The effectiveness of such a device “presupposes the

²⁰³ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 62–63.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 64.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁶ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 110.

credulity of the masses.”²⁰⁷ However, other scholars have proposed various theories to account for the phenomenology of pseudonymity within the psychology of the apocalyptic seer’s experience. Russell sought to explain pseudepigraphy against the background of the Hebrew concept of corporate personality—that Israelites in later generations were able to function as representatives of previous generations.²⁰⁸ Corporate personality allowed the later author to identify with the legendary figure and communicate what the hero would have revealed had he been alive at the later date. Because the apocalypticist identified with the situation of the earlier figure, he could identify himself as an extension of that individual in a later time.²⁰⁹ As attractive as this thesis might seem, it is based on H. Wheeler Robinson’s work which has been largely discredited.²¹⁰ Meade places the continuity of the message of the apocalypse with the message of the legendary figure, rather than in the pseudonym’s personality. He claims that pseudepigraphy was the way for apocalypticists to relate their work to an authoritative tradition without making a statement on literary origins.²¹¹ The later writers considered their work to be an inspired actualization of the ancient figure. This is also essentially the view of Najman who says that pseudonymity was an “attempt to recover an idealized or utopian past” by authorizing and linking “their new texts to old and established traditions and founders.”²¹² Najman also sees pseudonymity as a metaphorical device in which the author emulates his exemplar as a spiritual discipline, an “asceticism of self-effacement.”²¹³ When the later ‘Ezra’ identifies as Ezra, the

²⁰⁷ Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 49.

²⁰⁸ This is based on the research of H. Wheeler Robinson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality” in *Werden und Wesen des Alten Testaments*, ed. Paul Volz, Friedrich Stummer, Johannes Hempel, BZAW 66 (Berlin: A. Töpelmann, 1936), 49–62.

²⁰⁹ Russell, *Method and Message*, 136.

²¹⁰ J. W. Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination,” *JTS* 21 (1970): 1–16; Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon*, 6–7; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 65; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 97.

²¹¹ Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon*, 72, 90, 102.

²¹² Najman, *Past Renewals*, 238.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 241.

figure of Ezra is transformed—later readers read the figure of Ezra through the prism of the new ‘Ezra’. Najman concludes:

Pseudepigraphic texts, such as Jubilees, 1 Enoch, and 4 Ezra, efface their own compositional contexts when they attach their new traditions to a founding figure from the past. In so doing, however, they situate themselves within another context: a perfectionist practice of effacing oneself in order to emulate an exemplary figure. This practice provides a context for overcoming the present period of destruction by expanding the legacy of founders from the past.²¹⁴

Stone has argued for the possibility that actual visionary experiences lay behind the pseudepigraphical apocalypses. He suggests that the presence of pseudepigraphy is related to the content of the work. He stresses that Jewish pseudepigraphy is present in other modes of literature. For example, a wisdom tradition represented by the *Wisdom of Solomon*, the *Testament of Solomon*, and *Psalms and Odes of Solomon* attribute these works to Solomon, an obvious choice (cf. 1 Kings 3:5–13; 5:9–14; 10:1–9).²¹⁵ Stone notes that the Enochic tradition contrasted with and complemented the legal/exegetical tradition of Moses. In this way, the claims of the Enochic tradition were buttressed. Pseudepigraphy provided “an aura of antiquity and participation in a tradition of great status and authority.”²¹⁶ Stone suspects that pseudepigraphy was a way for the ancients to deal with the authoritative written tradition of the past similar to the exegetical tradition. Accordingly, both exegesis and pseudepigraphy were two different yet related means of connecting the normative tradition to the current situation.²¹⁷ The pseudepigraphic authors make a bold claim, however, that surpasses that of the exegetes. They do not derive their authority from the Mosaic revelation solely, but claim the authority of direct revelation from God. However, even in the apocalyptists’ alternative way of understanding, they

²¹⁴ Ibid., 242.

²¹⁵ Stone, “Pseudepigraphy Reconsidered,” 8.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 9.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

still felt the need to anchor the revelation in the authoritative tradition. Stone compares the apocalyptic claim to that of the “pneumatic exegesis” done at Qumran. In sectarian documents, they claimed to have uncovered hidden meanings in the Scriptures which the ancient prophets did not know to be present (e.g. 1QpHab 7:1–8).²¹⁸ For Stone, pseudepigraphy was a means by which the weight of the tradition was realized in later works.²¹⁹ Thus, Stone shares Meade’s understanding of pseudepigraphy as a means of indicating continuity with the tradition; however, Stone adds a psychological and experiential explanation as well. Once one admits the possibility that ‘Ezra’ might have had real visionary experience, pseudepigraphy may have been part of this complex experience of communicating revelations from the transmundane realm.²²⁰ In his commentary on 4 Ezra, Stone suggests that the prophetic role of ‘Ezra’ in the text may reflect the role of the author behind the pseudepigraphic attribution which was recognized by the community.²²¹

Niditch has studied shamanism and the rabbinic genres of literature which suggest two interesting approaches to the issue of pseudepigraphy.²²² First, the pseudepigraphic seer might have been possessed by the spirit of the ancient hero in some ecstatic sense. Possible confirmation for this thesis is the appearance of Enoch to Noah in the Book of Noah (1 En. 65:1–5). Enoch appears to be able to travel through time and appear when summoned; however, Niditch argues that this does not seem likely for the apocalypses since Enoch is carried off, but

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 11.

²²⁰ Stone, “Apocalyptic Literature,” 431.

²²¹ Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 121, 326–27, 429–31.

²²² Niditch, “Visionary,” 157.

there is no indication that the spirit of Enoch has possessed some anonymous person.²²³ Second, pseudepigrapha might be compared to aggadic midrash.²²⁴ Niditch says:

If the authors of Mekilta can describe Baruch's conversation with God having Baruch speak in the first person (a convention not found, of course, in the Old Testament) (Mekilta de-Rabbi Ishmael 1:1:150ff), so can the writers of 2 Baruch have this hero describe his visions and celestial journeys, his conversations with angelic beings.²²⁵

The midrashic re-use of Scripture mentality, Niditch believes, might have encouraged the use of pseudonymity. Niditch makes no presumption to be able to determine records of real vision from literary creations; however, she says, "What I can say with assurance is that comparison with non-Jewish material leads me to conclude that these writers have at least a genuine notion of that which visionaries do, how they experience visions, the sorts of things they see and so on."²²⁶

In Halperin's study of the *merkabah*, he asks,

Who, then, is the "I" who ate the sweet and bitter scroll, and who speaks in Revelation? It is, of course, the putative author, John of Patmos. But it is also Ezekiel. Better: it is Ezekiel as he would have spoken had he fully understood the implications of what had been revealed to him.²²⁷

Yet, John does not only speak in the voice of Ezekiel; Ezekiel is combined with numerous other texts from the Scriptures of Israel. Texts like Daniel and Zechariah also occupied the author's mind. Halperin notes that in some ways, John's use of the Scriptures is similar to midrash; however, the midrashim never make first-person visionary claims ("I saw").²²⁸ Halperin says that the "I" who sees is at once super-Ezekiel, super-Zechariah, super-Daniel, and a composite prophetic personality. The "I" sees what the prophets would have seen had they witnessed what

²²³ Niditch, "Visionary," 157; "Promising as this way of investigating is, there is one additional problem: the comparative lack of parallel descriptions of ancient people being possessed and then writing automatically makes straightforward comparison within Judaism, or even toward the ancient world at large, impossible" (Rowland, Gibbons, Dobroruka, "Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity," 52).

²²⁴ Niditch, "Visionary," 157–58.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid., 158.

²²⁷ Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 71.

²²⁸ Ibid.

John saw. The apocalyptists select the biblical figures who become the “I” who perceives. Although Revelation does not pseudonymously describe the vision as being that of Ezekiel or a composite prophetic personality, John uses the Scriptures in a similar manner as the pseudonymous apocalyptic seers. He concludes, “When an apocalyptic visionary “sees” something that looks like Ezekiel’s *merkabah*, we may assume that he is seeing the *merkabah* vision as he has persuaded himself it really was, as Ezekiel would have seen it had he been inspired wholly and not in part.”²²⁹

Rowland asserts that the apocalypses often provide an authenticating framework for the visions which may be accounts of real visionary experience. For example, in Daniel, after the legends about Daniel in the first six chapters, there is a series of visions in chs. 7–8 which are not connected to the legendary material. It is possible the first six chapters function to provide the framework for the record of visions. Similarly, the Apocalypse of Abraham can be divided into two sections. The first eight chapters set the framework by relating Abraham’s turning away from his life of idolatry with no mention of visionary activity. Once the stage is set, the setting continues through the rest of the book, and there is a series of visions. 1 Enoch is more difficult to separate between framing context and visionary material; however, the *merkabah* vision of 1 En. 14 does not appear to be intimately connected to its context and may represent a vision report inserted into the framework of Enoch’s vision of judgement on the Watchers.²³⁰ Rowland believes that viewing the pseudonymous accounts as providing authenticating frameworks can account for the relation between pseudonymity and religious experience.²³¹

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 242.

²³¹ Ibid., 242–43.

Rowland next explores the possibility of whether pseudonymity might be related to the psychology of visionary experience. Previously, Lindblom had pointed to die Objektivierung des Ichs, a tendency in visionary texts to differentiate between the seer's normal quotidian experience and his visionary life.²³² Lindblom had provided convincing examples of texts which separated the visionary's everyday ego from his extraordinary ego.²³³ In the alter, extraordinary ego, the visionary sees, hears, dialogues with angelic figures, takes heavenly journeys, and receives revelations. The phenomenon of the alter ego may have been caused by the humility of the seer before the supernatural powers.²³⁴ One of the best examples of this in the prophetic tradition is Isa 21:1–17 where the watchman is placed in a position to see the encroaching enemy.²³⁵ Scholars have debated the identity of the watchman, and the majority hold that the watchman is the prophet himself.²³⁶ “The command to the prophet concerns his visionary self which will participate in the ensuing vision, while the prophet looks upon his *alter ego* giving warning of the marauding hordes (Isa. 21.9).”²³⁷ Rowland also finds this phenomenon in the *Passio Perpetuae* 3.2 where Perpetua sees herself transformed into a man to fight in the gladiatorial arena.²³⁸

Andrei Orlov studies the Jewish pseudepigraphical traditions associated with Enoch, Moses, Jacob, Joseph and Aseneth to see how these traditions describe the transformations experienced in heavenly journeys.²³⁹ He asserts that understanding how seers envisioned their

²³² Ibid., 243.

²³³ Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1962), 44; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 243.

²³⁴ Lindblom, *Prophecy in Ancient Israel*, 44; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 243.

²³⁵ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 243

²³⁶ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 13–39: A Commentary*, trans. R. A. Wilson, OTL (London: SCM Press, 1974), 126; R. B. Y. Scott, “Isaiah XXI 1–10; The Inside of a Prophet’s Mind,” *VT* 2 (1952): 281; Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 243.

²³⁷ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 244.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Andrei Orlov, *The Greatest Mirror: Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2017).

celestial alter ego is an essential element of understanding the lore of heavenly journeys. He is particularly interested in understanding the nature of pseudepigraphal attribution to key figures in Israel's biblically authoritative past. In this study, Orlov seeks to demonstrate that the reason the seers use pseudepigraphy is because they believed that in the visionary experience, the seer "identified with his or her heavenly alter ego, often in the form of an exalted exemplar."²⁴⁰ Through this process, the seer unifies his own identity with the exemplar of the literary figure and mystical tradition in order to participate in the ongoing story of the exemplar. Orlov argues that in these developing traditions, angels, particularly the angels of the Presence, help the seer unite with his heavenly counterpart.²⁴¹

The unusual description in 2 Cor 12:1–10 by the Apostle Paul draws on apocalyptic and mystical vocabulary and experience.²⁴² Paul describes this vision in the third person ("I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven"; 12:2).²⁴³ The description of the ascent to "the third heaven" has sparked discussion.²⁴⁴ Although many scholars hold that the man in 2 Cor 12 is Paul himself (cf. 12:7), for some reason he expressed his own

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 3.

²⁴¹ Ibid., 3–5.

²⁴² The testimony of Acts 22, 27 indicates that Paul was familiar with supernatural experiences (Rowland, "Things into Which Angels Long to Look," 139); see also idem., "Things into Which Angels Long to Look," 138–41; "... it is clear that Jewish mystical traditions must occupy a central place in any reconstruction of the matrices of Paul's experience and thought" (Christopher Morray-Jones, "Divine Names, Celestial Sanctuaries, and Visionary Ascents: Approaching the New Testament from the Perspective of Merkava Traditions," in *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*, ed. Christopher Rowland and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones [Boston: Brill, 2009], 341); Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 58–59.

²⁴³ C. K. Barrett wrote, "There is a *man* who is a visionary, and this man is in fact Paul; but Paul would rather be thought of as the weak man, who has nothing to boast of but his weakness" (*A Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, BNTC [London: Black, 1973], 307).

²⁴⁴ James Tabor sees a two-step journey where Paul counters his opponents with each step. In the first stage, he relates receiving revelations at the third heaven which would have been an impressive claim since his opponents also claim to have received revelations. The second stage distances Paul from his opponents. Although he has been taken to God's throne in Paradise, the words revealed were unutterable to lower grade initiates (*Things Unutterable: Paul's Ascent to Paradise in its Greco-Roman, Judaic, and Early Christian Contexts* [London: University Press of America, 1987], 116–21); Rowland wonders if the story might be told to highlight Paul's weakness which is the theme of the section. If one assumes a seven-heaven structure, Paul was only allowed to see the lower levels. Thus, the account might describe Paul's failure to achieve full ascent ("Things into Which Angels Long to Look," 139–41).

experience in a very unusual way.²⁴⁵ In this passage, Paul describes the experience of visions (ὄπτασίας) and revelations (ἀποκαλύψεις) and being caught up to the third heaven (ἀρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ).²⁴⁶ Paul does not know whether this happened bodily or out of the body. By speaking of his experience in the third person, Paul creates a distance between himself and the visionary experience.²⁴⁷ The distancing appears to be part of his discomfort over “boasting” and connected to the theme of weakness.²⁴⁸ Paul may have learned to do this through his familiarity with the pseudepigraphic and apocalyptic mystical tradition.²⁴⁹ This is frequently referred to as the construction of the transcendent self.²⁵⁰ The transcendent self is the part of human existence that can separate from the body and experience heavenly journeys characteristic in *merkabah* mysticism.²⁵¹ Segal says that it describes the part of the self that most Western traditions have viewed as surviving death which is influenced by the Platonic notion of the

²⁴⁵ W. Baird, “Visions, Revelation, and Ministry: Reflections on 2 Cor. 12:1–5 and Gal. 1:11–17,” *JBL* 104 (1985): 658–62; George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 580–81; James D. G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, vol. 2 *Christianity in the Making* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 373–75; Peter Schäfer, “New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and Merkavah Mysticism,” *JJS* 35 (1985): 19–35.

²⁴⁶ J. W. Bowker points to overlaps between Paul’s description in *merkabah* mysticism leading him to the conclusion that Paul was reflecting on the *merkabah* (“‘Merkabah’ Visions and the Visions of Paul,” 159, 167, 172–73); “The cumulative weight of the evidence seems overwhelming: Paul’s account of his ascent to paradise and the Jewish *pardes* story have common roots in the mystical tradition... We may conclude, then, that Paul is describing an ascent to the heavenly temple and a merkabah vision of the enthroned and ‘glorified’ Christ. The context in which his account occurs suggests that he bases his claim to apostolic authority on this vision. ‘Merkabah mysticism’ was, therefore, a central feature of Paul’s experience and self-understanding” (Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12): The Jewish Mystical background of Paul’s Apostolate Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and its Significance,” *HTR* [1993]: 283).

²⁴⁷ “The problem with Paul’s account, however, is that we cannot be sure whether the apostle actually experienced the phenomenon of dual personality during the ascent itself or had only used this form when he came to report it to others” (Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 244).

²⁴⁸ Morray-Jones, “Divine Names, Celestial Sanctuaries, and Visionary Ascents,” 384.

²⁴⁹ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 242–45; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 58–71; Morray-Jones, “Divine Names, Celestial Sanctuaries, and Visionary Ascents,” 384.

²⁵⁰ “The ‘man in Christ’ is thus Paul’s ‘heavenly self’ or ‘apostolic identity,’ which is conformed to the image of the enthroned and glorified Christ and therefore possesses ‘power’ and divinely conferred authority. ‘This man’ is contrasted with Paul’s earthly, human self” (Morray-Jones, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1–12),” 274); see also Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, 580; Margaret E. Thrall, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians. Volume II, Commentary on II Corinthians VIII–XIII*, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 2000), 2:782; Segal, “Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self,” 27–40.

²⁵¹ Segal, “Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self,” 28.

immortal soul.²⁵² The transcendent self is the part which is able to travel “out of body” (cf. 2 Cor 12:3).²⁵³ Other apocalyptic texts envision the separation of the body and soul of the visionary during heavenly ascent (e.g. 1 En. 71.1; Ascen. Isa. 6.10; 7.5).²⁵⁴ The fundamental difference between Paul’s experience and the pseudonymous apocalyptists’ is that Paul’s alter ego is apparently anonymous (although Paul is hesitant to give details about the experience) while the apocalyptists experience an alter ego of an ancient, historical named figure. Thus, Rowland conjectures that the apocalypses represent accounts which link the alter ego with a renowned figure.²⁵⁵

Though we may expect that the bulk of the material in the apocalypses may have been inserted within a fictitious framework deliberately, in order to gain some authority for the visions, it seems that a case can be made for some visions at least being linked with a pseudonymous author precisely because the character of the experience itself drove the visionary to the conclusion that narrating in the name of some other person was the only way in which he could do justice to the nature of his experience.²⁵⁶

Thus, while Paul’s description of his own experience contains differences from the pseudonymous apocalypses, they both share the device of distancing oneself from the visionary experience by speaking about it in the name of another.²⁵⁷ Najman referred to this distancing as

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Segal notes that neuroscientists have studied the feelings of leaving the body which occur in the parietal lobes of the brain. In the tests, subjects report no longer being able to perceive their bodily location. These experiences can occur in forms of religious meditation. Some people experience them spontaneously while others are trained to achieve a state of meditation. Drugs like Ketamine have been known to commonly produce out-of-body experiences. One commonly occurring experience in the West are the descriptions of “near-death experiences” which Segal likens to ancient accounts of heavenly ascent. The main differences in the accounts are due to social and cultural expectations. A motivated student can learn to have heavenly journey experiences (Alan Segal, “Transcribing Experience,” in *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic and Mysticism in Honor of Rachel Elior*, ed. Daphna V. Arbel and Andrew A. Orlov [New York: De Gruyter, 2011], 36).

²⁵⁴ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 383.

²⁵⁵ See also Andrei Orlov, who studies how the seers behind the pseudepigraphical traditions related to Enoch, Moses, Jacob, and Joseph constructed the heavenly or celestial self, or alter ego (*The Greatest Mirror: Heavenly Counterparts in the Jewish Pseudepigrapha*).

²⁵⁶ Rowland, *Open Heaven*, 245.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 385.

practicing the “asceticism of self-effacement” which coheres with Paul’s effort to humble himself in weakness and avoid boasting.²⁵⁸

While Himmelfarb has found the phenomenon of pseudepigraphy to point to the inauthenticity of the purported visions in these texts, other scholars have proposed hypotheses that account for pseudonymity as part of the psychology of the visionary experience. Moyise has compared John’s use of the OT to the phenomenon of pseudonymity in Jewish apocalypses. Although Revelation is not pseudonymous, it presents itself in a very similar fashion—as John’s experience of Ezekiel’s vision.²⁵⁹ John links his own experience to Ezekiel’s (cf. Rev 21:10; Ezek 40:2) in significant ways. If this is right, then it is possible that Ezekiel functions as John’s alter ego, although without resorting to pseudonymity.

Conclusion

In this section, I explored the experience of vision. There are several features of apocalyptic literature that, when added together, plausibly indicate real visionary experience: details of the visionary setting and background, practices for achieving vision, and the description of the effects of the vision. Two of the greatest barriers to ascribing visionary experience behind the apocalyptic texts have been their traditional character and the practice of pseudonymity in Jewish apocalypses. First, there are strong indications that many apocalypses began as meditations on Scripture. Thus, traditionalism, rather than indicating inauthenticity, is expected in the resulting work. With minds soaked in the language of Scripture, the imagination processes new experiences through that language in the complex process of experience. Meditation on Scripture was the catalyst for the vision, and then the vision report is cloaked in

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 241.

²⁵⁹ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 79.

the language of the Scriptures. This reality lay behind rabbinic prohibitions to study and meditate on certain passages of Scripture—because the exposition of those texts may lead to visionary experiences. Second, several scholars have provided convincing arguments that pseudonymity was an integral part of the visionary experience. Pseudonymity was one of the means of connecting the new revelation of God to the authoritative biblical tradition. There are also indications that visionary experience involved the creation of an alter ego, a transcendent self. In many of these descriptions, the visionaries distanced their natural, everyday self from the transcendent self which experienced the vision. Apocalyptic pseudonymity may have been part of a complex process of the experience of vision in the transcendent self, in which the identity of the transcendent self was a named figure from Israel's past. This is similar to the way scholars understand Paul's heavenly ascent and Revelation's use of the Scriptures. In the end, we do not have access to the psychology of apocalyptists. Pseudonymity obscures information about the identity and social locations of the apocalyptists. It is a leap to conclude that because there are gaps in our knowledge that the apocalypses were fictionalized literary creations. There are convincing arguments that visionary experience lies behind apocalypses.

That several apocalypses plausibly began as meditations on Scripture might help us understand Revelation's complicated use of Israel's Scriptures. I am arguing that Revelation is a complex *imitatio Ezechielis*. Contrary to Himmelfarb's assertion that the apocalypses are "works of fiction from start to finish," the ancients would not have regarded these texts as fiction—neither would the apocalyptists.²⁶⁰ The impulse to imitate Ezekiel plausibly began as meditation on the text of Ezekiel that then led to visionary experience. The visions given to John came as a result of John's meditation on Scripture, particularly the *merkabah* of Ezek 1. As a result, John

²⁶⁰ DeConick, "What is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?," 7.

believed that he saw again the vision that the ancient prophet had seen. Thus, the “I” in Revelation is both John the prophet and super-Ezekiel. Although meditation on Ezekiel may have been the starting point for the visionary experience, John’s imagination allowed him to color Ezekiel’s original vision with elements from other texts. This is precisely the phenomenon witnessed in comparable texts like 1 En. 14 and the Apoc. Ab. 17–18, and it appears to be the kind of experience against which the rabbis warned. These instances are different from the analytical phenomena of midrash which seeks to explain details of the text. In these texts, the experience of “seeing again” what Ezekiel saw becomes the interpretation of the text.²⁶¹

Rowland, Gibbons, and Dobroruka are worth quoting at length:

It seems plausible to go on exploring the possibility that the apocalypses of Second Temple Judaism are the form that the mystical and prophetic religion took in the Greco-Roman period. We may find in these texts examples of those moments when human experience moves beyond what is apparent to physical perception to open up perceptions of other dimensions of existence and with them other perspectives on ordinary life, different from a purely analytical or rational approach to texts or received wisdom. Such experiences may for the visionary have their origin in an approach to texts in which the pursuit of the meaning of the text is not a detached operation but may involve the interpreter as a participant in the narrative of the biblical texts (such as John’s experience of realization in his own vision of what had appeared to Ezekiel in Rev 1 and 4). Thereby he (and it was probably almost always a man) becomes a recipient of insight as the text becomes the vehicle of an imaginative transport to other realms of consciousness.²⁶²

This investigation was important in order to demonstrate the plausibility of the identification of *imitatio* in the previous chapters. I concluded previously that John identified significantly with the prophet Ezekiel which led to the experience of similar visions which were based on Ezekiel’s own *merkabah* vision. Further, I argued that the first chapter of Ezekiel’s *merkabah* vision served as a significant influence on John’s prophecy in various manners. Since much work has been done on the origin and production of apocalyptic works and the experience

²⁶¹ Rowland, Gibbons, Dobroruka, “Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity,” 56.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 55.

of apocalyptic visions, I investigated whether the hypothesis of John's *imitatio Ezechielis* coheres with the way apocalyptic texts originated. Rowland has provided a plausible and convincing case for explaining how Revelation originated in the experience of John as well as how the impulse to imitate and identify with Ezekiel took shape. Visionary experiences were often the result of meditations on Scripture which led to visions like those in the Scriptures. The *merkabah* vision of Ezek 1 was particularly significant. The resulting visionary experience was profoundly shaped by the text, and the experience leads to a new interpretation of the text blurring the distinction between text and interpretation. Further, I argued that pseudepigraphy may have been an integral part of the psychology of apocalyptic seers. These seers identified their transcendent, visionary selves with significant figures in Israel's past which served to link the authoritative tradition to the seer's contemporary context and message. Although John does not use pseudepigraphy, in similar fashion, John significantly links his work to Ezekiel's text in the presentation of "seeing again" what the prophet Ezekiel saw. Thus, it has been demonstrated that within apocalyptic phenomenology, literary *imitatio* and visionary experience are plausibly the result of the actual visionary experience of the prophet John.

***IMITATIO* AND INSPIRATION**

In order to round out this discussion on visionary experience, I conclude with a brief investigation of *imitatio* and prophetic inspiration. Here, I demonstrate that the ancients already had categories for understanding *imitatio*, not merely as literary artistry, but also as the result of prophetic and mystical inspiration from figures of the past. For ps.-Longinus, slavish copying of a parent text was considered "theft" (κλοπή). The most explicit statement is in ps.-Longinus:

Zealous imitation of the great prose writers and poets of the past. That is the aim, dear friend; let us hold to it with all our might. For many are carried away by the inspiration of

another [ἄλλοτρίῳ θεοφοροῦνται πνεύματι], just as the story runs that the Pythian priestess on approaching the tripod where there is, they say, a rift in the earth, exhaling divine vapour, thereby becomes impregnated [ἐγκύμονα] with the divine power [τῆς δαιμονίου καθισταμένην δυνάμεως] and is at once inspired to utter oracles [χρησμοδεῖν κατ' ἐπίπνοιαν]; so, too, from the natural genius of those old writers there flows into the hearts of their admirers as it were an emanation [ἀπόρροιαί] from those holy mouths. Inspired [ἐπιπνεόμενοι] by this, even those who are not easily moved to prophecy [φοιβαστικοὶ] share the enthusiasm [συνενθουσιῶσι] of these others' grandeur. Was Herodotus alone Homeric in the highest degree? No, there was Stesichorus at a still earlier date and Archilochus too, and above all others Plato, who drew off for his own use ten thousand runnels from the great Homeric spring.²⁶³

In this passage, ps.–Longinus uses a variety of terms and concepts that were associated with Greco-Roman prophecy and oracular inspiration. Θεοφορέω and its related terms referred to being possessed by a god (inspired).²⁶⁴ Philo frequently uses this term to describe being possessed by God in order to utter inspired prophecy.²⁶⁵ Inspiration was often held to be the result of the divine πνεύμα. The Pythia were said to utter oracles by an enthusiastic spirit (πνεῦμα ἐνθουσιαστικόν)²⁶⁶ and to be filled with the spirit (ἐμπιπλαμένη τοῦ πνεύματος)²⁶⁷. Philo saw Gen 15:12 as the typical experience of the fellowship of the prophets. There, when the spirit of God arrives on the prophet, the prophet's mind departs while the prophet utters the oracles of God in a state of inspired frenzy.²⁶⁸

Ps.–Longinus uses this constellation of terms in reference to the Pythian priestess who uttered oracles at Delphi which dated back to at least the eighth century BCE. The priestess served as his primary metaphor of successful *imitatio*. The oracle at Delphi was the most preeminent oracular site in ancient Greece. The Pythia were called πρόμαντιν and προφήτις.²⁶⁹

²⁶³ *Subl.* 13 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²⁶⁴ Lucian, *Philops.* 38

²⁶⁵ *Her.* 14.69; *Somm.* 1.1.2; *Mos.* 1.38.210; 1.51.283; 2.14.69; 2.46.250; 2.48.264; 2.49.273.

²⁶⁶ Strabo, *Geogr.* 9.3.5 (Horace Leonard Jones, LCL); see also Plutarch, *Def. orac.* 432C–F.

²⁶⁷ Dio Chrysostom, *Hab.* 72.12 (H. Lamar Crosby, LCL).

²⁶⁸ Philo, *Her.* 264–65; see also *Spec.* 4.49.

²⁶⁹ The Pythia are referred to as πρόμαντιν in Herodotus *Hist.* vi.66; vii.111, 141; Lucian, *Hermot.* 60; Pausanias, *Descr.* iii.4.4 and προφήτις in Plato, *Phaedr.* 244a; Euripides, *Ion* 42, 321.

There were also two prophets, appointed for life, that served the Pythia at Delphi.²⁷⁰ There is considerable debate about the role of the prophets at Delphi. Some contend that the prophets had a hand in interpreting the ecstatic utterances of the Pythia into comprehensible language. Others suggest that prophets functioned as the announcers of the oracles.²⁷¹ Writing in the first century BCE, Diodorus Siculus relates the origin story of the Delphic oracle which had been passed down. Diodorus probably received this story from his source Ephorus, dating it to at least the fourth century BCE.²⁷² Diodorus writes:

Since I have mentioned the tripod, I think it not inopportune to recount the ancient story which has been handed down about it. It is said that in ancient times goats discovered the oracular shrine, on which account even to this day the Delphians use goats preferably when they consult the oracle. They say that the manner of its discovery was the following. There is a chasm at this place where now is situated what is known as the “forbidden” sanctuary, and as goats had been wont to feed about this because Delphi had not as yet been settled, invariably any goat that approached the chasm and peered into it would leap about in an extraordinary fashion and utter a sound quite different from what it was formerly wont to emit. The herdsman in charge of the goats marvelled at the strange phenomenon and having approached the chasm and peeped down it to discover what it was, had the same experience as the goats, for the goats began to act like beings possessed and the goatherd also began to foretell future events. After this as the report was bruited among the people of the vicinity concerning the experience of those who approached the chasm, an increasing number of persons visited the place and, as they all tested it because of its miraculous character, whosoever approached the spot became inspired. For these reasons the oracle came to be regarded as a marvel and to be considered the prophecy-giving shrine of Earth. For some time all who wished to obtain a prophecy approached the chasm and made their prophetic replies to one another; but later, since many were leaping down into the chasm under the influence of their frenzy and all disappeared, it seemed best to the dwellers in that region, in order to eliminate the risk, to station one woman there as a single prophetess for all and to have the oracles told through her. And for her a contrivance was devised which she could safely mount, then become inspired and give prophecies to those who so desired. And this contrivance has three supports and hence was called a tripod, and, I dare say, all the bronze tripods which are constructed even to this day are made in imitation of this contrivance. In what manner, then, the oracle was discovered and for what reasons the tripod was devised I think I have told at sufficient length. It is said that in ancient times virgins delivered the oracles because virgins have their natural innocence intact and are in the same case as

²⁷⁰ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 28.

²⁷¹ Aune, *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 31; Richard Stoneman, *The Ancient Oracles: Making the Gods Speak* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 37–39.

²⁷² H. W. Park, D. E. W. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 20.

Artemis; for indeed virgins were alleged to be well suited to guard the secrecy of disclosures made by oracles. In more recent times, however, people say that Echeocrates the Thessalian, having arrived at the shrine and beheld the virgin who uttered the oracle, became enamoured of her because of her beauty, carried her away with him and violated her; and that the Delphians because of this deplorable occurrence passed a law that in future a virgin should no longer prophesy but that an elderly woman of fifty should declare the oracles and that she should be dressed in the costume of a virgin, as a sort of reminder of the prophetess of olden times.²⁷³

Plutarch, a priest of Apollo at Delphi, alludes to this story in *The Obsolescence of Oracles* 42 indicating this tradition had considerable authority within the cult of Apollo.²⁷⁴ In a related legend, a shepherd named Koretas accidentally fell into the crevice of the site which would later become Apollo's sanctuary, and Koretas immediately fell into an uncontrolled state of prophetic ecstasy.²⁷⁵ One of the most curious features of the ocular activity at Delphi is that it consistently pictured as inspired by gasses arising from the earth.²⁷⁶ While ingesting substances—mushrooms, for example—to induce ecstasy is a well-known practice in the ancient world, there is no evidence outside of this legend of the ingestion of gasses arising from the earth.²⁷⁷ Furthermore, modern archaeologists have been unable to locate any deposits of gas under the Temple of Apollo at Delphi.²⁷⁸

Ps.–Longinus draws on this well-known and authoritative legend to describe *imitatio*. He compares the “natural genius of those old writers” to the Delphic vapors which possessed the Pythia. Ps.–Longinus says this intoxicating effect even overwhelms those who are not easily

²⁷³ Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* XVI.26

²⁷⁴ Stoneman, *The Ancient Oracles*, 33; Cicero was also apparently aware of this tradition (*Div.* I.36.79).

²⁷⁵ For this legend, see Plutarch *Def. orac.* 433C–D; 435D–E; Pausanias, *Descr.* 10.5.7; Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History* XV.26.

²⁷⁶ Pliny the Elder, *Nat.* 2.95.208; Lucan, *The Civil War*, 5.160–65.

²⁷⁷ Stoneman, *The Ancient Oracles*, 33.

²⁷⁸ “This is not to say they did not exist in the past, for the famous toxic fumes of a certain cave at Hierapolis/Pamukkale, which guides demonstrated to nineteenth-century travelers with the sacrifice of unfortunate dogs, are also a thing of the past. In fact recent researchers have found traces of ethylene, a narcotic gas, seeping through faults in the rock, which is prone to earthquakes. So it is possible that the story was true, though the use of gases would remain unique” (Stoneman, *The Ancient Oracles*, 33–34).

moved toward prophecy. The premier example of the inspirational and intoxicating vapor proceeding forth from the ancients was Homer who had inspired the likes of Herodotus, Stesichorus, Archilochus, and Plato. Plato “drew off for his own use ten thousand runnels from the great Homeric spring.”²⁷⁹ This draws on the long-held view that Homer’s works— the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*— were divinely inspired because Homer was inspired. In Xenophon’s *Symposium*, Niceratus addresses his fellow guests. He states that his father wanted to develop him into a good man so he had him memorize the entirety of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* by heart.²⁸⁰ Niceratus explains that “Homer has expressed practically everything pertaining to humanity.”²⁸¹ From Homer, Niceratus had learned how to best drive a chariot, and that an onion might provide flavor for a drink.²⁸² Homer’s literature became the standard to all children who received an education in the ancient world. Plato states that nurses and mothers began telling Homer to children as soon as they were born (*Resp.* 377B–C), and Homer was still the core curriculum for Quintilian in the first century CE. Homer’s writings became the basis for “how to manage the house, run the *polis*, wage war, make speeches, cure sickness; laws, good and bad morals, knowledge about the deities.”²⁸³

An anonymous schoolboy summarized the ancient view taught to students well when he wrote the dictum: “Θεὸς οὐδ’ ἄνθρωπος Ὅμηρος” (“Homer is a God, not a human being”).²⁸⁴ In his *Or. 53 On Homer*, Dio Chrysostom begins by proclaiming that Homer was divinely inspired because without a divine and superhuman nature, no one could have produced such beauty and

²⁷⁹ Ps.-Longinus, *Subl.* 13 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²⁸⁰ Xenophon, *Symp.* 3.5.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.6.

²⁸² Xenophon, *Symp.* 4.6–7; citing *Il.* 23.323; 23.334–337 for the chariot and *Il.* 11.630 for the onion.

²⁸³ Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity*, LNTS (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 45.

²⁸⁴ Cited from Sandnes, *Challenge of Homer*, 45.

wisdom.²⁸⁵ He says, “without inspiration from the Muses and Apollo,” Homer never could have produced his works.²⁸⁶ In *Or.* 53.10 Dio refers to Homer as being like “the prophets of the gods” (οἱ προφηῆται τῶν θεῶν). For Dio, the fact that almost nothing was known about Homer’s personal life demonstrates the divine inspiration of his poems. Because Homer was considered to be divinely inspired and omniscient, his literature became the foundational texts for Greek culture and identity which was inculcated through education.²⁸⁷ In this way, Homer’s epics functioned for Greeks in much the same way as the Bible did for Jews and Christians.²⁸⁸ Because Homer was inspired, ancient Greeks and Romans developed complex strategies for resolving problems and contradictions in Homer’s writings. The best example is the critic of Christianity, Porphyry who wrote the longest and most complete commentary on Homer. In his so-called *Homeric Questions*, Porphyry sought to resolve questions about Homer by cross-referencing to other passages in Homer. The basis for the dictum “Interpret Homer with Homer’s help” is the idea that Homer’s works were inspired and this inspiration united all of his works.²⁸⁹

This idea of Homer’s inspiration seems to inspire ps.–Longinus as well. Like the Pythian ingestion of divine vapors, Homer continued to inspire. By imitating Homer, orators could experience Homer before them, as if himself present.²⁹⁰ In the ecstasy of *imitatio*, ps.–Longinus says that one is led to ask three questions: How might Homer have said this same thing? How would Homer have listened to this passage of mine? If I write this, how will all posterity receive it?²⁹¹ Thus, in the same passage, ps.–Longinus can speak of *imitatio Homero* as experiential,

²⁸⁵ Dio Chrysostom, *Hom.* 53.1.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 53.6.

²⁸⁷ See discussion in Sandnes, *Challenge of Homer*, 44–49.

²⁸⁸ See Christopher Stanley, “Paul ad Homer: Graeco-Roman Citation Practice in the First Century CE,” *NovT* 32 (1990): 51–52.

²⁸⁹ Sandnes, *Challenge of Homer*, 53.

²⁹⁰ *Subl.* 14 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

rhetorical, and literary. Through *imitatio*, one experiences the presence of Homer which affects the rhetorical expression and the resulting writing.

Conclusion to this Section

This section explored ps.–Longinuss’ discussion of *imitatio* as inspiration. *Imitatio* was not conceived as merely a literary enterprise. Like the vapors inhaled by the Pythian priestess, the figures of old could provide intoxicating inspiration for later writings. The foremost analogy for this experience was how Homer was considered divine and became the basis for the inculcation of culture and identity through education. Thus, ps.–Longinus provides an example of the overlap between *imitatio* and inspiration. These were not mutually exclusive concepts in ancient minds. With the findings of the previous section regarding the likelihood of visionary experiences lying behind (at least some of) the apocalypses, ps.–Longinus shows that the identification of literary *imitatio* need not exclude the possibility of the experience of prophetic inspiration. The supposition that John experienced some kind of connection to the prophets of Israel’s Scriptures which resulted in a literary *imitatio*, primarily of Ezekiel, is not negated by the theory of *imitatio* in the ancient world. In fact, this section has demonstrated the ancients had ready-made categories of oracular inspiration to make sense of such experiences.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter was to explore the nature of apocalyptic visionary experience. The question of whether apocalypses generated as literary creations, hallucinations, or records of

real experiences has been frequently explored. Features such as pseudonymity and the use of traditional *topoi* has complicated the discussion. Some scholars believe that since access to the psyche of apocalyptic seers is impossible, commenting on the origins of apocalyptic texts is fruitlessly speculative. Other scholars believe apocalypses are literary creations which draw upon expected traditional *topoi*. The arguments of scholars who detect real psychological phenomena and experiences lying behind the apocalypses are convincing, and they avoid the pitfalls of Western biases against claims to experiences of transcendent reality. Both Jews, Greco-Romans, and early Christians asserted the actuality of transcendent realities including tales of heavenly ascents. John certainly claims to have experienced a vision, and a hermeneutic of acceptance assumes the veracity of John's claims unless significant evidence exists to doubt those claims.

Several features of apocalyptic writings point to the possibility of visionary experience. First, several of the apocalypses present the qualifications of the seer which served as prerequisites for receiving vision. Second, the apocalypses often include specific details about the location and nature of the vision. Third, there are some reoccurring practices for achieving visionary experience including prayer, fasting, confession of sin, mourning, sleep deprivation, and consumption of special liquids. These practices have been confirmed by anthropologists and psychologists to induce altered states of consciousness. Fourth, the accounts often indicate psychological and physical effects associated with the visions including fear, falling prostrate, trembling, speechlessness, loss of strength, experience of ground shaking, and hot and cold sensations. Fifth, visionary experiences occurred frequently as the result of meditation on Scripture.

The Jewish people were united in the conviction of the authority of the Torah; however, changing situations and crises required the exegesis and application of Scripture. Like the

exegetical tradition, apocalypses sought to apply the authoritative tradition to national and social crises. Although apocalyptists claimed direct revelation from God, they rooted their claims in the authoritative tradition. Pseudepigraphy was one way this was achieved. In several apocalyptic texts, the meditation on certain Scriptures (particularly Gen 1, Ezek 1, and Isa 6) served as launching pads for visionary experience. The meditation leads to “seeing again” the same (kinds of) visions. Speculation on the *merkabah* “was capable of producing states through which the historic event of revelation was relived.”²⁹² The language of the Scriptures was part of the sense-making process of visionary experience. Text, interpretation, and experience are all intertwined in the complicated event of visions. Cross-cultural comparative study including anthropology and neurophysiological studies have demonstrated the coherence of the descriptions found in visionary texts. There is widespread testimony in different cultures across the centuries to experiences of heavenly journeys and ascents.

The two greatest barriers to the admittance of actual experience to apocalyptic texts has been their traditional character and pseudonymity. The traditional nature of apocalypses is partway explained by their origin in meditations on Scripture. The sense-making process is complex and draws upon structures already present in the imagination for understanding new phenomenon. Similarly, several scholars have sought to understand pseudonymity as part and parcel of the visionary experience; not simply the result of literary forgery. Several have found it to be part of the authority-conferring strategy of these documents. Pseudonymity allowed the apocalyptists to span the distance between their own day and the authoritative past. The most fruitful observation has been *Die Objektivierung des Ichs*—the separation of the seer’s normal self from the visionary self. The roots of this practice occur as early as Isa 21. It can also be seen

²⁹² Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 122.

in Paul's description in 2 Cor 12 where he describes his own experience in the third person. Both Paul and the apocalyptists share the device of distancing oneself from the visionary experience by speaking about it occurring in an alter, transcendent ego. The difference is that apocalyptists apparently associated their transcendent ego with a known figure in Israel's past. John's imitation of Ezekiel is a similar phenomenon. Although John does not refer to himself as Ezekiel, he essentially describes his own experience as being that of Ezekiel.²⁹³

Examining the evidence of the apocalypses and ancient Jewish and Christian sources proves that the claim of visionary experience is plausible. The impulse to imitate previous prophets and prophetic texts are best understood as integral parts of achieving and producing visions. However, even within Greco-Roman sources, inspiration and imitation were not antithetical. Ps.-Longinus demonstrates the overlap of these categories. He compared the imitation of previous texts to the Pythian priestesses uttering oracles under divine influence at Delphi. For ps.-Longinus, in imitation, the authoritative figures of the past become like the intoxicating vapors that inspire oracles. Homer was most often ascribed divinely inspired status and his texts were used, studied, and imitated for centuries. By imitating Homer, orators and writers could experience Homer as if standing before them. Ps.-Longinus demonstrates the significant interplay between *imitatio* as experiential, literary, and rhetorical.

²⁹³ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 79.

CHAPTER SIX SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY

Revelation is an incredibly complex document composed by employing the Scriptures of Israel in a multifaceted way. Unfortunately, other than knowing the author's name and connection to the churches in Asia Minor, we do not know much about John with any certainty. He does not leave any explicit explanations of his techniques and suppositions, and we do not have direct access to the author's psyche. What is evident, however, is that the author was firmly planted within both Judaism, her Scriptures and antecedent traditions, as well as the Roman province of Asia Minor. John demonstrates an advanced engagement with Israel's Scriptures and Greco-Roman ideology and mythology as well as several sophisticated literary and rhetorical techniques suggesting that we are dealing with the work of a virtuoso literati.

These conclusions regarding the skill and artistry of the author make the grammatical and stylistic irregularity of Revelation titillating. It marks the document as *sui generis* since no other Greek document of this length and complexity exhibits such flawed Greek.¹ This feature is particularly magnified with the recognition that the document was designed with aural intent. Revelation was meant to be read aloud (1:1–3), and the first makarism is pronounced on the lector and the hearers. There is a repeated emphasis on “hearing” in the book (e.g. 2:7, 11, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 13:9; 22:17–18). Further, John has been referred to as the most “textually self-conscious Christian writer of the early period.”² The author demonstrates knowledge of the production of texts, writing, and reading. The author also demonstrates proficiency in Greek

¹ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxliiii; Paulsen, “Zu Sprache und Stil,” 4.

² Gamble, *Books and Readers*, 104.

throughout the apocalypse. For almost every irregularly occurring construction, the author uses a parallel construction elsewhere in the expected form.

Two major camps have formed to understand the syntax of Revelation grammatically. The first camp holds that the solecisms are due to Semitic language interference caused by the author's previous familiarity with Hebrew or Aramaic while he writes in Greek. The means by which John's primary Semitic language affected his Greek—intentionally or unintentionally—has been variously explained. A second major approach has been to study the grammatical irregularity as a Greek idiolect. The method of this approach asserts that unless a construction can be proven to be unattested or impossible in Greek, scholars should not automatically resort to Semitic language transfer. In some cases, constructions identified as "Semitism" turn out to be found in Greek literature where Semitic influence cannot be suspected.

Other approaches to this vexing issue have attributed the irregular syntax to the author's literary, rhetorical, and theological communicative agendas. These arguments are intriguing, even if sometimes less than fully convincing. Ruiz argues the solecisms are literary obstacles which create dissonance that causes the reader to slow down and involve himself or herself in actively understanding the meaning. Callahan sees the idiolect as an intentionally created insurgent language which is part of the decolonizing discourse of the apocalypse. Beale argues the solecisms are markers of allusions to OT texts. Holtz, Paulsen, and Verheyden argue the language allowed the author to convey shock and surprise as well as the author's recognition of the majesty of God as wholly other. Drawing on ps.-Longinus, Karrer argues the Semitisms and Septuagintalisms were used by the author in the deployment of a conscious rhetorical style to give the document an elevated, sublime style. This style was used to promote the social identity of the churches in Asia Minor.

A final group of scholars have made tantalizing suggestions that something in the nature of John's visionary experience of prophetic ecstasy resulted in this irregular grammar. The visionary experience results in a style that gives the document a 'biblical' and 'ecstatic' quality. In the literature, this remains the least explored possibility. How does ungrammaticality convey a 'biblical' or 'ecstatic' prophetic quality? One of the major purposes of this dissertation was to fill this gap by taking seriously the possibility of John's prophetic experience and the ways that experience might explain the irregular grammar. Stone has lamented that scholars working in biblical studies do not sufficiently consider how religious experience impacted the author and the resulting text.³ If we take the author's claim to visionary experience seriously then we should not reduce the author's use of the Scriptures of Israel in his own Revelation to mere authorial and literary intention. In this dissertation, I sought to take seriously rhetorical and literary aspects of Revelation's communicative strategy while being attentive to how the author's visionary experience has impacted the literary shape and form of the text.

Accepting the possibility that John intentionally used grammatical and stylistic irregularity, I argued that ancient rhetorical theory as epitomized by the handbooks holds potential for aiding our understanding of the possible workings of John's mind and the reception of the unusual style of Revelation by the inaugural audiences. Because rhetoric involves the techniques and figures used in the art of persuasion and because Revelation was designed to persuade the seven churches of Asia, rhetoric is an apropos means of investigation. Several studies have demonstrated that John employs known rhetorical techniques even if we are unable to know much about John's background and formal rhetorical training. Rhetorical theory was

³ Stone, "Reconsideration of Apocalyptic Visions," 169.

consulted in a heuristic rather than rigid fashion. Rhetorical criticism necessitates a certain amount of sensitivity and artistry on the part of the interpreter in its deployment.

Rhetoric proved pertinent to this investigation in two ways. First, I demonstrated that there are in-depth discussions by the rhetoricians—especially Quintilian—regarding ungrammaticality. The ancients distinguished between accidental grammatical blunders and intentional artistic ungrammaticality. The key difference between the two understandings of ungrammaticality hinged on the recognition of intentionality. In addition to rhetorical theory preserved in the handbooks, there are numerous examples from relevant Greco-Roman sources regarding reactions to barbarisms and solecisms in public readings. The ancients exhibited an aversion to mistakes in public reading which resulted in social embarrassment and humiliation. Manuscripts with errors were torn up and thrown away since bad writing results in bad speaking. Stories from Cicero, Lucian, Gellius, as well as accounts of reactions to lectors who made mistakes in public reading suggest that accidental mistakes were embarrassing and frowned upon. These stories confirm Quintilian’s rhetorical theory—intentionality was key. Mistakes in reading caused by ignorance or ineptitude frequently resulted in public derision and humiliation. Even social elites, like Pliny the Younger, expressed hesitation to read publicly because the possibility of the embarrassment of imperfection was an ever-present reality. It was further demonstrated that impromptu readings were especially susceptible to mistakes in reading which is why almost all public reading events required preparation and practice.

Because identifying a particular construction as intentional requires knowledge of the author’s mind at the time of writing, the ancients had to devise a way to detect intentionality. Quintilian lists four criteria that could be used to determine intentionality. First, logical principle refers to word studies, etymology, and appealing to the origin and development of a word.

Second, antiquity refers to the use of archaic words to give the style a grandeur. Archaic words also give the style religious awe and majesty because they are taken from past ages and have the attraction of novelty. Third, authority refers to the judgment of the most supreme orators and writers of the past. An error should be considered honorable if it was used by the best authors. Fourth, Quintilian held usage to be the most important indicator. Usage does not refer to the practice of the majority but the “consensus of the educated” indicating that the practice of previous authorities takes precedence over linguistic law. Quintilian’s criteria are based on the fact that an author might draw upon the style and phraseology of the canonical works of the classic past in order to have a desired effect on the audience. These criteria opened up new questions for investigation regarding John’s style. If it is to be viewed as intentional according to ancient categories, the supreme consideration is whether John may have imitated a literary or stylistic precursor that he considered to be authoritative. If this could be demonstrated, according to Quintilian, the style should not be considered solecistic and erroneous; rather, intentional ungrammaticality can be employed to give the style a sense of grandeur and even “religious awe and majesty.”⁴

These criteria led to the identification of a second feature of rhetoric in the ancient world that proved valuable in this investigation. The criteria provided by Quintilian point to the conservative character of rhetoric and language. While moderns since the dawn of Romanticism have valued novelty, ancients were much less inclined to do so. In fact, Quintilian noted that “novelty” came from using archaic words since “the best new words will be the oldest...”⁵ All Greco-Roman *paideia* was an attempt to provide students the best models from the past to

⁴ *Inst.* 1.6.1 (Russell, LCL).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.6.39, 41.

imitate.⁶ Quintilian says that the most important indicator for a child's pedagogical success was the student's ability to imitate models. Education at every level proceeded on the basis of imitation of the past. This is why Quintilian provides long lists of the best models in his rhetorical textbook (cf. 2.5.18–20; book 10). In the Roman world, authors had no qualms about “submerging their individualities” in the works of authoritative predecessors.⁷ The underlying assumption of *imitatio* is that the works of the classical past had a certain authority and majesty, and the creation of a new, impressive work came not from pure innovation, but from creative interaction with and reworking of the great works of the past.

Because *imitatio* was “an essential element in all literary composition,” there are plentiful discussions about how successful imitation was practiced and its resulting effects.⁸ Because *imitatio* concerns the intentional use of earlier sources in a later work, several studies have demonstrated its potential to shed light on the composition of works in the NT (e.g. Synoptic problem, 2 Peter's use of Jude). One of the reasons Revelation is such a complex document is because the author clearly melds together words, phrases, characters, places, details, and images from Israel's Scriptures without ever explicitly quoting his sources. While John's engagement with the Scriptures has sometimes been labeled “midrashic,” there is no other Jewish work which fully approximates John's technique. Because John is clearly at home in his Greco-Roman environment, it was argued that *imitatio* provides a lens through which to understand John's employment of the his authoritative source material from the past. Several scholars have characterized John's use of the Hebrew Bible as imitation, although they have rarely appealed to ancient concepts of *imitatio*.⁹ Others describe his style as intentionally archaizing and mimicking

⁶ Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire*, 6.

⁷ Kraemer, “On Imitation and Originality,” 135.

⁸ Russell, “De Imitatione,” 1.

⁹ M.–E. Boismard, “‘L’Apocalypse’,” 532; Burney, *The Aramaic Origin*, 16; Farrer, *Rebirth of Images*, 24.

the classical biblical prophets and describe his book as being “modelled” on Scriptural texts like Ezekiel.¹⁰ In his study on Revelation’s use of the Scriptures, Decock explicitly calls for more attention to be given to *imitatio*.¹¹ Whitaker even muses that the pervasiveness of *imitatio* in the Greco-Roman world may provide an explanation for why and how John interacts with the OT while constructing a new narrative.¹² Consequently, I sought to fill this need by analyzing ancient theory regarding *imitatio* to bring ancient categories to bear on our understanding of the peculiar phenomenon of John’s irregular Greek. Since the underlying impulse behind Quintilian’s criteria for detecting stylistic intentionality is the use of approved and authoritative sources from the past, *imitatio* provides the possibility of a fresh exploration of John’s irregular grammar. These realizations from rhetoric led to the following research questions: Can it be determined that John was imitating figures of the past? If so, is it possible that something about the style of the figure(s) John considered to be authoritative caused him to use an unusual, and frequently ungrammatical, style?

A method for recognizing *imitatio* was considered in order to address the question of whether John was imitating past figures. In conversation with the methodologies presented by Brodie, MacDonald, McAdon, and Winn, I accepted six criteria. The first three criteria form the basis of the identification of *imitatio*, and the final three criteria can provide confirmatory evidence to strengthen the case. In chapter four, these six criteria were applied to John’s use of Ezekiel. Of all the books from Israel’s Scriptures that John incorporated, he makes the most comprehensive use of Ezekiel which makes it the most likely candidate for detecting *imitatio*. First, the criterion of external plausibility seeks to prove the pre-existence of the hypotext. It was

¹⁰ Mazzaferri, *Genre of the Book of Revelation*, 379; Vogelgesang, “Interpretation of Ezekiel,” 11, 72; Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 230; Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 78–83.

¹¹ Decock, “Scriptures in the Book of Revelation,” 375, 395.

¹² Whitaker, “Seeing God,” 24.

concluded that by the end of the first century, John had access to Ezekiel's work in both Hebrew and Greek formats. However, due to the allusive nature of John's use of the Scriptural passages and images, the question of whether John is solely or primarily influenced by Hebrew or Greek texts has proved vexing. The studies of Laughlin, Vanhoye, Vogelgesang, Trudinger, Lo, and Moyise all concluded that John most likely knew and used both Hebrew and Greek texts, with several arguing for primary dependence on the Hebrew text. Allen's work on John's use of Zechariah has quickly become a standard work on this topic. Taking into account the pluriformity of material textual culture in the first century, Allen analyzes the unambiguous uses of Zechariah in Revelation, and concludes that John had access to several forms of Hebrew and Greek texts, and he drew from Hebrew Zechariah and Greek exegetical traditions. The most that can be said with confidence is that John knew and used both Hebrew and Greek texts in his use of Ezekiel. This conclusion fits the bilingual character of the book (cf. 9:11; 16:16).

Second, the criterion of significant similarities demonstrates the volume of contact between two texts. While it is not simply a matter of adding up the number of parallels, the presence of several weighty similarities serves as intertextual flags that an ancient author is drawing upon a model. At the level of theme of content, the inaugural vision of Ezek 1 was the basis for John's vision in chs. 4–5. The sealing of the redeemed in Rev 7 and 14 is taken from Ezek 9 primarily. The measuring of the temple in Rev 11:1–2 is influenced by Ezekiel's commissioning narrative and alludes to Ezekiel's measuring of the temple in Ezek 40–48. The material on the whore of Babylon in Rev 17–18 draws on Ezek 16 and 23. John draws upon Ezekelian material for his critique of idolatry, the jewelry and clothing of the woman, God's judgment on unfaithful women, and the list of commercial goods. The Gog and Magog tradition in chs. 16, 19–20 make extensive use of Ezek 38–39. Finally, one of the most comprehensive

intertextual connections is the description of the heavenly New Jerusalem in Rev 21–22 patterned after the temple vision in Ezek 40–48.

The next section on similarities of details and actions focused on John’s significant identification with Ezekiel’s commissioning and vision experience. John’s experience described in chs. 1:9–20; 4–5; and 10–11 suggests that John identified with Ezekiel as visionary, prophet, and exile. As John writes in exile on Patmos to Christians in their own exile in ‘Babylon’, it was natural for John to turn for inspiration to the prophets who delivered the word of the Lord to the exiles. The one sign act in Revelation involving the instructions to consume the scroll and measure the temple (chs. 10–11) is influenced by Ezekiel. By describing his own prophetic and visionary ministry in Ezekielian terms, John is “cloaking himself with the prophetic aura of his visionary predecessor.”¹³

One of the most significant indicators of John’s dependence on Ezekiel is the similarity of organizational and conceptual structures. The findings of the studies of Wikenhauser, Kuhn, Lust, Boismard, Vanhoye, Goulder, Vogelgesang, Moyise, Karrer, Matthewson, and Boxall were considered and found to prove overwhelmingly and convincingly that almost the entirety of the structure of Revelation can be explained by the influence of the structure of Ezekiel. The structural influence of Ezekiel is demonstrated in the following chart:¹⁴

Revelation 1	Ezekiel 1
Revelation 4	Ezekiel 1
Revelation 5	Ezekiel 2
Revelation 7–8	Ezekiel 9–10
<i>Revelation 10</i>	<i>Ezekiel 2–3</i>
<i>Revelation 11:1–2</i>	<i>Ezekiel 40</i>
Revelation 17	Ezekiel 16, 23
Revelation 18	Ezekiel 26–28
Revelation 19–20	Ezekiel 37–39

¹³ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 221.

¹⁴ Reproduced from Boxall, “Exile, Prophet, Visionary,” 149–50; italics indicate a parallel located out of sequence.

Boxall has argued convincingly that even the “gaps” in John’s use of Ezekelian material can be understood as influenced, albeit in a secondary way, by Ezekiel. For example, it is possible to see Ezek 5 as influencing Rev 6 and Ezek 11–15 as influencing Rev 9–16. Thus, John’s work evinces a near comprehensive use of Ezekiel’s conceptual structure.

The next section on verbal and stylistic similarities constitutes one of the central hypotheses of this dissertation. One of the dominant theories regarding Revelation’s unique style is that the author intentionally employed Semitisms and Septuagintalisms in order to create a biblical effect which aligns the author’s voice (writing in Greek) with the voice of the classical Hebrew prophets. John’s style has been described as an “elaborate archaism” that allowed him to write as a “Christian Ezekiel.”¹⁵ On its surface, this is a more sophisticated solution to the question of Revelation’s irregular grammar which seeks to do justice to the complexity observed in the text. However, rather than stopping at whether the author is imitating a Semitic style more generally, I investigated whether a specific feature of Ezekiel’s work might have impacted John’s irregular grammatical style.

I determined that the commissioning scene in Ezek 1–3 played a significant role in shaping John’s own prophetic and visionary experience as well as the structure of his work. It is a widely recognized feature by scholars studying Ezekiel that the inaugural (*merkabah*) vision of Ezekiel is grammatically and stylistically difficult. Block has offered the most thorough study of the difficulties in this text which include confusion of gender and number, irregular use of verbs, inconsistency in the use of adverbs and prepositions, morphological irregularities, dittography and redundancy, difficult constructions to comprehend, and a generally difficult narrative style.

¹⁵ Farrer, *Rebirth of Images*, 24.

The difficulties were clearly recognized in the editorial history of Ezekiel and in later translations of the book. Ezekiel 10 is largely a repeat of material from ch. 1 which appear to be later interpretations and expansions on the confusing text of its *Vorlage* in ch. 1. However, where the tradent(s) behind Ezek 10 used parallel material from ch. 1, the grammatical, stylistic, and conceptual difficulties are smoothed out. The translators of the Septuagint also smoothed out difficulties encountered in this text. The textual and redactional history of Ezek 1 suggests that from a very early time it was a fixed text. Later redactors added to ch. 10 because ch. 1 was already sacred and unchangeable.¹⁶

Several explanations have been offered for this stylistic phenomenon. The dominant view is that the grammatical errors were caused by scribal transmission and redaction; however, these redactional explanations were found wanting. Block's own proposal is that the incredible nature of the vision Ezekiel saw and heard forced the prophet to use the language of analogy to express the inexpressibility of communicating what was seen. He believes "the genre of experience" better explains the nature of the text and even suggests the conclusions of his study might have significant ramifications for the irregular grammar and style in Revelation.¹⁷ The theory I find the most compelling is Fredericks attempt to place this aspect of Ezekiel's call narrative within other prophetic call narratives in the biblical text. The call narratives of the Hebrew Bible frequently depict a speech impediment on the part of the commissioned prophet which God has to intervene in some way to rectify before the prophet can embark on his prophetic task. For Fredericks, Ezek 1 serves as the impediment of speech which Ezekiel must overcome by God's help which is rectified by the consumption of the scroll.

¹⁶ Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 47; Halperin, "Exegetical Character," 140; cf. Block, "Text and Emotion," 426–27.

¹⁷ Block, "Text and Emotion," 433.

Taking into account that John is writing in Greek and Ezekiel's stylistic problems exist primarily in Hebrew, the essential categories of stylistic irregularity overlap significantly. The largest number of difficulties in Ezekiel consist of confusion of gender and number, and in Revelation, the largest category of difficulties is discord of gender, number, and case. I argue that John's imitation of the irregular style of Ezekiel's inaugural vision helps explain the main characterizations of John's irregularities. That they appear to be intentional in some cases and random in others suggests that John has successfully imitated his Ezekielian model so that his vision text appears just as "confused" as Ezekiel's own experience. My argument is not that every occurrence of irregularity in Revelation can be explained in a one-to-one relationship with a text in Ezekiel's inaugural vision. In Revelation, the grammatical irregularities do not only occur in material directly linked to Ezekiel's *merkabah* vision. Rather, my argument proposes that John found some kind of significance in Ezekiel's irregular visionary style due to his intimate familiarity and identification with Ezekiel's call narrative and sought to creatively imitate that style in his own work. The identification of stylistic imitation raised several potential objections and questions which were posed and answered.

The third criterion is evidence of intimate familiarity with source. Although that criterion has already been amply satisfied by the previous investigations, three examples were provided which demonstrate John's intimate familiarity with Ezekiel's text. The difficulties and interpretive questions in Rev 4:6; 21:13; 22:2 are explained by what Vogelgesang identified as John's "excruciatingly detailed and comprehensive mastery of the text of Ezekiel..."¹⁸

The fourth criterion involves the intelligibility of differences. In imitation, it was demonstrated that dependence and transformation are of a piece. Sources employed were

¹⁸ Ibid.

expected to be transformed in some way when imitated. John exhibits several notable tendencies in his alteration of Ezekielian material. Because the New Jerusalem of Revelation lacks a temple, there are numerous examples of temple-to-city transference in the final chapters. The Christological focus of Revelation is also a novel reinterpretation of Ezekiel. While Ezekiel is primarily a prophet to Israel, John universalizes and democratizes his prophetic message to all people. John also typically abbreviates and condenses the material he uses from Ezekiel. However, even in his abbreviation of material, his use can still often be described as comprehensive. For example, although he abbreviates about twenty-eight verses from Ezek 1 into less than half that, he makes an almost comprehensive use of all the elements of Ezek 1 (with the exception of the wheels). One of the most obvious characteristics of John's use of Ezekiel is his amplification of Ezekielian material with elements taken from other Scripture texts. All of these creative uses of Ezekiel are intelligible in light of observable practices used in *imitatio* (i.e. Vergil's use of Homer).

The fifth criterion is analogy which places the proposed imitative parallels within the tradition of imitations of the same model. Since the argument is that the style of Ezekiel's inaugural (*merkabah*) vision significantly impacted John, two kinds of analogy were explored. First, I demonstrated that Ezek 1 was an influential text in rabbinic Judaism, Second Temple Jewish texts, apocalypses, and early Christianity. Rabbinic Judaism placed strict restrictions around interpreting Ezek 1. Within Jewish apocalypticism, the *merkabah* vision accounts of 1 En. 14 and Apoc. Ab. 17–19 demonstrate that this text was especially important for apocalyptic seers. *Merkabah* mysticism continued to grow and develop into the later *hekhalot* texts which provided instructions to would-be seers on how to induce mystical experiences. Gruenwald

summarizes, “Ezekiel was for a very long time the model for visionaries to follow and imitate.”¹⁹ Several scholars have argued Paul was familiar with *merkabah* mystical practices and even experienced *merkabah* visions himself. If so, the rabbinic texts which attribute *merkabah* speculation to Yohanan ben Zakkai, the possibility of Paul’s own experience of the *merkabah*, and John’s description of his own *merkabah* experience indicate that Ezek 1 was not merely the focus of a fringe, aberrant conventicle of mystics but was at the very heart of Jewish and Christian meditation and experience.

The second type of analogy focused more specifically on whether an analogous text exists which is heavily dependent on Ezekiel’s *merkabah* vision and also exhibits idiosyncratic grammar and style. Unfortunately, the long histories of transmission of the most pertinent apocalyptic texts (1 En.; Apoc. Ab.) and their survival in secondary and tertiary translations make close grammatical and syntactical scrutiny problematic. Stead has argued Zech 1–8 makes use of Ezekiel and exhibits “grammatical awkwardness” but this possible analogy was dismissed on the basis of its subtlety. However, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* which functioned to facilitate worship with the angels among the Qumran community provides a tantalizing analogy. Newsom has demonstrated that the central chapters invoke praise from the heavenly temple and are heavily influenced by Ezek 1 and 10. In the different sections of the *Shirot*, the style changes to apparently elicit different emotional responses. The sections dependent on the *merkabah* exhibit grammatical irregularity, especially in the alteration of singulars and plurals. After considering and dismissing several alternatives, Newsom concludes, that the ungrammaticality of the *Shirot* are “intentional violations of ordinary syntax and meaning in a text which is attempting to communicate something of the elusive transcendence of heavenly reality.”²⁰ The

¹⁹ Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 4.

²⁰ Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 49.

songs were composed through a “careful manipulation of language” which seeks to invoke a numinous religious experience. The “deformations of ordinary syntax” are part of the communicative strategy to generate an experience of the heavenly realm and its wonders.²¹

The sixth criterion brings all of the previous findings together to provide weight to the proposed identification. The case for *imitatio* is strengthened if multiple criteria are satisfied. The foregoing investigation demonstrated that Revelation exhibits significant similarities to Ezekiel in themes and content, details and actions, organizational structures, and verbal and stylistic similarities which all point to a studied familiarity with Ezekiel’s text. Although there are differences in the way John uses Ezekielian material, these differences can largely be grouped within a constellation of observable editorial practices. The criteria used by scholars studying the use of *imitatio* have been satisfied convincingly at every point. “These similarities in theology, structure, form, linguistic features, and authorial self-conception” leads to the conclusion that “John could identify closely with Ezekiel’s personality and theology.”²² “That Ezekiel’s prophecy exerted enormous influence on John is indisputable.”²³

Some studies have examined the cause of John’s irregular grammar and syntax as a stand-alone literary phenomenon. In this dissertation, I have argued that the grammatical and stylistic irregularity is one part of a complex and comprehensive effort on John’s part to imitate Ezekiel. Because John so identified with the prophetic and visionary ministry of Ezekiel, he expressed his own vision as a “seeing again” of what Ezekiel first saw, and I would add, a “saying again” of exactly how Ezekiel described what he saw. It is part of an advanced effort to

²¹ Newsom, “Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 219.

²² Kowalski, “Transformation of Ezekiel in John’s Revelation,” 301.

²³ Morton, *One Upon the Throne*, 88.

link his own voice with the voice of Israel's prophets which had the communicative effect of increasing the authority of his message with the inaugural audiences.

The last chapter was my attempt to take up Stone's call to take seriously the purported religious experiences of apocalyptic authors in forming and shaping their texts. Because there is a good amount of literature explicating the origins of apocalyptic visionary experience, it proved imperative to investigate whether the identification of John's *imitatio Ezechielis* could be understood phenomenologically. The categories identified by scholars studying apocalyptic visionary experience provided a helpful framework for exploring John's *imitatio*. The first option is to consider the investigation pointlessly speculative since we know so little about John on the island of Patmos and the workings of his mind at the time of writing. Another approach would consider the work to be a creative fiction in which John has identified with Ezekiel and the prophets in literary terms. Conversely, I adopted a hermeneutic of acceptance in an attempt to take John's claim to present a revelation from the Lord to be *prima facie* true. This led me to consider seriously the possibility that something in the psychology or nature of the experience resulted in John's *imitatio Ezechielis*.

Numerous lines of evidence converge to strengthen the plausibility that apocalyptic texts, even pseudepigraphical accounts drawing on traditional apocalyptic *topoi*, were the result of perceived visionary experiences and alternate states of consciousness. The presentations of the qualifications of the seers, the embedded details of the visionary experiences, the practices for achieving visionary experience, and the descriptions of the effects of the visions support the reality of claims to visionary experience. The most significant observation was that meditation on Scripture likely served as catalysts for visionary experience. Already in Israel's Scriptures, texts like Jer 25 and 29 served as a catalyst for the visionary experience described in the book of

Daniel. This was one way later Jewish writers had at their disposal for bringing the authority of the inspired tradition to bear on contemporary situations and crises (i.e. the exile in Daniel). Passages like those in Daniel, 4 Ezra 6–7, 11, 13; Rev 4–5; 1 En. 14; Apoc. Ab. 17–18; and the rabbinic legends of exposition on the *merkabah* vision suggest that the meditation of certain texts was not merely exegetical engagement, but the catalyst of visionary experiences. Wolfson says, “...insofar as the visionary experience is hermeneutically related to the text, it may be said that the way of seeing is simultaneously a way of reading.”²⁴ Thus, the hermeneutical engagement with the text is already active at the level of the experience making the dichotomy between an experiential core and exegetical reflection unnecessary. In the words of Wolfson, speculation on the *merkabah* of Ezek 1 “was capable of producing states through which the historic event of revelation was relived.”²⁵ This is supported by Gruenwald’s observation that *merkabah* mysticism and the *hekhalot* texts demonstrate that for centuries Ezekiel was the model for mystics to imitate.

My study also suggests that John’s close identification with Ezekiel may be similar to other apocalyptic authors’ employment of pseudonymity. At the very least, pseudepigraphy lent authority to apocalypses by tying the work to the traditions associated with authoritative figures like Abraham, Moses, Ezra, Enoch, etc. Additionally, other scholars have found pseudepigraphy to result from some aspect of the seer’s psychology and experience. Najman finds pseudepigraphy to be a way for the unknown seers to efface themselves in order to emulate exemplary figures and expand their legacies into the present period of crisis.²⁶ Stone finds that pseudepigraphy flows out of the need to tie all interpretation to the authoritative tradition as well

²⁴ Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, 53.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 122.

²⁶ Najman, *Past Renewals*, 242.

as the real visionary experiences of the authors to transcend the mundane world to receive divine revelations. Recognizing the similarities, Moyise compared John's use of the OT Scriptures to the pseudepigraphy of Jewish apocalypses.²⁷ Although Revelation is not pseudonymous, John aligns his voice with the Scriptural voice, thereby linking his own claim to divine revelation to the authoritative tradition. Thus, the impulse to imitate Ezekiel and the resulting form of the text as an *imitatio Ezechielis* is partially explained by the phenomenology of apocalyptic visionary experience. If John's meditation on the text of Ezekiel was the catalyst for his own visionary experience, it is no surprise that his text bears significant similarities to Ezekiel's text in substance, structure, and style. While Rowland has helpfully argued that Revelation constitutes a "seeing again" of what Ezekiel saw, the reconsideration of the irregular style of Revelation suggests that John also "speaks again" in the *vox Ezechielis*.

Finally, after examining how the experience of apocalyptists might have resulted in a text that appears to be imitative, consideration was given to *imitatio* and inspiration. The discussion of *imitatio* in ps.-Longinus suggests that the Greco-Roman world had ready-made categories for understanding *imitatio* as inspired experience, not merely rhetorical or literary fiction. Ps.-Longinus compared *imitatio* to the Pythian priestesses at Delphi inhaling the divine vapors which inspired them to utter oracles. In a similar way, contemporary writers were considered to be inspired by the holy mouths of the old writers. *Imitatio* was a way of making it appear as if the divinely inspired Homer were himself present. The way that Homer functioned in education and in later literary works, and especially in Vergil's *Aen.*, provides a parallel to the way Ezekiel functioned for John of Patmos. Thus, the identification of *imitatio*, when considered in its Greco-Roman context does not negate the possibility of experience and inspiration.

²⁷ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 79.

CONCLUSIONS

Author

First, John was an advanced and educated writer. He exhibits an advanced vocabulary, aptitude in Greek, employs rhetorical techniques, demonstrates knowledge of the imperial cult and ideology, and engages with Jewish and Greek sources. The author cites the Greek alphabet (1:8), uses a Latin loan word (18:13), and defines Hebrew words into Greek (9:11; 16:16). The author's most obvious creativity and literary virtuoso is in his use of Israel's Scriptures. The findings of this dissertation suggest that John was a sophisticated author who was in tune with the Greco-Roman constellation of practices associated with *imitatio*, and yet still manages to respectfully honor his own religious heritage. He employs the tools of rhetorical and literary culture around him to compete with the dominant imperial voice while at the same time aligning his work with the voice of Israel's Scriptures. The perspective of John's unsuccessful bilingualism caused by writing in Greek while thinking in Hebrew as he produces a work comparable to the "less educated papyri" of Egypt should be fully and finally discarded.²⁸

A second conclusion which follows from this study is that our author significantly identifies with the prophet Ezekiel. The prophet is not merely a source for textual engagement and reinterpretation, but served as the paradigmatic prophet for John's own prophetic ministry. As John found himself in his own exile on Patmos called to share the word of the Lord, Ezekiel, the exilic prophet, served as an obvious model. John's own prophetic self-conception and commissioning is described as Ezekelian in nature, and he structures his entire work after the structure of Ezekiel. The impulse to imitate Ezekiel as prophetic and visionary model was not

²⁸ Charles, *Revelation*, 1:cxliii; Moulton, *Prolegomena*, 1:8–9.

new to John. John was part of a growing and developing tradition of *merkabah* speculation which is present in sources which predate Revelation (i.e. 1 En.), are roughly contemporary with Revelation (i.e. Apoc. Ab.), and continue for centuries (*merkabah* mysticism and *hekhlot* texts). As John meditated on Ezekiel's book, it became a determining factor in what John saw in his own visions as well as how he expressed those visions.

Text

“[T]here is a figure corresponding to every kind of solecism.”²⁹ Quintilian says that without access to the mind of the author at the time of writing, there are four criteria which determine intentionality. I have argued that John intentionally imitated a difficult and ungrammatical style he encountered in his prophetic model, Ezekiel. If this argument is accepted, it satisfies three of Quintilian's four criteria.³⁰ First, antiquity referred to the use of archaic words and constructions which causes the style to have a “certain majesty and, I might almost say, religious awe.”³¹ Quintilian further says that using words taken from past ages give the style a grandeur and “an attraction like that of novelty.”³² Second, Quintilian says authority can prove intentionality. Authority involves looking at the best writers and orators of the past, and if those authorities used a particular phrase, it renders the construction acceptable. John's comprehensive use of Ezekiel suggests that he considered the son of Buzi to be one of Israel's authoritative prophets *par excellence*. This kind of visionary prophetic style has the authority of one of Israel's greatest prophets. Third, Quintilian says that usage is an important indicator of intentionality.

²⁹ Quintilian, *Inst.* 9.3.11 (Russell, LCL).

³⁰ This is not meant to suggest that John had formal rhetorical training (which he may have had), but suggests that John was familiar with the impulse underlying these criteria—the impulse to imitate the works and style of the past.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 1.6.1.

³² *Ibid.*, 1.6.39.

Quintilian explains that language did not come to humans from heaven, but linguistic rules were only invented after humans were already using language. Thus, usage precedes linguistic law. “[Language] rests therefore not upon Reason but upon Precedent; it is not a law of speech, but an observed practice, Analogy itself being merely the product of Usage.”³³ The key, according to Quintilian, is that “precedent” overrules “reason” and linguistic law. The study of language is an “observed practice” rather than an imposed “law.” If my argument is accepted, John had a significant precedent for using stylistic and grammatical irregularity in his own visionary text.

One of the key contributions of this dissertation is to bring the issue of intentionality discussed by the rhetoricians to the forefront in the discussion of Revelation’s style.³⁴ The review of literature in this dissertation confirms the observation of Paulsen that the idea that John’s irregular constructions are due to limited proficiency in a second language “wird, soweit ich sehe, nicht mehr ernsthaft vertreten und ist auch mühelos zu widerlegen.”³⁵ The majority of works produced on the “solecisms” of Revelation have concluded that John’s irregular grammar is “intentional,” although there is disagreement about what caused John to use this intentional style. The argument that John imitated Ezekiel’s irregular visionary style can serve as a complement to previous arguments. The argument is that Ezekiel supplied John with a particular style, but this identification is not capable of explaining each instance of irregularity. Since the major category of stylistic irregularity in Ezekiel was discord in gender and number, this supplied the stylistic impulse to John to exhibit discords of gender, number, and case in his own work. Each particular instance of discord might be caused by Semitism/Septuagintalism (e.g. Karrer), allusion to a text from Scripture (e.g. Beale), or to indicate shock or majesty (e.g. Holtz,

³³ Ibid., 1.6.16.

³⁴ This is also one of the most significant contributions of Moř (*Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*, 64–73, 219–221).

³⁵ Ibid., 4.

Paulsen, Verheyden).³⁶ It was outside the scope of this dissertation to examine each instance of irregularity to determine its specific cause.³⁷ Indeed, my argument does not require precise classification of each instance of irregularity since it is the style, taken as a whole, which reproduces Ezekiel's irregular visionary style. The key is that John's unusual style and each decision of rendering his revelation in an irregular way in Greek was intentional, not due to linguistic incompetence. Rhetoric shows that this was the crucial criterion for evaluating the style.

A second observation is that *imitatio* is a helpful way to conceive of John's use of the Scriptures of Israel. Previous studies have compared John's use of Scripture to known categories of Jewish exegesis of texts. Although John's reuse of authoritative texts has similarities to other Jewish methods of engagement with Scripture (i.e. midrash, pesher, targum, rewritten Bible), these Jewish categories have proven unable to provide comprehensive explanations for the ways John uses the Scriptures in Revelation.³⁸ After the most comprehensive study to date of John's use of Ezekiel, Kowalski concludes:

Die Offb ist keine Interpretation des AT. Sie beansprucht vielmehr, Offenbarung Jesu Christi zu sein. Keine der in der jüdischen Exegese bekannten Formen der Schriftauslegung trifft auf das Rezeptionsverhalten des Johannes zu. Es handelt sich bei seinem Umgang mit dem AT weder um die Form eines Pescher, noch um die Form der Targumim. Keine der bekannten Auslegungsregeln (sieben Regeln des Rabbi Hillel, zweiunddreißig Regeln des Rabbi Eliezer) greift zu einer adäquaten Beschreibung der Schriftrezeption. Die Offb ist daher auch nicht als Midrasch zum Buch Ezekiel zu verstehen.³⁹

³⁶ I personally find the identification of many of the constructions as Semitisms/Septuagintalisms as compelling (Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 91–102; Beale, *Revelation*, 101–03; Ozanne, “Language of the Apocalypse,” 7–8; The impulse for using Semitisms may have come from a view, especially evident in later Jewish mysticism, that the Hebrew language was holy (see Moshe Idel, “Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism,” in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. Steven T. Katz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

³⁷ See Moř, *Morphological and Syntactical Irregularities*; Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 91–95.

³⁸ Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 223.

³⁹ Kowalski, *Die Rezeption*, 474.

John is familiar with the production of texts, and he is firmly planted within the Greco-Roman world of Asia Minor. *Imitatio* was ubiquitous in rhetoric, every genre of literature, and even in the arts. It is incomprehensible that a sophisticated writer who spent time (decades?) in the most urban cities outside Rome in Asia Minor had no contact with the literary or rhetorical practice of *imitatio*. *Imitatio* was not a stand-alone genre but an impulse which pervaded every genre. I suggest that John found *imitatio* to be the most capable form at hand to convey the nature of his experience. While in some ways similar to the “pneumatic exegesis” of some documents discovered at Qumran, the techniques of peshet or midrash simply could not convey adequately John’s visionary experience. As I have concluded, because John was “seeing again” what Ezekiel saw and patterning his work after Ezekiel’s work, *imitatio* supplied John with a way to convey that experience in a manner that typical Jewish techniques and genres did not. I argue that the function of *imitatio* for John is similar to the function of pseudepigraphy for Jewish apocalypses. *Imitatio* allowed John to express the psychology of the experience while also anchoring his visionary text to the authoritative tradition.

After analyzing John’s extensive use of Ezekiel, Moyise says, “The most obvious explanation is that John has taken on the ‘persona’ of Ezekiel.”⁴⁰ Moyise believes that through John’s meditation and study on the book “John has absorbed something of the character and mind of the prophet.” Moyise supports this identification by noting the pseudonymous claims of Jewish apocalypses which place their visions within the tradition of a prior authoritative figure. Although Revelation is not pseudonymous, John’s claim are similar: “Not only are many of John’s visions modelled on Ezekiel, but he himself seems to see a similarity between his experiences and those of the prophet.”⁴¹ He further notes that meditation on texts for achieving

⁴⁰ Moyise, *Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 78.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 79.

ecstatic visions is well documented. In *merkabah* mysticism, meditation on Ezek 1 was used “to achieve trance-like visions and heavenly transportations.”⁴² Although Moyise finds this to be the “most obvious” explanation, he considers the major weakness to be John’s use of other books like Daniel, Isaiah, and Zechariah. However, I demonstrated that *imitatio* was most successful when the orator or writer used the best aspects of multiple models. Quintilian says, “[L]et us keep the excellences of a number of authors before our eyes, so that one thing stays in our minds from one of them, and another from another, and we can use each in the appropriate place.”⁴³ Rather than bringing the voice of only one of Israel’s prophets to bear on the might of the Empire and her ideology, John has employed the most powerful critiques of the authoritative prophets. “[T]he more patterns one examines, the greater advantage to one’s eloquence.”⁴⁴ If viewed through the lens of *imitatio*, John’s use of multiple models in no way impinges upon the assertion that the seer has taken on the ‘persona’ and mind of the prophet Ezekiel. While Ezekiel provided the dominant voice for John, this in no way precluded the inclusion of the best aspects of other models.⁴⁵ Thus, Moyise was even more correct than he was willing to admit.

Audience

The social makeup of the seven churches of Asia is unknown with certainty. The question of whether the audience would have been aware of John’s highly allusive textual interplay is a difficult one. Christopher Stanley has proposed that it is best to envision a stratified audience which was composed of ‘informed’ individuals (familiar with the reference passage and its original context); ‘competent’ individuals (familiar with the general contours of the reused

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ *Inst.* 10.2.26 (Russell, LCL).

⁴⁴ Seneca, *Controversiae* I. Preface 6 (Winterbottom, LCL); See also Seneca, *Ep.* 84.6–8 (Gummere, LCL).

⁴⁵ See Mathewson, *New Heaven and a New Earth*, 234–35.

materials); and a ‘minimal audience’ (familiar only with the general contours of the best-known passages).⁴⁶ This schema acknowledges that authors did not expect every member of the audience to understand every intertextual interplay upon the first hearing. The sophisticated epistles of the NT as well as Revelation were not written primarily with a ‘minimal audience’ in view. Ongoing engagement with the text after the first hearing would have provided new insights with each new reading.

John refers to himself as a prophet working within a circle of prophets in Asia Minor (22:9). While many in John’s audience might not have recognized his sophisticated intertextuality, the most ‘informed’ members of his audience (his fellow prophetic cohorts) trained in the exegetical traditions and knowledgeable of literary production likely would have. This was also the conclusion of David Hill who suggested that the nine references to “prophets” in Revelation (10:7; 11:10, 18; 16:6; 18:20, 24; 22:6, 9) refers to a special group of prophets functioning within the churches of Asia. Hill suggests that John primarily addressed his work to this group which was expected to mediate the revelation to the churches.⁴⁷ Aune has taken up and expanded Hill’s suggestion by focusing on the meaning of 22:16. The central issue is the referent of the dative plural ὁμῶν.⁴⁸ Aune argues that based on the parallel text at 19:10, the reference to prophets in 22:9 refers to prophets contemporary to John, and these prophets are also the referents of the plural pronoun ὁμῶν in 22:16.⁴⁹ This indicates that John has entrusted the delivery of his revelation to his prophetic colleagues. This recognition helps explain why the

⁴⁶ Christopher Stanley, *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 60–61.

⁴⁷ David Hill, “Prophecy and Prophets in the Revelation of St. John,” *NTS* 18 (1971): 406–13.

⁴⁸ Aune, *Revelation*, 3:1125; Idem., “The Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos And the Exegesis of Revelation 22.16,” *JSNT* 37 (1989): 103–16; Idem., “The Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos and the Exegesis of Revelation 22:16,” in *Apocalypticism, Prophecy, and Magic in Early Christianity*, ed. David Aune (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 250–60.

⁴⁹ Aune, “Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos,” 109.

apocalypse is framed as a letter with an epistolary introduction containing a makarism for the lector (1:1–3).⁵⁰ Aune argues it is likely that these prophets served as both the envoys and lectors for the seven churches. Further, ancient letter carriers were frequently expected to expound on the delivery of the written letter with oral commentary (cf. Col 4:7–8; Acts 15:30–33).⁵¹ Thus, it is entirely plausible that John’s prophetic circle—the most ‘informed’ members of the audience—were subsequently charged with the delivery and explication of the book to the seven churches. If John’s studied familiarity and meditation upon the text of Ezekiel and his speculation on the *merkabah* occurred within the context of his prophetic circle before his exile on Patmos, it is entirely plausible that the prophetic envoys were familiar with the visionary experience described in Revelation. This recognition increases the likelihood that the cause of the irregular style would have been understood by John’s own peer group.

Allen considers it likely that John only expected the most advanced members of his audience to understand his techniques of reuse. If this is so, he asks, “[H]ow can complex literary entities such as Revelation be considered effective at all if the majority of early Christians were only minimally literate?”⁵² First, Allen notes that because Revelation resembles other forms of literature (apocalypses, Jewish intertextual reuse, etc.⁵³), John’s text is effective because it would have been recognized by producers of other texts. One can speak of the effectiveness of John’s letter because his maximal audience would have understood it.⁵⁴ Second, for the remainder of the minimal audience, John’s imperial critique and overall message comes through even if members

⁵⁰ Ibid., 110.

⁵¹ See Hermas *Vis* 2.4.3 for comparison; Aune, “Prophetic Circle of John of Patmos,” 108; Peter M. Head, “Named Letter-Carriers among the Oxyrhynchus Papyri,” *JSNT* 31.3 (2009): 279–299; E. Randolph Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing: Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 171–209.

⁵² Allen, *Revelation*, 265.

⁵³ And I would add here the ubiquitous impulse for *imitatio*.

⁵⁴ Allen, *Revelation*, 266.

of the audience were unaware of the details of the author's Scriptural use.⁵⁵ The call to "come out of her my people" (18:3); "endure" (13:10; 14:12); and worship God and the Lamb (chs. 4–5; 19:10) come through whether or not the audience was aware of John's complex engagement with Israel's Scriptures.

Rhetorical Effect

On a fundamental level, John's extensive engagement with Israel's Scriptures provides authority for John's prophecy since he speaks in the *vox sacra*. This technique places his message in continuity with Israel's prophetic voice.⁵⁶ John frequently opposes false prophecy (cf. 16:13; 19:20; 20:10), and labels his opponents in the churches in Asia as false prophets (2:14, 20).⁵⁷ This indicates that John's prophetic authority was not automatic in the churches. Further, the words of the prophets were frequently submitted to testing (cf. 1 Cor 14:29; 1 John 4:1–3; 1 Thess 5:20–21). John places himself within this schema of prophetic testing when he praises the Ephesians for testing and rejecting those claiming falsely to be apostles (Rev 2:2). By doing so, he invites his own work to be placed under scrutiny. John faced the challenge of asserting his own authority by placing his work under the written authority of Israel's prophetic tradition.⁵⁸ In addition to aligning his voice with the Scriptural tradition, John further claims authority by claiming his revelation comes directly from the God and Christ through the mediation of angels (1:1–2). Further, as Allen notes, John's sophisticated work gains him authority by giving him "an opportunity to display his literary skill" and status as a "literary elite."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Allen, *Revelation*, 267; deSilva, *Seeing Things John's Way*, 159–74; Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 529–37.

⁵⁷ The author calls one of his opponents 'Balaam' who was a seer that uttered oracles for God and his other rival he refers to as 'Jezebel' which he claims is a self-proclaimed prophetess.

⁵⁸ Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse*, 533.

⁵⁹ Allen, *Revelation*, 267.

The findings of this dissertation suggest that the style of Revelation was deliberately composed. According to Quintilian’s rhetorical theory, the use of archaism due to dependence on an authoritative past figure gives the style grandeur. It produces majesty and especially when the archaism is sacred, it produces “religious awe.”⁶⁰ Ps.–Longinus suggested that changes in case, tense, person, number, or gender could contribute to a work’s sublimity.⁶¹ Ps.–Longinus also considers that a style which consists of a “disorganized flood” and “outbursts of divine inspiration” due to the fact that divine utterances were difficult to bring under control could produce sublimity.⁶² Karrer suggests, in dialogue with ps.–Longinus, that the style of “unser Autor das Schwere in der Sprache bis hin zum Heftigen, Gewaltamen (das "grave" und "vehemens").”⁶³ He says, “Die heute auffälligen Stilbrüche der Apk sind daher, rhetorisch betrachtet, Kennzeichen nicht eines sprachlichen Unvermögens, sondern eines beeindruckenden, auf das Erhaben-Schwere zielenden Stilwillens.”⁶⁴

We might add to Karrer’s insights by drawing on ps.–Longinus to further explain how the style of Revelation produced sublimity. One of the surest ways to give “sublimity of thought and expression” was “[z]ealous imitation of the great prose writers and poets of the past.”⁶⁵ By drawing on the genius and inspiration of the old writers allows one to “share the enthusiasm of these others’ grandeur.”⁶⁶ When a topic demands sublimity, the orator or writer should ask in his heart, “How might Homer have said this same thing?”⁶⁷ In order to create his own sublime style, we might imagine John asking, “How might Ezekiel have said this same thing?” In Ezekiel’s

⁶⁰ *Inst.* 1.6.26–39 (Russell, LCL).

⁶¹ *Subl.* 1.23 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁶² *Subl.* 1.33 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁶³ Karrer, *Johannesoffenbarung*, 96.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Subl.* 1.13 (Fyfe and Russell, LCL).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

important *merkabah* vision, John encountered an unusual style that allowed him to express the majesty and grandeur of what he saw himself. John's sublime style, irregular syntax included, presents John's voice in the *vox Ezechielis*. These observations might be confirmed by Newsom's study of the Shirot of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Both Revelation and the Shirot are composed for and read in liturgical settings. Newsom argues the Shirot use repetition, grammatical and stylistic irregularity, and speculation on the *merkabah* to produce powerful religious experience among the worshippers. The Shirot were meant to give the worshippers an experience of participation in heavenly worship. Newsom's findings may also similarly describe the function of Revelation's style for the inaugural audiences

Further Research

This dissertation points to research avenues for further work. This study reminds us that John writes in Greek to audiences in the largest urban centers outside Rome. The Greco-Roman world was complex, and limiting John's literary abilities to Jewish techniques and genres (midrash, peshet, etc.) has proven unable to account fully for John's strategies of textual reuse. I have attempted to take seriously that John was impacted by impulses in his larger rhetorical and literary social world. *Imitatio* has proved fruitful for understanding intertextuality in other NT texts. In what ways might *imitatio* provide further insights to supplement our understanding of John's self-conception and his techniques of engagement with the Scriptures?

This study also points to the need for further research on the experience of visions, and the ability of texts to produce visionary experiences. More comparative studies are needed on the textual production of experiences resulting from alternate states of consciousness. Newsom's work on the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* points to the ability of texts to aid worshippers in

achieving an experience of the divine. Perhaps, like Newsom's claims regarding the Shirot, John's almost obsessive repetition of sevens and inclusion of so many septets was part of a strategy to evoke meditative states of consciousness among worshippers.⁶⁸ Further, I was only able to briefly interact with the similar phenomena described in *merkabah* mystical literature and *hekhalot* texts. There remains more work to do on how mystical experience helps elucidate features of Revelation.⁶⁹ More work needs to be done heeding the call of Stone to give more consideration to how the nature of the visionary experience explains various features of Revelation.

⁶⁸ Newsom, "Religious Experience in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 217–18.

⁶⁹ Katz, "Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning," 23–24.

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