

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

JOHN'S CANONICAL PORTRAIT OF CHRIST: A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE
DEPICTION OF THE GLORIFIED CHRIST IN REVELATION 1

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BY

CHRISTOPHER CARPENTER

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APPROVAL SHEET

John's Canonical Portrait of Christ: A Biblical-Theological Approach to the
Depiction of the Glorified Christ in Revelation 1

By:

Christopher Matthew Carpenter

READ AND APPROVED BY:

Chairperson:

Richard Fuhr, Ph.D.

Supervising Reader:

Jeffrey Dickson, Ph.D.

Second Reader:

Daniel Sloan, Ph.D.

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In memory of Dr. Ed Hindson, who laid a solid foundation in Apocalyptic studies that generations of scholars may follow. This dissertation aims to exhort the reader to focus on the “who” of Revelation rather than the issues that typically dominate the literature covering Revelation. I never had the privilege of meeting Dr. Hindson, but I am grateful for his work. He was once quoted, “Nobody knows the time, so don’t waste your time trying to guess the time, be ready all the time because Jesus can come anytime.” May this work encourage the reader to approach Revelation with a focus, not on the time reserved only for the Father to know but to take the approach of John and worship the glorified Christ.

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Abstract

Throughout the history of evangelical scholarship, a significant lacuna has formed in Apocalyptic studies. Many theologians have expressed fear or uncertainty concerning the text of Revelation as numerous ambiguous aspects exist within the Apocalypse. A proposed path forward into the gap in scholarship is to return the focus to the intent of the author of Revelation, John the apostle, and examine the definitive truths of the text. John's priority is revealed in the initial chapter as he depicts the subject of his Apocalypse, Jesus Christ. This intent is revealed in John's use of allusions, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices through which John draws upon the other books of the Christian canon.

This dissertation focuses on analyzing John's description of Christ in the initial chapter of the Apocalypse. As John depicts Christ, the protagonist of Revelation, he describes Him through titles, descriptions, and attributes that appear elsewhere in Scripture. This study examines the appearance of these canonical similarities concerning their place in the biblical text. The analysis dedicates a chapter to exegeting the OT and NT resemblances, respectively, before moving to the use of the terminology within Revelation itself. John's writing style in the Apocalypse makes this endeavor unique from such studies elsewhere in Scripture. While Revelation is saturated with allusions to other parts of the canon, John does not use formal citations in the Apocalypse that scholars of other parts of the NT may be accustomed to. Thorough exegesis reveals that the task is a worthwhile endeavor, as Christological truths are revealed through John's use of the canon. John's high Christology is evident throughout this study through his compositional method in the Apocalypse. This dissertation aims to highlight this Christology and demonstrate its purposeful inclusion in Revelation's initial chapter.

Abbreviations

<i>A.H.</i>	<i>Against Heresies</i>
ANF	The Ante-Nicene Fathers
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Antiquities of the Jews</i>
<i>Apol. 1</i>	<i>First Apology</i>
BAR	<i>The Biblical Archaeology Review</i>
BDAG	A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature
BDB	The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the NT
CCGNT	Classical Commentaries on the Greek NT
CNTOT	Commentary on the NT Use of the OT
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>
<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>
GELS	A Greek-English Lexicon of the LXX
<i>Epistle</i>	<i>The Epistles of Pliny the Younger</i>
<i>E.H.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
HB	Hebrew Bible
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Ignatius Mag.</i>	<i>Ignatius Magnes</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the NT</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the OT</i>
LGT	The Lexham Glossary of Theology
LXX	Septuagint
MHMP	The Moody Handbook of Messianic Theology
MT	Masoretic Text
NAC	The New American Commentary
NASB95	The New American Standard Bible (1995 edition)
NCBC	The New Cambridge Bible Commentary
NICNT	The New International Commentary on the NT
NIGTC	The New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NT	New Testament
<i>NZJCTP</i>	<i>The New Zealand Journal for Christian Thought and Practice</i>
<i>Or. Bas.</i>	<i>Oratio in Laudem Basilii</i>
OT	Old Testament
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the NT</i>
<i>TEQ</i>	<i>The Evangelical Quarterly</i>
<i>Trin.</i>	<i>De Trinitate</i>
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the NT

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Initial Issues

Introduction

The book of Revelation is frequently consulted as believers and secular scholars grapple with modern realities that mirror eschatological events and truths depicted in Scripture. Inevitably, each day brings all people closer to the Day of the Lord, and for this reason, readers have flocked to Revelation to ask pressing questions such as “When? How? Where? Why?” However, perhaps the most important question to ask is the one omitted from this strand of inquiries. One aim of this dissertation is to understand the “who” behind the events of the Apocalypse. Regardless of the reader’s view on the identity of the subject of Revelation 1, it is clear that this individual is significant to the text.¹ This author argues that the subject of Revelation 1 is Jesus Christ and that He is not only the central focus of Revelation 1 but also the Book of Revelation and the canon as a whole. This will be delineated through a better understanding of the author of Revelation and how he uses references to the rest of the canon to introduce his protagonist. Scripture functions as a sixty-six-book anthology in the English canon, and Revelation is the concluding capstone.² If Scripture were portrayed as a play or movie with sixty-six acts or scenes, this dissertation would display the situation at the beginning of the final act or scene. As the author of Revelation describes the apocalyptic vision being given to him, he first describes the One giving it to him. At this point, some of the mystery of the first sixty-five

¹ This author views Jesus Christ as the subject of Revelation in contrast to other viewpoints that argue God the Father, an angel, or other subjects.

² The term “capstone” in reference to the canonical position of Revelation is credited to Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New: Revelation as Canonical Capstone* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2019).

books (or acts/scenes for the metaphor in use here) begins to be solved, allowing the reader to comprehensively understand the subject being discussed in the passage. As the audience discovers the author's usage of metaphors, allusions, and direct references to some of the first sixty-five books, it becomes apparent that the primary figure of Revelation is Jesus Christ. He is the person introduced in the initial chapter and the canon's central figure. This dissertation argues that John's apocalyptic introduction of Christ in Revelation 1 establishes Jesus as the culmination of the entire canon. The apostle's use of special literary devices accomplishes this most emphatically.

The following section contains the argument's thesis, which details the study's parameters and scope. Immediately following the thesis, the discussion will shift to the existing gap in modern scholarship, serving as a preview of the literature review in the next chapter.

Following these introductory elements, a brief discussion of relevant themes within Johannine authorship is held. This includes the case for genuine Johannine authorship as the most likely and necessary approach. The authorship discussion aims to demonstrate John's authorial intent to place Christ at the forefront of his writing. As a modern scholar cannot simply interview John, the best place to examine his authorial intent is within the texts he authored, thus the need to survey the Christological or Messianic allusions as they appear in his writings in addition to the significance that he places on intertextuality in both Revelation 1 and his other writings. John's OT scholarship is evident in his writings. He regularly references the OT through allusions and metaphors in the Apocalypse without using direct, formal quotations. As the dissertation progresses, John's authorial intent becomes more evident as the chapters move sequentially through the text of Revelation 1 as it relates to the canon as a whole.

Following this will be a discussion of hermeneutical methodology, which emphasizes the significance of this author's view of inspiration and calls for a canonical consciousness that heavily emphasizes the literary context and theological context of the passage being discussed. The development of canonical theology is essential to the argument of canonical culmination as the direct references and literary devices examined in Revelation 1 are gathered from across the biblical text. Finally, this initial chapter concludes with a synopsis of each of the remaining chapters in this work before addressing the concluding thoughts from the introduction.

Thesis Statement

In Revelation 1, John intentionally utilizes literary devices to provide verbal and/or thematic cohesion in reference to Christological and Messianic passages from the entirety of Scripture to depict a canonical, cumulative Christological presentation that thoroughly examines the person and works of Christ. The chapters of this dissertation will seek to provide evidence for this thesis through examples of verbal and thematic cohesion. Additionally, the fact that John's Christological presentation begins in Revelation 1 will be addressed as there is a discussion detailing the role of Revelation 1 in framing Revelation as a whole.

Filling the Gap

From the outset, it must be conceded that there is existing scholarship with concepts similar to the ones presented in this argument. Two notable sources will be presented further in the second chapter but merit a brief review in this introduction. The first is Tabb's aforementioned work which depicts Revelation as the canonical capstone. Tabb states, concerning the scope of his work, "the present volume stresses the vital importance of the

canonical context of the Book of Revelation. I argue that the Apocalypse presents itself as the climax of biblical prophecy that shows how various Old Testament prophecies and patterns find their consummation in the present and future reign of Jesus Christ, who decisively defeats his foes, saves his people and restores all things.”³ This dissertation will undoubtedly follow in Tabb’s footsteps in several aspects, including canonical awareness as it applies to the text of Revelation. Additionally, Tabb’s third chapter contains a treatment of the person of Christ within Revelation, which is particularly relevant to this thesis. However, this dissertation adds to the conversation by narrowing the focus of the entire work to understanding the canonical implications and intentionality behind the presentation of Christ in Revelation 1.

Bauckham's *The Climax of Prophecy* is a second work that offers similar terminology. This dissertation’s understanding of Revelation 1 as a Christological culmination finds common ground with Bauckham’s thesis. Bauckham summarizes his view of Revelation, “[Revelation] is a book designed to be read in constant intertextual relationship with the Old Testament. John was writing what he understood to be a work of prophetic Scripture, the climax of prophetic revelation, which gathered up the prophetic meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures and disclosed the way in which it was being and was to be fulfilled in the last days.”⁴ The canonical consciousness emphasized in this dissertation places a great deal of weight on the fact that John is a scholar of the Old Testament Scriptures and the author of Revelation. He pens the first chapter so that the canonical themes permeate through each word in the introduction to portray a

³ Tabb, *All Things New*, 2.

⁴ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 1993), xi.

canonical portrait of the glorified Christ. Bauckham's work focuses on Revelation as a whole, whereas this thesis limits its scope to the first chapter.

While the idea of Revelation as a capstone or climax is not novel, there has been little scholarship dedicated to understanding the Christological titles and descriptions in Revelation. In a survey of some popular Systematic Theology texts, the results yielded little to no references to Revelation 1, specifically in their sections on Christology.⁵ While this sampling of texts indicates a lack of citations of Revelation 1 in the Christological mainstream, it is doubtful that many scholars would contest the message of Revelation 1 as a Christological text. Moyise notes the novelty of such a study and the existent gap,

“First, there has not been a major study on John's use of Scripture in the seven messages. Secondly, it is of particular interest because many scholars believe that the images used in the messages were chosen because of their relevance to the local churches. However, it is also clear that many of the images derive from the Old Testament and a number of them have already occurred in the inaugural vision (Rev. 1:12–18).”⁶

While Moyise dedicates a chapter of his work to the use of the OT in Rev 1-3, there is undoubtedly an opportunity to explore the intertextuality in Rev 1. Analyzing John's use of the biblical text in the initial chapter will require careful exegesis. Additionally, the first chapter functions with Revelation itself to portray a complete image of Christ. The fifth chapter will seek to iterate how Revelation 1 functions within the Apocalypse. Revelation 1 serves as somewhat of

⁵ The following texts were surveyed for this section: Daniel L. Akin, *A Theology for the Church* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014)., Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013)., Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology In One Volume* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2011)., and Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994). While these texts each give a thorough treatment on Christology and discuss the significant topics of Revelation 1, Revelation 1 is rarely the passage directly referenced. For example, Grudem's discussion on the Alpha and Omega is excellent, however he references the epistolary bookend found in Revelation 22 rather than the initial statement made in Revelation 1. As will be seen in the fifth chapter, the attribution of this title to Christ in the final chapter is significant given that the title is given to the Father in the first chapter.

⁶ Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 115 (T&T Clark, 2014), 21.

an axis in the sense that John has used the Messianism and Christology of the canon to portray Christ in the initial Apocalyptic vision. He then utilizes the same titles, attributes, and descriptions of Christ to show the glorified Christ throughout the Apocalypse.

Johannine Authorship and Authorial Intent

Johannine authorship is significant for the entire Apocalypse, and for the scope of this discussion, it is relevant for the initial chapter. The assessment of the allusions of Revelation 1 and the assertion that they are intentional demands the historical plausibility of the author's allusion to the text at hand.⁷ John knew Jesus Christ incarnate; He would have easily recognized Him as a man. He is seeing an old friend whom he walked with during His earthly ministry now revealed in all of His glory. The identity of John as the author of Revelation is significant to this thesis as John's utilization of intertextuality within Revelation hinges on his knowledge of the Old Testament and His knowledge of Christ incarnate revealed within his other writings. While the intertextual references between these writings will be explored in greater detail in the fourth chapter, this introduction will examine some historical information surrounding Johannine authorship.

Initially, internal textual evidence may seem to suggest that the author of Revelation and the author of John's Gospel are two different authors. Due to the difference in subject matter and genre, the content varies significantly between the two works. This raises the speculation of two separate authors. Additionally, the grammar and style are mainly contrasting between the books. Fanning notes, "On the one hand, the style and grammar of Revelation are clearly different

⁷ Ched Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible: Exploring the History and Hermeneutics of the Canon* (Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2020), 162.

compared to the Gospel and Epistles of John. The latter books are written in simple Greek, but the style is smooth, consistent, and without grammatical oddities. But Revelation is notable for its grammatical irregularities and is markedly unlike the other Johannine books on a number of counts while still communicating with power and effectiveness.”⁸ Fanning offers an exciting explanation but dismisses it as unlikely, “did John write Revelation hurriedly without time to edit his work as with the other books?”⁹ Perhaps this question should not be so quickly dismissed. It is significant in this author’s view of inspiration, the verbal plenary view, to note that John would have been writing under the direction of the Holy Spirit. Yet also through His wisdom, the Spirit would have allowed John to use His own experiences, styles, and language to record the text.¹⁰

Norman Geisler defines inspiration according to this view,

“Inspiration is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, who through the different personalities and literary styles of the chosen human authors invested the very words of the original books of Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very Word of God without error in all that they teach or imply (including history and science), and the Bible is thereby the infallible rule and final authority for faith and practice of all believers.”¹¹

The key element to highlight in this definition is that the Holy Spirit inspired the text in the different personalities and styles of the chosen human authors. As John is experiencing this apocalyptic vision and attempting to write as quickly as possible, it is proposed that he used terms that he knew and recognized in the form of Old Testament texts, thus indicating the reason for his usage of intertextual references and allusions to aid in the writing process. Bauckham

⁸ Buist M. Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 27.

⁹ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 27.

¹⁰ Erickson’s discussion contains an excellent model of inspiration detailing the movement of the text from God’s thought He is conveying to the author to the penning of the limited human word upon the page. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 182-185.

¹¹ Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 178.

clarifies the purpose of these allusions, “allusions are meant to recall the Old Testament context, which thereby becomes part of the meaning the Apocalypse conveys, and to build up, sometimes by a network of allusion to the same Old Testament passage in various parts of the Apocalypse, an interpretation of whole passages of Old Testament prophecy.”¹² Regardless of the methodology for John’s usage of the OT to portray Christ, the critical factor is that He does so intentionally to depict the glorified Christ,

“It seems that John not only writes in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets, but understands himself to be writing at the climax of the tradition, when all the eschatological oracles of the prophets are about to be finally fulfilled, and so he interprets and gathers them up into his own prophetic revelation. What makes him a Christian prophet is that he does so in the light of the fulfillment already of the Old Testament prophetic expectation in the victory of the Lamb, the Messiah Jesus.”¹³

While internal evidence is heavily debated, it is worth noting that several commonalities indicate a common author between the Johannine epistles, the Gospel of John, and Revelation. Thomas suggests various linguistic similarities, including that only John uses descriptors of Christ such as the Word, the Lamb, the water of life, He who overcomes, and several commonalities in verb or adjective usage.¹⁴ Additionally, Fanning indicates that much of the early external evidence supports John the apostle as the author of Revelation.¹⁵ Mounce cites the early church evidence from sources such as Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Irenaeus, and Polycarp

¹² Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, xi.

¹³ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, xiii.

¹⁴ Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7: An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 1992), 11. See Thomas 11-15 for an expanded list of identical vocabulary and stylistic similarities.

¹⁵ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 26.

before concluding, “Early tradition is unanimous in its opinion that the Apocalypse was written by John the apostle.”¹⁶

While there are numerous theories on the authorship of Revelation, only a few views merit a place at the discussion table for this dissertation. Perhaps the most noteworthy opponents of apostolic (and therefore Johannine) authorship of Revelation stemmed from the works of Eusebius and Dionysius of Alexandria. Dionysius, in particular, cites much of the internal evidence mentioned in the previous paragraph, such as John’s usage of own his name four times in the Apocalypse, yet no mention of his name in his Gospel or his epistles.¹⁷ Thomas refutes this stance, indicating the time elapsed between the composition of the first works of John and the Apocalypse. Thomas states,

“[Dionysius] does not, however, allow for the obvious difference in character between the two sets of writings. . . Furthermore, one may question Dionysius’ objectivity and his credentials for deciding such an issue in view of his endorsement of Paul as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. It apparently never occurred to him that Paul is careful to give his name in thirteen epistles, but fails to do so in Hebrews, about which there was a dispute over authorship long before Dionysius’ time.”¹⁸

Additionally, Dionysius challenges the structure and linguistics of the Apocalypse, indicating that there are no parallels between the Gospel/epistles of John and the Apocalypse. Thomas refutes this claim, “Dionysius radically overstates the case in order to try to make his point. There is actually an interesting parallel between the structure of the Apocalypse and that of the gospel and the first epistle.”¹⁹ Eusebius leaned on the works of Dionysius and expanded the

¹⁶ Robert H. Mounce, *NICNT: The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 11.

¹⁷ Eusebius, *EH*, 7.25.9-7.25.11.

¹⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 4.

¹⁹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 4.

argument as the two combined to beget the idea that there was a second John in Ephesus, known as “John the Elder,” to distinguish him from the apostle.²⁰ The theory is altered from Dionysius’ original proposal that John Mark had written the Apocalypse. Dickson notes, “[Dionysius] retracted his position shortly after positing the idea on the grounds that John Mark returned to Jerusalem instead of going with Paul and Barnabas into Asia (the very region that housed the churches addressed in Revelation 2-3).”²¹ If debate exists about the similarity between the Johannine Gospel and the Apocalypse, there would undoubtedly be a more extensive debate concerning Mark’s Gospel as there are even fewer similarities between Mark and Revelation. This theory falls short based on the literary evidence and the historical positions taken on the authorship of the Apocalypse. While the idea concerning “John the Elder” or an alternate John or perhaps a Johannine school may initially appear to carry some plausibility, there is little evidence for this pseudepigraphic theory. Charles debunks the theory of pseudonymity,

“In the post-Exilic period the idea of an inspired Law—adequate, infallible, and valid for all time—became a dogma of Judaism. When this dogma was once established, there was no longer any room for the prophet, nor for the religious teacher, except in so far as he was a mere exponent of the Law. The second cause for the adoption of pseudonymity was the formation of the Canon of the Law, the Prophets and the Hagiographa. After this date—say about 200 B.C.—no book of a prophetic character could gain canonization as such, and all real advances to a higher ethics or a higher theology could appear only in works of a pseudonymous character published under the name of some ancient worthy. . . . There is, therefore, not a single a priori reason for regarding the Apocalypse as pseudonymous. Furthermore, its author distinctly claims that the visions are his own, and that they are not for some far distant generation, as is universally the case in Jewish pseudonymous works, but for his own (22:10).”²²

²⁰ Eusebius, *E.H.*, 3.29

²¹ Jeffrey R. Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb: Toward a Robust Apocalyptic Christology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2018), 138. Additionally, Dickson cites the source for Dionysius’ stance in Eusebius’ work, Eusebius, *E.H.*, 7.25.

²² R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St. John*, vol. 1 & 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1920), xxxiv.

Despite this evidence for the rejection of pseudonymity, Charles continues to conclude that the authorship of the Apocalypse should be credited to another John rather than the apostle, dating the apostle's death between A.D. 64 and 70.²³ Citing Charles' conclusion, Dickson proposes the following,

“Upon observing the author's distinct claims of prophet status and reticence concerning apostleship, Charles' own position was that a prophet named John (not the apostle John), wrote the Apocalypse. However, this view has never metastasized into a viable option as the author of the Apocalypse appears to have the kind of authority over the Asian churches that the New Testament prophets did not know. This authority calls into question any position that claims some other John or a “Johannine school” is responsible for writing this work.”²⁴

In conclusion, concerning the authorship of Revelation, there is little reason to adopt any pseudonymous authorship theory in light of the evidence provided by Charles' rebuttal of the pseudonymity of the Apocalypse. Additionally, Fiorenza argues that the lack of a pseudonym and the use of John's name in his work are indicative of his purpose, “John does not adopt a pseudonym probably because he is not interested either in communicating esoteric knowledge or in predicting schedules for the coming of the end of time. Instead, he seeks to provide prophetic interpretation and eschatological exhortation for the Christian communities in Asia Minor to whom he writes.”²⁵ While there are vast linguistic differences between John's Gospel and the Apocalypse, the similarities indicated in the body of this argument yield credibility to the apostolic authorship theory. The stance of this author is that John the apostle, son of Zebedee,

²³ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, xlix.

²⁴ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 139.

²⁵ Elisabeth S. Fiorenza, *Revelation: Vision of a Just World* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991), 47.

from the early followers of Jesus, the beloved disciple, and author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles is the author of Revelation.²⁶

While the intentional usage of metaphors, allusions, and other literary devices has been discussed, the final aspect of authorial intent to be addressed is John's deliberate focus on the subject of Revelation, Jesus Christ. As mentioned previously in this introduction, Revelation is frequently consulted for its collection of information concerning the when, where, why, and how of the Apocalypse. However, John intended for Revelation to focus on the "who" behind the Apocalypse, Jesus Christ. The initial verse of Revelation begins, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."²⁷ In the Greek, "Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ," the word "Ἰησοῦ" is in the genitive. Wallace seeks to clarify how the genitive functions, "The book is certainly a revelation *from* Christ (hence, we may have a subjective genitive in 1:1. But the revelation is supremely and ultimately *about* Christ. Thus, the genitive in 1:1 may also be an objective genitive."²⁸ Wallace states that both meanings could apply here. Other commentators seem to differ. Tabb writes concerning this introduction, "some take this phrase to mean Jesus is the one revealed (revelation *about* Jesus), but most likely the stress is on Jesus as the one who reveals (revelation *from* Jesus."²⁹ A.T. Robertson also supports the subjective genitive stance, "It is the Son who received

²⁶ It is important to note that not every commentary cited in this dissertation agrees with the apostolic authorship theory. Ben Witherington provides an argument for a seer within the Johannine community. Ben Witherington III, *The New Cambridge Bible Commentary: Revelation* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3.

²⁷ All Scripture references in this dissertation are from the NASB 1995 translation unless otherwise stated.

²⁸ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 121.

²⁹ Tabb, *All Things New*, 3.

the revelation from the Father, as is usual.”³⁰ Thomas states his support for the subjective genitive with the following statement, “the strongest single consideration on either side of the issue is the plain fact that Christ functions in the role of the revealer throughout the book.”³¹ While the majority view is the subjective genitive indicating that Christ is the revealer rather than the revealed, there is the possibility of the genitive functioning either way.³² Regardless of the perspective, Witherington states, “Revelation is presented from the outset as a ‘revelation of Jesus Christ,’ which among other things reminds us that Christology is the heart of the matter for John when it comes to theology. It is Christ’s vision that John conveys, and the vision is about Christ, in whose hands are all the scrolls that are to be unsealed and all the truths to be revealed.”³³ Osborne adds, “John wants the reader to understand at the outset that the same “Jesus Christ” who became incarnate, revealed himself in human flesh, died on the cross, and rose again is the one who mediates the visions in this book.”³⁴

In conclusion, this dissertation proceeds on the premise that John the apostle is the genuine author of Revelation and that he intentionally utilizes rhetorical devices to depict a canonical understanding of Christ.

³⁰ A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, vol. 5, 6 vols. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Rev. 1:1.

³¹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 52.

³² While there are other views including viewing this genitive as a genitive of apposition, possession, source, context, or other categories, Wallace’s argument limits the conversation to the subjective or objective genitive. Given the contrast in emphasis between the two, these are the primary two possible categorizations to examine for this thesis. The juxtaposition between the two significantly impacts the emphasis of the initial verse of the chapter, which in turn impacts the subject.

³³ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 27.

³⁴ Grant R. Osborne, *Revelation*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 52.

Methodology and Hermeneutical Approach

The hermeneutical method employed in this study finds substantial roots in two works on the subject.³⁵ Köstenberger and Patterson propose a triad that enforces the significance of the historical context/setting, the literary context, and the passage's theological message. "By starting with the big picture or broadest category, canon, and moving from there to genre and finally to the study of a concrete literary unit in its discourse context, our method embodies the principle of interpreting the parts (words) in light of the whole (canon and genre)."³⁶ Osborne focuses on a spiral from the original text to the modern-day context and provides practical tools for application and contextualization. This author employs a hermeneutical strategy that blends the styles with a heavier emphasis on theological message and literary context in the canon, which also seeks to understand the original context to provide an applicable message for modern-day readers. The historical context occupies a place in the hermeneutical method employed here.

However, this study prioritizes literary (canonical) context and the theological message. The reasoning for this method is to highlight canonical theology, which heavily emphasizes the cohesiveness of the literature and theology in the canon of Scripture.³⁷ The cohesiveness of the canon is significant to the unification of Scripture. Peckham defends the canonicity of Scripture

³⁵ Andreas J. Köstenberger and Patterson, Richard D., *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation: Exploring the Hermeneutical Triad of History, Literature, and Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011, Kregel Academic).; Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Comprehensive Introduction to Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

³⁶ Köstenberger and Patterson., *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 25.

³⁷ This method is bolstered by the canonical theology presented in the second chapter through the reviews of the works of Spellman and Peckham. These two authors lean heavily on the biblical text, which is the preferred method of this author. While external factors to the text such as historical context are impactful and helpful to understanding the text in context, the primary focus is Scripture itself. While Scripture was not written in a vacuum exempt from history, essential historical information is provided in Scripture. Revelation 1 in particular places a greater emphasis on canonical consciousness and canonical theology rather than historical information.

by labeling it his “rule of faith” which he explains, “the canon is properly recognized as divinely commissioned covenantally prophetic and apostolic of writings, it is the ‘rule’ (“κανών”) of all faith and practice over which there can be no other normative rule, interpretive or otherwise.”³⁸ Since the canonical text is the standard by which Christian faith may be articulated and there is no other authority over Scripture, it follows that canonical theology takes center stage in this hermeneutical approach. It is also significant to note that the interpretive process concludes by providing an applicable message for modern-day readers. Though this dissertation is primarily academic, the aim is to give practical application in the concluding chapter concerning canonical consciousness and a deeper understanding of Christ.

As Bauckham refers to Revelation as the climax of prophecy, it is essential to recognize this dissertation’s approach to prophetic interpretation. This author opts for a direct fulfillment method of prophetic interpretation with a compositional/canonical approach.³⁹ Rydelnik states, “the traditional approach simply affirms that much of messianic prophecy is direct . . . this view maintains that when the Old Testament books were composed the authors had a messianic intention. Further, it observes a canonical shaping which recognizes the messianic nature of the text. This view asserts that, having established the Hebrew text through textual criticism, a close reading of the Hebrew text will result in a messianic interpretation.”⁴⁰ Understanding the prophecy of Revelation 1 and the parts of Revelation that work intertextually with Revelation 1

³⁸ Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 131.

³⁹ For a list and explanation of other views of prophecy, see Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 27-33.

⁴⁰ Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 31-32.

as direct prophecy with deliberate canonical and compositional design is essential to the idea that John intentionally utilized allusions and references to the Old Testament in Revelation.

The final aspect of methodology to discuss is canonical consciousness. As indicated by the last two elements, the hermeneutical triad and direct prophetic fulfillment interpretation, a canonically conscious reading of Scripture is necessary. In his work describing the significance of canonical consciousness, Spellman indicates that Revelation is a fitting conclusion to the Christian canon,

“One of the ways that the New Testament as a whole connects to the Old Testament is through a deluge of intertextual references. . . in this setting, the book of Revelation functions as a fitting and intertextually connected conclusion to the Christian canon as a whole. . . the pervasive use of the Old Testament in the book of Revelation is in line with the hermeneutical methodology of the rest of the New Testament authors.”⁴¹

Spellman’s thesis pushes the reader to explore the canonical scope of any text in Scripture, a common aim with this dissertation. This author holds that the text is best interpreted in light of the whole, which requires an intertextual, canonical approach.⁴² This will frame the author’s methodology for canonical consciousness in this dissertation.

In conclusion, the primary factors in the methodology of this dissertation are a focus on the literary context and theological message of the passage while working towards a practical application of the text, a direct fulfillment with canonical focus methodology of prophetic interpretation, and an overall canonical consciousness.

⁴¹ Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 178-179.

⁴² Spellman expounds upon an intertextual methodology that is largely affirmed by this author. Spellman also uses Revelation as a case study in his work to demonstrate that “the book of Revelation is best interpreted in light of its compositional shape, as an integral part of the New Testament canon, and as an integral part of the Christian canon as a whole. Seen on this canonical horizon, the function of the book as a conclusion of God’s written revelation can be fully appreciated.” Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 181. See also 172-181. Additional intertextual methodology can be found in G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 29-184.

Chapter by Chapter Synopsis

The second chapter will review the most relevant historical works on Revelation, canonical or biblical theology, and Christology within Revelation. The section from earlier in the introduction titled “filling the gap” will be expanded upon in greater detail as the contributions made by modern scholars will become readily evident. Thus, the gap this dissertation seeks to fill will also become apparent.

The third chapter will apply the hermeneutical principles explained in this introduction in a case-by-case examination of OT intertextuality in the initial chapter of Revelation. Scholars in the last half-century have given John’s use of the OT in Revelation more attention. This chapter begins by engaging some key authors and their respective theories on Revelation’s use of the OT. A discussion of the Messianic shape of the OT also provides evidence for the Christological descriptors’ cohesiveness. The chapter progresses to a discussion on the *Vorlage*, or base text, which John drew from in his allusions to the OT. Through this analysis, it is plausible to prove that John deliberately used the OT. The last half of the chapter is reserved for a case-by-case analysis of each of the titles, descriptions, or attributes of Christ written in the first chapter of Revelation that has roots in the OT. The third chapter aims to demonstrate that the OT testifies about Christ and that John recognizes this in his intentional accumulation of Christological descriptors in the initial chapter of his Apocalypse.

The fourth chapter will have an identical structure to the third, except that the focus will shift to the NT intertextual references in Revelation 1. The initial issue in this section is to provide evidence for the plausibility of John’s use of the NT, given that the author was a contemporary of the other NT authors. An analysis of textual transmission in the first century provides a foundation for John’s use of the NT. While the hermeneutical methodology is

identical, a brief survey of the limited number of authors that have forayed into the field of Revelation's use of the NT will be conducted. Following these initial issues, the bulk of the chapter contains the familiar case-by-case exegesis of the NT allusions in Revelation 1.

The fifth chapter will follow a similar structure to the third and fourth but will specifically focus on John's use of literary devices and intertextuality within the book of Revelation itself. The main issue in the front matter of this section is the case for Apocalyptic cohesion. This discussion will argue that the Apocalypse has one author and is composed as a single unit. Following this argumentation, the term "inner textuality" will be explained, as the references in Revelation 1 are now being used within the same literary work. Once again, the bulk of the chapter consists of a case-by-case examination of the internal textual references to the Christological titles in Revelation 1. At this point, it will be evident that John intentionally utilized Christological descriptions from various biblical texts to compose his initial description of Christ. John does not stop demonstrating his high Christology after the initial Apocalyptic vision. Instead, he continues to utilize the canonically conscious descriptors of Christ to present a robust Christology in his work. Revelation 1 sets the scene for the Apocalypse by introducing the central figure of Revelation and the canon, Jesus Christ.

The sixth and final chapter provides the verdict of the evidence presented in the dissertation. The chapter will begin with a summary of the central tenets of the preceding chapters. Following this review are three sections of conclusions – hermeneutical, theological, and practical. The hermeneutical conclusions will review the proposed methodology and argue for the validity and veracity of the strategy utilized. Additionally, the areas of opportunity within hermeneutics, namely in intertextual studies, will be highlighted. The second section will review the study's theological, specifically Christological, implications. While Christological truths are

unearthed throughout the dissertation, an abbreviated recap of the findings provides the reader with a fresh reminder. As with the previous section, areas of opportunity that are yet to be explored are provided for the curious scholar. The last section offers practical applications intended to impact the reader's approach. The previous two sections highlight hermeneutical methods and Christological truths that also serve to edify the reader. The practical section differs by offering a new strategy with which to read Revelation. Additionally, comfort is provided to the believer, as they can find comfort in the knowledge of Christ and His superiority over the external realities of the world. This chapter will close with an assessment of the success of the thesis.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter seeks to introduce the scope of the dissertation as a study of the Apocalypse's initial chapter and the passage's literary, theological, and canonical significance. This introduction has argued for the genuine, apostolic, Johannine authorship of Revelation. It has expressed John's authorial intent to employ Old Testament references and allusions to provide a canonical scope at the conclusion of the canon. His intent to emphasize the "who" behind Revelation, Jesus Christ, has been detailed. Christ appears in Revelation 1 much like the central figure of a play or movie at the climactic scene, revealed in all His glory as the promised, Messianic hope that the entire canon has pointed towards. Finally, the gap that this dissertation aims to fill yearns for elaboration. This dissertation seeks to venture into this multifaceted field of authorial intent, canonical theology, and Christology in Revelation 1. Few of the limited works in Revelation discussed in the following chapter address these aspects of the Apocalyptic text.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

A critical aspect of this study is recognizing the history of the existing scholarship on the Apocalypse as a whole, and the Christology represented in Revelation 1. As this dissertation fills a gap that blends several categories within the field of Bible exposition, the surveyed literature within this chapter culminates with a wide variety of authors with diverse specialties. As with any contemporary biblical study, this work adds to a discussion that has been ongoing for centuries, with theological and hermeneutical giants providing the groundwork upon which modern theologians stand. Over the course of this chapter, scholarship from the Apostolic period, patristic era, Middle Ages, Reformation era, and modern era that discusses pertinent issues in Revelation, particularly in the analysis of authorial intent via literary devices in Scripture, Christology in Revelation, relevant commentary on Revelation, canonical theology and authors who present Revelation as capstone will be surveyed in succession. As this dissertation combines a study of methodology (including authorial intent and literary devices) with an examination of biblical and theological themes culminating in Revelation, a wide variety of authorship and resource topics is present. Additionally, this literature review includes the most relevant sources from the history of interpretation and some of the most widely cited sources within this dissertation. However, it will not include a discussion on every source or every author cited. Through this literature review, the objective is to expose the reader to relevant information for this dissertation. The need to pull from various academic disciplines, such as the study of rhetorical or literary devices ranging to the study of Revelation, canonical consciousness and Christology, highlights the gap in which this study exists. The lacuna in Apocalyptic studies

concerning its Christology is evident within scholarship, “on a historical level, the Apocalypse of John has been largely neglected for its Christological content. . . reasons for this are copious and vary depending on the discussions taking place, debates had, and distractions present in specific socio-historical localizations.”⁴³ While various factors have impacted the scholarship on Revelation, there can be no doubt that the Christology of John’s Apocalypse, namely in the book’s initial chapter, deserves more attention from the academy.

The Apostolic Era: Pre-Revelation Christology

While the preferred date of John’s authorship is later (most likely around 90 A.D.),⁴⁴ the Jewish culture and religion of the first century play an integral role in setting the stage for the Christology that John discusses in Revelation 1. This study aims to examine John's intentional canonical culmination of Christology. Understanding the original receiving culture and their understanding of the canon at the time of Revelation’s authorship is essential. The necessity of understanding first-century Judaism and the significance of Christology in a study such as this cannot be understated due to the implications of the beliefs of the first-century Christian church. “A fiercely monotheistic Jewish worldview was not designed to immediately endorse the addition of Jesus -a man- into the Godhead. After all, the idea of a Godhead may have even proven foreign to the followers of Yahweh.”⁴⁵ In addition to understanding the Christology of

⁴³ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 19.

⁴⁴ The accepted date for the authorship of the Apocalypse for this dissertation is the later of the two major dates proposed in scholarship, particularly around 90 A.D. The earlier date would place the authorship of Revelation during the reign of Nero (54-68 A.D.) and the later date opts to place the authorship of Revelation in the Domitian era (81-96 A.D.).

⁴⁵ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 19-20.

the first century, it is essential to be aware of social and scholastic factors which influenced the first-century church from which and to which John wrote the Apocalypse.

Examining the textual culture from which Revelation would have been authored reveals significant conclusions regarding the authorial intent. In his observation of this first-century textual culture, Allen argues that certain factors potentially influenced John's authorship of Revelation,

“The book of Revelation, too, was composed within a textual culture in which scriptural texts were pluriform. The procedures by which the Apocalypse was constructed remain elusive, although it is clear that its author constructed it with creative nuance, visionary sensibilities, and great care, a high level of composition masked by its chaos of images and claim to direct visionary revelation. The manners in which antecedent scriptural traditions were woven into the fabric of the book of Revelation places its author in league with some Jewish scribes of the late Second Temple period, scribes who were responsible for the concurrent transmission of scriptural works and the production of new literary creations that engage incessantly with Jewish scripture.”⁴⁶

Allen's work moves chronologically through references in Revelation that share intertextuality with Zechariah in particular and pays special attention to the source tradition and social circumstances of literary composition that factor into the authorship of Revelation. Of particular note are the text-critical practices Allen lists: the addition of supplementary description, the addition of material from other discernable traditional sources, the omission of material due to harmonization, selective omission of linguistic material from borrowed source texts, discourse sensitivity to the narrative of the target text, and syntactical alteration.⁴⁷ These scribal practices are observable in John's direct references and allusions to Zechariah throughout the Apocalypse. “John embedded material derived from different forms and sources of

⁴⁶ Garrick V. Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 168 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1-2.

⁴⁷ Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 251.

Zechariah, including Hebrew texts from manuscripts and Greek forms taken from existing exegetical traditions. This identification, in turn, has illuminated the exegetical procedures by which John's reuse was accomplished."⁴⁸

In particular relation to the citation of Zechariah 12:10 (and Daniel 7:13) in Revelation 1:7, Allen examines the source material possibilities of Old Greek, Theodotic, LXX, and MT to determine which John may have used as a source for his citation.⁴⁹ Allen favors a Greek tradition revised towards the proto-MT yet suggests that John would have been conscious of a Greek form of Zechariah that was circulating by the first century.⁵⁰ This conclusion demonstrates the social background that produced the text from which John drew his references to the OT. Ultimately, Allen concludes that John and his contemporaries' utilization and reuse of canonical source material is a specific scribal practice that stems from the social climate of the era.

“John and those situated within his textual culture utilized similar sets of resources to explicitly reference locutions from antecedent material. Evidently, these authors, including John, privileged the (implied) meaning of Zechariah over its exact wording. The wording of quotations and translations was malleable inasmuch as the new wording endorsed or enhanced the meaning of the original. John's techniques of reuse draw him into a close relationship with other scribal text producers located in his milieu.”⁵¹

Understanding the nature of John's citations helps demonstrate his authorial intent via the standard scribal practices of the era. John's intentional use of rhetorical devices is a critical tenet of the thesis of this dissertation. Allen sheds ample light on the scribal practices and social climate of first-century writing.

⁴⁸ Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 216.

⁴⁹ This argument is revisited closer in the third chapter discussing the significance of this reference to the thesis of a Christological culmination.

⁵⁰ Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 121-122.

⁵¹ Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 251.

Additionally, Bauckham forays into another first-century practice that influenced canonical interpretation in a way that challenged that status quo. Bauckham proposes that a high view of Christ within the monotheistic context of Judaism was possible and was practiced in the first century. This was accomplished by identifying Christ directly with/as the God of Israel. Bauckham also notes the novelty of this view of Christ and how the first-century church incorporated Christ into their worship and recognized Him as God without the need for redaction of their understanding of the uniqueness of Yahweh. He notes this expression, “Jewish monotheism clearly distinguished the one God and all other reality, but the ways in which it distinguished the one God from all else did not prevent the early Christians including Jesus in this unique divine identity.”⁵² One distinguishing factor of first-century Christianity was the prominence placed on the text, which was unusual for other religions of the period outside of ancient Jewish circles.⁵³ In an appeal to the significance of sacred texts to the first-century Jewish/Christian community, Bauckham cites both the Shema and the first two commandments of the Decalogue to support the claim that Second Temple Judaism was self-consciously a monotheistic religion.

“There is every reason to suppose that observant Jews of the late Second Temple Period were highly self-conscious monotheists in this sense: they saw their worship of and obedience to the one and only God, the God of Israel, as defining their distinctive religious way in the pluralistic religious environment of their time. . . Their self-conscious monotheism was not merely an intellectual belief about God, but a unity of belief and praxis, involving the elusive worship of this one God and exclusive obedience

⁵² Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 1-2.

⁵³ See the following for a description of first century Christianity and Judaism’s distinctiveness via the prominence placed on textual traditions. Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 105ff

to this one God. Monolatry (the worship of only the one God) as the corollary of monotheism (belief in only the one God) is an important aspect of Jewish monotheism.”⁵⁴

Jewish monotheism would have stood out in contrast to the variety of cult worship that dominated the first-century world, especially within the Roman Empire. Some cults and other sects may have focused on worshipping a central deity, but it was a regular social and religious practice to combine worship with other cults or sects through the practice of syncretism. One might argue that this first-century practice led to the acceptance of Jesus as just merely another Christian deity. Bauckham rejects such a theory, asserting that the evidence reveals the contrary and appeals to the tenacity of NT believers to hold to both exclusive monotheism and the worship of Jesus because both features were distinguishing tenets for the Christian Church as it sprouted from its original Jewish context rather than from pagan origins.⁵⁵

Bauckham’s argument aids in illuminating the first-century view of Jesus. The tremendous social pressure for first-century Christians to worship false gods is well documented in the Pauline corpus, and the author of Hebrews warns against the temptation to relinquish the faith in light of the persecution his audience faces on multiple occasions (1 Cor 10:20; 15:45; Col 2:8; Heb 12:1-3). For first-century Christians to worship Jesus, a condemned criminal in the eyes of the rest of the world, when they would not worship those who were icons from the pagan perspective, was a severe risk. Internal evidence within Scripture and external evidence from history both document the uncompromising worship of Christ within the early church, which would echo across the centuries. Bauckham summarizes the impact,

“As we have seen, the worship of Jesus was central to the character of early Christianity throughout the early centuries, beginning in the early Palestinian Christian movement. At

⁵⁴ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 5.

⁵⁵ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 140-141.

the same time as a worshipping response to Jesus was integral to Christian faith, the early church also clung tenaciously to the Jewish understanding of monotheism, according to which belief in the one God was defined in religious practice by the exclusive worship of the one God. In time it became clear that the practice of the worship of Jesus in the context of Jewish monotheism constituted both a Christological principle – that Jesus is such that he can be worshipped – and a theological (Trinitarian) principle – that God is such that Jesus can be worshipped. These were the principles that governed the development of the Nicene and Chalcedonian dogmas, and they constitute the fundamental continuity of these dogmas with the faith of the first Christians in the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁵⁶

Bauckham’s observations on the first-century practice of monotheism and its relation to the deity of Jesus Christ are helpful contributions to the development of the thesis in this dissertation. His studies on the divine identity of Christ shed light on the interpretation of Revelation by the receiving community. John espouses the deity of Christ in his gospel and would have been no stranger to the idea of Jesus being equivocally worshipped with God the Father. First-century readers of the Johannine writings would have been led to the same conclusion that Paul reaches in 1 Cor 8:6, that there is one God, one Lord, and He is the protagonist John introduces in Revelation 1.

Similarly, Hurtado highlights the distinctiveness of first-century Christianity within the wider Roman world. Hurtado notes the distinctiveness of Early Christianity in its era, “There were no images of deity, no Christian altars or sacrifices, these ubiquitously essential in religious life throughout the Roman world. There was no Christian priesthood either, at least for the first couple of centuries or so, and no temples or shrines. The absence of these things definitely made early Christianity odd as a religious movement in that time.”⁵⁷ The persecution faced by the first-century Church, as evidenced internally in Scripture, certainly demonstrates that Christianity

⁵⁶ Bauckham, *Jesus and the God of Israel*, 151.

⁵⁷ Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 58.

made those outside the Church uncomfortable. The early Church also challenged the methodology of gathering for worship in the first century with noted practicing of counter-cultural practices for prayer and assembling.⁵⁸ Hurtado describes several practices that would have been unique, including the practice of consistent weekly gatherings in contrast to the pagan methodology of assembling only at particular times of the week or month connected with a specific deity. Additionally, the pagan practice tended to consult a god or goddess in times of need or when a favor was requested rather than as a regular practice.⁵⁹ These practices would have offended both the traditional Jews and the pagans of the Roman Empire. Hurtado stresses the significance of recognizing that Christianity was not an entirely distinguishable religion from Judaism in its earliest days but rather a religious movement emerging from within the Jewish tradition that also birthed sects such as the Pharisees and Qumran communities.⁶⁰

Despite the differentiating characteristics articulated up to this point, the most distinct aspect of the first-century Church compared to the other religious cults and sects of the era was its Christology. Building on the concept of Christ as the recipient of worship within a monotheistic religion, Hurtado states, “The accommodation of Jesus as recipient of cultic worship with God is unparalleled and signals a major development in monotheistic cultic practice and belief. But this variant form of monotheism appeared among circles who insisted

⁵⁸ It is likely that John himself demonstrates a shift in the worship paradigm of the age. John reports that he received the apocalyptic vision as he was “in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10). Witherington notes “Probably we have the first clear reference to Sunday as a Christian day of worship, with ‘Lord’s Day’ becoming something of a technical term (cf. *Did.* 14.1; *Ignatius Mag.* 9.1). We have confirmation of worship on Sunday in this vicinity from the early second century when Pliny writes to Trajan about Christians meeting in early morning on the first day of the week to sing and worship (see *Epistle* 10.96.8ff).” Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 80.

⁵⁹ Larry W. Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 61.

⁶⁰ Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 67. See 77ff for a thorough articulation of the distinctiveness of first century Christianity in particular.

that they maintained faithfulness to the monotheistic stance of Jewish tradition.”⁶¹ How could the first-century church accept Jesus as God from a monotheistic worldview which already claimed the deity of Yahweh? As previously mentioned, 1 Cor 8:6 summarizes the monotheistic stance of the first-century Church. For these Christians, the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ was the defining tenet that separated them from the rest of the world at the time.

“The gospel message focused very much on Jesus’ significance as Messiah (Greek: *Christos*; e.g., Acts 2:36), as the vindicated and unique ‘Son’ of God (e.g., Romans 1:3-4), and as the divinely appointed ‘Lord’ (Greek: *Kyrios*), who had been raised by God from death and installed by God from death and installed at God’s ‘right hand’ (e.g., Philippians 2:9-11). Especially in the earliest days, the startling conviction that God had raised Jesus from death was obviously crucial and was the ignition point for the new level of enthusiasm among Jesus followers and was the ignition point for the new level of enthusiasm among Jesus-followers and the emphasis on these high claims about Him.”⁶²

This gospel message was doubtlessly the point of most extreme tension between early Christianity and the larger world. The pattern Hurtado describes as “dyadic” was a unique, novel movement that represented the centralization of the one true God and Jesus (as fully God Himself) as the cornerstone tenet of early Christianity.⁶³ Hurtado notes, “the Gospel of John gives us evidence of sharp conflict in the late first century between Johannine Christians and Jewish authorities over Christological claims.”⁶⁴ Hurtado additionally explores the Synoptic

⁶¹ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 53.

⁶² Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 69.

⁶³ Hurtado, *Destroyer of the Gods*, 76.

⁶⁴ Larry W. Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions About Earliest Devotion to Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 152. Hurtado opts to date John’s Gospel between 90 and 100 A.D. Though there may be lack of consensus on the dating of the Gospel of John, there is nearly unanimous tradition dating back to the patristic Era that John’s Gospel is the fourth, final Gospel and was authored last by a few decades. While some scholars accept a date for this Gospel around 70 A.D., the internal evidence for conflict between first-century Jews and Christians paints a vivid picture to aid the reader in understanding the Christology of those following the Johannine school of thought. For a complete discussion on the

Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline corpus to examine the distinctive Jesus devotion of early Christianity.⁶⁵ The acknowledgment of the Christology of the early church is significant for understanding the community from which John was writing. In his authorship of Revelation 1, John was not writing about a concept that was novel for the early Church, but instead he was articulating the central, distinguishing theological point of their faith. Understanding the historical context surrounding the circumstances and the theological framework contributing to John's authorship bolsters the idea of his authorial intent reflecting a culmination of Christological truths before revealing the apocalyptic events.⁶⁶ The events of Revelation, in part, represent themes of persecution consistent with the internal evidence from Scripture that the early Church was facing at the time. John's authorship reflects that it was critical for him to remind his audience who Christ is as the differentiating factor of their faith, the reason for their hope in the midst of trial, before revealing the apocalyptic events that followed Revelation 1.

Working towards a narrower focus on the Christology of Revelation, Talbert exhorts his reader and shares the attitude of this dissertation, "It is true that the Revelation to John does not present a complete and ordered account of the nature and work of Christ. It is also true that there are relatively few major studies of the Christology of the Apocalypse. The former should not

dating of John's Gospel, see Gerald L. Borchert, *NAC: John 1-11*, vol. 25A (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1996), 91-95.

⁶⁵ Hurtado, *How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?*, 173. Hurtado interestingly notes that Acts describes Saul as persecuting and moving against those who 'call upon' the name of Jesus (Acts 9:14,21). The offense taken by Saul of Tarsus was likely due to the invocation of the name of Christ in a manner identical to that of Yahweh which would have seemed to be an idolatrous action.

⁶⁶ See Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1988), 93-124 for a full discussion on the earliness of the Jewish recognition of Christianity as deviation from their monotheistic tradition.

preclude our pursuit of the seer's distinctive picture of Christ; the latter should encourage it."⁶⁷

Following a helpful survey of the names and titles of Christ in Revelation, Talbert reaches three significant conclusions.

“First, these titles are sometimes carryovers of earlier titles (for example, Lord, Christ, Son of God) but sometimes are created by the author from descriptions of God (for example, living one, true one) or of other figures (for example, Lamb, bright morning star) in ancient Judaism. Second, of the titles applied to Christ in Revelation, some are taken from language by which God is referred to in Israel's Scriptures and in post-biblical Judaism (for example, Lord, ruler of kings of the earth); some are taken from language used by Scripture and later tradition to describe the messiah or some other vice-regent of God (for example, Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, the one who has the key of David); some are used to refer to one who is faithful to God in whatever circumstances (for example, the faithful witness/martyr). Third, while some titles are used for a specific trait or function of Christ (for example, the beginning and the end, the Alpha and the Omega), others encompass multiple functions (for example, Lamb).”⁶⁸

Talbert also examines the functions and actions of Christ in the Apocalypse, detailing the past, present, and future activities of Christ within the Book. The remainder of the chapter focuses on the factors contributing to the first-century audience's reception of the message of Revelation, much of which is described by other authors in this section. One final thought from Talbert articulates a significant tenet of the present study, “In the setting in which Revelation would have been heard, the auditors would have known this story. As the plot of the Apocalypse unfolded, the auditors would have been able unconsciously to sort out and fit the various names, titles, functions, and faces of Christ into the underlying narrative. This would have given coherence to the various pieces of John [the seer's] Christology.”⁶⁹ This coherence that Talbert

⁶⁷ Charles H Talbert, *The Development of Christology During the First Hundred Years: And Other Essays on Early Christian Christology* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 143.

⁶⁸ Talbert, *The Development of Christology*, 147-148.

⁶⁹ Talbert, *The Development of Christology*, 151.

describes is the aim of this dissertation. Much as Talbert assembled a list of titles, actions, and functions of Christ in this discussion, this dissertation aims to limit the scope to the initial chapter of Revelation while demonstrating the coherence of Johannine Christology. John's method for establishing a coherent Christology is to utilize familiar references, titles, and allusions to Christ from the canon to present Him as his protagonist, a familiar figure to those in his audience who were canonically conscious.

In works similar to Hurtado and Bauckham, Grillmeier details first-century Judaism and gives a detailed exposition of the primary source material. He analyzes the relationship of Jesus and the Father, "In using 'Abba,' an address impermissible to a Jewish man, as an intimate name for the Father, He is expressing a filial relationship that surpasses all Old Testament precedent. The relationship of the 'Son of God' to the 'Father' is therefore not just a more or less technical circumlocution for a special election of Jesus, say, to be Messianic king: it means a real relationship of Son to Father."⁷⁰ While Grillmeier's work through the New Testament is worth studying, his most relevant discussions for this dissertation come from his discussion on John's Christology. He articulates, "The climax in the New Testament development of Christological thought is reached in John. His prologue to the Fourth Gospel is the most penetrating description of the career of Jesus Christ that has been written. It is not without reason that the Christological formula of John 1:14 could increasingly become the most influential New Testament text in the history of dogma."⁷¹ Additionally, Grillmeier notes the similarity of the features of the Logos in John to its discussion in the Old Testament, particularly in the Wisdom literature where there are

⁷⁰ Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2nd ed., vol. 1, 2 vols. (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1975), 13.

⁷¹ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 26.

references to eternal generation (Prov 8:22) and tabernacling with God (Prov 8:23-25, 30).⁷² The discussion closes with a glance forward from the primary source literature during the apostolic period to the post-apocalyptic and patristic scholarship, which demonstrates new viewpoints and traditions on the topic of Christology. It is to these works that this literature review turns following some concluding thoughts.

The Apostolic period research compiled in this section portrays the first-century world and its perception of Jesus Christ.⁷³ As this dissertation argues that Revelation 1 demonstrates a Christological culmination, it is significant to understand the historical context from which the writing was penned. Outside of Talbert, there are no scholars or sources in this section that review the text of Revelation directly. As the Apocalypse was authored at the close of the Apostolic era, the primary source material in the first hundred years of Christianity is limited. However, the forthcoming generations of scholars dive into the reception of Revelation and the interpretation of Johannine Christology. The reception of Revelation is heavily debated in the patristic era, and the authorship argument is significant to the interpretation of the text. To properly conduct a study of the reception of Revelation, it is vital to understand the factors contributing to the authorship of Revelation and the subsequent debates that raged throughout the patristic period.

⁷² Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 29ff. See this source for a thorough description of the intertextuality of John's Gospel with the Old Testament as well as an analysis of the Logos. Grillmeier articulates the apparent contrast between pre-existent deity and fleshly nature that John 1:1ff describes.

⁷³ Two other noteworthy sources proved to be particularly useful in understanding historical context, but did not contain enough relevance to the discussion to be included in the literature review. These are: Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003). And Joel B. Green and Lee Martin McDonald, eds., *The World of the New Testament: Cultural, Social, and Historical Contexts* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013).

The Patristics: From the Apostles to Chalcedon

Though Revelation is widely considered the final canonical writing that was authored, John's Apocalypse was actively circulated and discussed by the inauguration of the patristic period and is referenced as early as the works of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, among others. Much western patristic scholarship held a traditional view of Revelation and its authorship. Craig Koester summarizes the consensus of western patristic scholarship,

“Christians in the west generally valued Revelation and assumed that John the apostle wrote the work, along with the Fourth Gospel and one or more of the Johannine Epistles. Christians in the east held similar views until the late third century, when questions were raised about the book's authorship in the wake of controversies about its message, leading to a decline in its status in the east. Revelatory texts such as the Shepherd of Hermas and the Apocalypse of Peter circulated alongside Revelation, but as churches defined the extent of the NT canon, Revelation was the one apocalypse accepted in the west and by some, though not all, in the east.”⁷⁴

The patristic era is not exempt from Talbert's observation that Christology in Revelation has not received much attention in scholarship. Much of the extant patristic literature is preoccupied with apologetics against the issues raised by various post-apostolic sects (such as the Gnostics, Arians, and Montanists) and internal debates in the early Church. This examination of patristic literature will be limited to the writings of the Church fathers that deal specifically with John's authorship, Revelation 1, or the canonical implications of the passage.

While Justin Martyr is not the most expansive of the Church fathers in his study of Revelation, it is significant to note that he is among the earliest (100-165 A.D.) post-apostolic authors to identify Christ as the Messiah and fulfillment of the Old Testament in addition to referencing the content of Revelation in his exchanges with Trypho.

⁷⁴ Koester, Craig K. *Revelation: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Edited by John J. Collins. Vol. 38A. Anchor Yale Bible. New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2014, 30.

“The writings of Justin Martyr are among the most important that have come down to us from the second century. He was not the first that wrote an Apology on behalf of the Christians, but his Apologies are the earliest extant. They are characterized by intense Christian fervour, and they give us an insight into the relations existing between heathens and Christians in those days. His other principal writing, the Dialogue with Trypho, is the first elaborate exposition of the reasons for regarding Christ as the Messiah of the Old Testament, and the first systematic attempt to exhibit the false position of the Jews in regard to Christianity.”⁷⁵

Additionally, Justin attributes the authorship of Revelation to John, and as Patterson astutely notes, Justin was living in Ephesus approximately 40 years after John was purportedly residing there.⁷⁶ Justin makes explicit reference to the millennium, citing Revelation amongst other prophetic and apocalyptic literature while attesting to the identity of its author, “There was a certain man with us, whose name was John, one of the apostles of Christ, who prophesied, by a revelation that was made to him, that those who believed in our Christ would dwell a thousand years in Jerusalem; and that thereafter the general, and, in short, the eternal resurrection and judgment of all men would likewise take place.”⁷⁷ While references directly to Revelation were only occasional throughout his extant writings, Justin was no stranger to the concept of canonical consciousness in presenting his Christological case against the various sects and heresies of the period. In referencing the then-recent Jewish War (Bar Kokhba revolt), Justin condemns the leader, Barchochebas, accusing that despite the Jewish knowledge of Scripture, they did not understand what Scripture truly taught as he criticizes their persecution of Christians. Justin articulates his canonical consciousness,

⁷⁵ A. Cleveland Coxe, ed., *ANF: The Apostolic Fathers, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus*, 2nd, American ed., vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995), 159.

⁷⁶ Paige Patterson, *NAC: Revelation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 21.

⁷⁷ Justin Martyr, *Dial*, 80-81.

“In these books, then, of the prophets we found Jesus our Christ foretold as coming, born of a virgin, growing up to man’s estate, and healing every disease and every sickness, and raising the dead, and being hated, and unrecognized, and crucified, and dying, and rising again, and ascending into heaven, and being, and being called the Son of God. . . and He was predicted before He appeared, first 5,000 years before, and again 3,000, then 2,000, then 1,000, and yet again 800; for in succession of generations prophets after prophets arose.”⁷⁸

Justin continues to argue that Christ is the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures and that those who would deny Him are committing blasphemy.⁷⁹ A final interesting element of Justin’s writings is his dependence on Johannine Christology. Grillmeier examines Justin’s philosophical apologetic through which he attempted to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity to Greek philosophy. Like John, Justin’s focus was on the incarnation, and his writings are strongly tied to John’s own Christology.⁸⁰ Grillmeier refers to Justin’s study of John,

“It is John in whom he finds proof for the identity of the Word made flesh with the pre-existent Logos, who is also the mediator of creation and revelation. As the eternal Dynamis of God, the Logos can Himself beget His earthly existence from the Virgin (Apol. 1 33ff). Justin sets great store on stressing the historical data of this earthly existence of the Word made flesh (Apo. 1, 13, 3; 35,9 and often). But this incarnation is the last link in a chain of events, during which the Logos has earlier already appeared on earth in other circumstances to reveal the will of the Father (Dial. 75,4). The Logos maintains this function of being the mediator of revelation until the end of the world. It comes to an end in the ‘second parousia’ – a phrase which Justin coined (Apol. 1, 52, 3; Dial. 14, 8 and often). Through the uninterrupted work of revelation of the Logos the history of mankind becomes a carefully planned construction with beginning, purpose, and end.”⁸¹

⁷⁸ Justin Martyr, *Apol.*, 1.31.

⁷⁹ See Martyr, *Apol.*, 1.30-53. Additionally, see Grillmeier for a comparison of Justin’s hermeneutic to his contemporaries, Grillmeier cites others in hailing Justin as “one of the first exegetes to use belief in Christ consistently as a basic hermeneutical principle in expounding the OT.” Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 90.

⁸⁰ Jn 1:1-14

⁸¹ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 90.

Justin's counter-cultural philosophical approach to Christology and the person of Christ in the past, present, and future is a reflection of John's method in Revelation 1 with a description of Christ as the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is, and was, and is to come (Rev 1:8).⁸² Grillmeier analyzes Martyr's approach, "It is Justin's intention to show by this theology that Christians do not think of the Logos after the manner of the pagan myths (Apol. 1.53.1ff.) In so doing, he also dismisses Jewish modalistic speculations."⁸³ Justin's teachings on Christology aimed to defend against the Jewish accusations that Christianity violated the monotheism upon which the OT is based while also establishing the person of Christ against those who would deny doctrines such as eternal generation. The writings of Justin are essential to grasping the early Church's understanding of Christology and are valuable for defending the authorial apostolicity of the Apocalypse.

One of the landmark names in patristic literature frequently hailed as one of the most credible sources of external evidence for the modern canon of Scripture is Irenaeus of Lyons (130 – 202 A.D.). Beale leans on the writings of Irenaeus in his commentary, citing the bishop's writings and the tradition that stems from them as a strong tradition that gives evidence to the later date (during the Domitian period) and the Johannine authorship of Revelation.⁸⁴ Irenaeus defends a literal interpretation of apocalyptic literature in Scripture, rejecting allegorical approaches as he articulates the literal nature of the events in Revelation. In doing so, he cites

⁸² Martyr, *Dial.*, 111, 2.

⁸³ Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 91.

⁸⁴ G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 27.

John as the author of the Apocalypse, describing him as the Lord's disciple.⁸⁵ In particular relevance to the present study, Irenaeus directly references Christ's appearance in Revelation 1,

“John also, the Lord's disciple, when beholding the sacerdotal and glorious advent of His kingdom, says in the Apocalypse: “I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And, being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the candlesticks One like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment reaching to the feet, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle; and His head and His hairs were white, as white as wool, and as snow; and His eyes were as a flame of fire; and His feet like unto fine brass, as if He burned in a furnace. And His voice [was] as the voice of waters; and He had in His right hand seven stars; and out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword; and His countenance was as the sun shining in his strength.” For in these words, He sets forth something of the glory [which He has received] from His Father, as [where He makes mention of] the head; something in reference to the priestly office also, as in the case of the long garment reaching to the feet. And this was the reason why Moses vested the high priest after this fashion. Something also alludes to the end [of all things], as [where He speaks of] the fine brass burning in the fire, which denotes the power of faith, and the continuing instant in prayer, because of the consuming fire which is to come at the end of time. But when John could not endure the sight for he says, ‘I fell at his feet as dead;’ that what was written might come to pass: ‘No man sees God, and shall live’, and the Word reviving him, and reminding him that it was He upon whose bosom he had leaned at supper, when he put the question as to who should betray Him, declared: ‘I am the first and the last, and He who liveth, and was dead, and behold I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of hell.’”⁸⁶

This direct reference from Irenaeus is perhaps the strongest link to Revelation 1 and the intertextuality of the text within patristic literature. The first observation concerning Irenaeus' stance on the text of Revelation 1 is that he views Jesus as the one being revealed in the apocalyptic vision.⁸⁷ Irenaeus appeals to the identity of the Son, noting that He has received glory from the Father as described in the New Testament, including in John's Gospel (Jn 17:1-3; 2 Pet 1:17). Additionally, the bishop describes John as leaning against the bosom of the one

⁸⁵ Irenaeus, *A.H.*, 5.30-5.35.

⁸⁶ Irenaeus, *A.H.*, 4.20.11

⁸⁷ This is not a unanimous observation among scholars in the modern era. Thomas' commentary delineates the argument against Christ being the revealed one in Revelation 1 and gives examples for how the titles and descriptions in Revelation 1 could reference other figures according to other scholars. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 51ff.

appearing in Revelation 1 in an obvious reference to the account of Jesus predicting His betrayal at the Last Supper (John 13:23). In the same reference, the second noteworthy observation from this passage is the reference to the identity of John the apostle as the author of Revelation 1. The indication that John would have been familiar with the incarnate Christ is evident from the closeness of their relationship given John's description as (ὁν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς), the one whom Jesus loved. Irenaeus does not miss John's reaction to the one whom John knew closely, noting the descriptor in the biblical text (ὡς νεκρός), as though dead.⁸⁸ This reaction to the One being revealed indicates both recognition and revelation for John as He exalts the risen Christ. The significance of Johannine authorship is particularly relevant for the canonical legitimacy of Revelation as apostolic authorship is one prerequisite for canonicity according to authors throughout Christian history, including Irenaeus up to modern authors such as Peckham.⁸⁹

The third conclusion from Irenaeus is that he seems to argue for canonical consciousness concerning the titles and descriptors of Christ in the apocalyptic vision. Irenaeus alludes to the symbolism involved in several of the descriptors and titles of Christ given in Revelation 1, including most notably the description of the priestly vestments (Rev 1:13) and their similarity to those God commanded Moses to have the high priest of Israel wear (Ex 28). Irenaeus notes that the reason for Moses' vesting the high priest like this is to model after this revelation of Christ. Without canonical consciousness, this may seem anachronistic. However, an understanding of Christ as the high priest of believers and His eternally generate nature indicates that this role in

⁸⁸ Irenaeus appears to indicate a belief that John actually died, indicating that the Word "revived" John rather than taking this as a simile. The discussion on this particular instance will come later in the dissertation. However, it is noteworthy at this point that in the next verse, it is apparent that Christ has been given what Witherington calls "plenipotentiary power over all the dead." Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 82.

⁸⁹ Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 32ff. Peckham's contributions will be discussed further under modern scholarship.

Exodus represented an imperfect, incomplete attempt by man to serve as high priest. The sacrifice of Christ perfects the high priest role, and His blood that atones where that of the Law cannot (Heb 10:1-4).

Irenaeus is well regarded as one who contributed significantly to the canonization of Scripture. His canonical awareness and exegetical ability stand out even in an era where many of the most recognized figures in the Christian faith did their work. His contributions to the present argument include a strong argument for Johannine authorship and a very early, if not the earliest, treatment of Revelation 1 in a canonical methodology.

The works of Eusebius (~260 – 339 A.D.) are some of the most complete records of the first centuries of the history of the Church. Naturally, Eusebius dealt with the text of Revelation even though it was disputed in the early Church. Eusebius notes critical observations from Irenaeus that protect the genuine Johannine authorship of the Apocalypse,

“It is said that in this persecution the apostle and evangelist John, who was still alive, was condemned to dwell on the island of Patmos in consequence of his testimony to the divine word. Irenaeus, in the fifth book of his work *Against Heresies*, where he discusses the number of the name of the Antichrist which is given in the so-called Apocalypse of John, speaks as follows concerning him: ‘if it were necessary for his name to be proclaimed openly at the present time, it would have been declared by him who saw the revelation. For it was seen not long ago, but almost in our own generation, at the end of the reign of Domitian.’”⁹⁰

Additionally, Eusebius continues to include the Apocalypse in his list of accepted writings, though he concedes that many do not accept it as canonical.⁹¹ This was one reason that many would choose to discount Revelation when it came to either studying the text or including it in worship gatherings or among the canon at all.

⁹⁰ Eusebius, *E.H.*, 3.18.1-3.18.3.

⁹¹ Eusebius, *E.H.*, 3.24.18-3.25.4.

As mentioned previously, there are sparse references to Revelation within the first few centuries of Christological and New Testament studies. Among those scant references, most have to do with authorship, canonicity, or the dating of the Apocalypse rather than the interaction with the Christology of Revelation 1. Various patristic authors reference Revelation, including Origen, Tertullian, and Clement, but none of these delve into the Christological depths that would advance the current literature survey. Like Irenaeus, Gregory of Nazianzus (329 A.D. – 390 A.D.) cites from the first chapter of Revelation (Rev 1:4,8), noting the eternal generation and deity of the Son,

“A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of your kingdom; and who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. All of these things are clearly spoken of the Son, with all the other passages of the same force; and none of them is an afterthought, added later to the Son or the Spirit, any more than to the Father Himself. For their perfection is not affected by additions. There never was a time when the Father was without the Word; there never was a time when He was not the Father; there never was a time when He was without truth, or without wisdom, or without power, or devoid of life, of splendour, or of goodness.”⁹²

This observation by Gregory of Nazianzus stemming from Revelation 1 demonstrates a recognition of the authorial intent to establish a canonical Christology, one that presents Christ as fully God, attaining titles that had previously been reserved strictly for Yahweh, denies the Arian heresy of subordination, and describes Him as eternally generate. An additional contribution from Gregory of Nazianzus is his stance that human limitations produce the need for metaphorical language to understand issues surrounding the Trinity, including the person of Christ. In responding to Eunomius, one who articulated that eternity and God are definable, absolutely knowable concepts, Gregory responds, “He contains all of existence in Himself without beginning or end, like an endless, boundless ocean of being. He extends beyond all our

⁹² Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. Bas.*, 3.17.

notions of time and nature, and is outlined by the mind alone, but only very dimly and in a limited way.”⁹³ This interpretation by Gregory appeals to the credibility of John’s use of intertextuality, using the Word of God to describe the exalted Christ rather than a limited, human description. Yarnell comments on Gregory of Nazianzus’ statement, “While our human words may point towards God in a relative manner, they may not speak absolutely of Him. When we say God is great or God exists, we need to recognize that He is infinitely beyond even the concept of greatness or of existence. . . The greatest theologian comprehends more of God but never completely.”⁹⁴ Gregory and his interpreters (such as Yarnell or Beeley) articulate an important tenet moving forward: the endeavor to describe God, Christ, the hypostatic union, or other Christological principles ultimately falls short, and any effort to do so must be grounded in Scripture as Revelation 1 is. However, human efforts to describe the dyad of Christ’s humanity and deity led to an emphasis on Christological debate rather than the text of Scripture itself. The Synoptics and Pauline corpus enjoy a far more significant portion of the attention of scholars throughout history, and the patristics were no different. A possible explanation for the lack of scholarship in the Apocalypse is that the plainer teachings of the other NT writings would have offered more straightforward perspectives compared to the highly debated figurative language in the Apocalypse.⁹⁵ As the patristic period could be characterized by its Christological debates, the effort to appeal to the more uncomplicated teachings is a justifiable cause for understanding the lacuna in the study of Revelation. To summarize the implications of these raging Christological

⁹³ Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 38* as cited in Christopher A. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the Knowledge of God: In Your Light We Shall See Light*, Oxford Studies in Historical Theology (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 102.

⁹⁴ Malcolm B. Yarnell III, *God the Trinity* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2016), 104.

⁹⁵ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 34.

debates of the day, it is crucial to conclude the discussion on the patristic era by examining essential councils that would shape the understanding of Christology for centuries.

This period of literature culminates in two iconic councils. The first is the Council of Nicaea, resulting in the Nicene Creed (325 A.D.).⁹⁶ This creed is still recited in many churches in the modern era. It is “perhaps the most famous and influential creed in the history of the church because it settled the question of how Christians can worship one God and also claim that this God is three persons. It was the first creed to obtain universal authority in the Church, and it improved the language of the Apostles’ Creed by including more specific statements about the divinity of Christ and the Holy Spirit.”⁹⁷ This council was created primarily to combat the heresy of Arius, who refused to recognize the deity of the Son. To refute the teachings of Arius, the council sought to create a statement on the divine Trinity and, in doing so, define the person of Jesus Christ within the Trinity. With particular reference to Revelation 1 and the Christology described in the passage, the Nicene Creed contains the following language, “He [Jesus] shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.”⁹⁸ The idea of the authority of Christ over the dead/death contains implications identical to the identification of Christ as the one holding the keys over Hades and death. Additionally, the kingdom language in the statement appeals to the authority of Jesus as well as the theme of the kingdom of God’s people, which is described in Revelation (Rev 1:6, 5:10, 20:6). This kingdom language shares intertextuality with the OT as Yahweh addresses Moses instructing him to tell

⁹⁶ It is worth noting that the Nicene Creed that is received and reflected in the translation used in this review is a combination of the original Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) and the Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.). The Creed is a product of sixty years of refining the original definition to attempt to settle the Trinitarian debate.

⁹⁷ Justin S. Holcomb, *Know the Creeds and Councils* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 33.

⁹⁸ Translation used from Holcomb, *Know the Creeds and Councils*, 35.

the sons of Israel “Now then, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” (Ex 19:6). In the Exodus passage, divine authority is attributed to Yahweh, and in Revelation, the same authority is attributed to Jesus. Recognition of Christ as eternally generate and the denial of eternal or partial subordination of the son was a critical contribution at this juncture in the history of Christology. Concerning the priests of the kingdom, Fanning makes a crucial observation concerning the relationship between the OT and NT usage of “kingdom,”

“In both the Old Testament and New Testament, this is intended as service ‘for God’ (the Greek dative phrase, ‘τῷ Θεῷ καὶ Πατρὶ αὐτοῦ’, is smoothed out in the English wording, ‘to serve’, but also as a witness and influence for him on the rest of humanity, who see the true and living God in His people. Those who are redeemed constitute a community under God, who benefit from and respond to his rule and so represent Him to the wider world.”⁹⁹

The Nicene Creed’s proclamation that Christ is equally authoritative with the Father is a significant distinction with direct implications for the deity of Christ and the intertextual theme of the kingdom in Revelation 1.

The second Christologically significant council to be discussed comes at the conclusion of this period is the Council of Chalcedon, which presents the Chalcedonian definition (451 A.D.). During the century and a quarter between these two essential councils, several contrary or heretical views stemmed from the questions left by the Nicene Creed. Holcomb articulates the situation that brought about Chalcedon, “The council of Nicaea left unanswered the exact relationship between the man Jesus Christ and the eternal Son of God – the Logos of the gospel

⁹⁹ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 83. Fanning has additional commentary on the concept of kingdom and its canonical implications that will be revisited later in the dissertation.

of John (1:1-4,14).”¹⁰⁰ Among the various problematic Christological solutions to this lacuna left from Nicaea were three prevalent views: Apollinarianism (incomplete humanity of Christ), Nestorianism (two persons within Christ), and Eutychianism or Monophysitism (a singular nature in Christ).¹⁰¹ Holcomb articulates the argument of the Chalcedonian Definition,

“The Definition of Chalcedon described Christ’s descent as a true incarnation of the *Logos*, the Second Person of the Trinity, while denying that a man was converted into God or that God was converted into a man. There was no confession or absorption between the divine nature and the human nature of Christ; the two remained distinct. Similarly, the incarnation was not merely a divine indwelling of a human nor a connection between two persons. Instead, Chalcedon asserted that there was real union between two persons. Instead, Chalcedon asserted that there was a real union between the divine and human natures that existed in one personal life: the life of Jesus of Nazareth, who was the Eternal *Logos*. . . the definition declares that these two natures are joined in one person. There can be no separation of the two natures, only a union in one hypostasis or person.”¹⁰²

Chalcedon’s language shows clear indications that the primary goal of the Council was to discredit the three major heresies concerning Christ, and it results in a set of restrictions on defining Christ rather than a precise definition directly articulated in Scripture. Holcomb admits that it is perhaps best to view Chalcedon as a method to correct the extremes in human logic.¹⁰³ However, the definition is critical to the history of Christology and the approach this dissertation takes to understanding Revelation 1. Many of the titles and descriptions of Christ in the passage

¹⁰⁰ Holcomb, *Know the Creeds and Councils*, 53.

¹⁰¹ Wellum provides a deeper description for each of the three as follows: Apollinarianism confessed that the Lord Jesus was ‘truly a man of reasonable soul and body; consubstantial with us according to his manhood; in all things like unto us. Nestorianism affirmed Mary as *theotokos*, not in order to exalt Mary but in order to affirm Jesus’ true deity and the fact of a real incarnation (it also spoke throughout of one and the same Son and one person and one subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, and whose natures are in union without division and without separation). Monophysitism confessed that in Christ there were two natures without confusion and without change, the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in the one person. Stephen J. Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 242.

¹⁰² Holcomb, *Know the Creeds and Councils*, 57.

¹⁰³ Holcomb, *Know the Creeds and Councils*, 59.

are affirming of His deity, such as the description of His hair like white wool or snow and His eyes like a flame of fire. This wording comes from Daniel’s description of the Ancient of Days, or Yahweh. Fanning notes, “Here, as in many places, John affords Jesus a level of honor given elsewhere only to God.”¹⁰⁴ The Chalcedonian definition aids the theologian in bridging the gap between understanding Christ as fully God as the Revelation passage describes and passages where Christ’s humanity is highlighted, such as His weeping at the death of Lazarus (Jn 11:35). Admittedly, the Chalcedonian definition still leaves questions unanswered, as there exists no perfect analogy to describe the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ. Thankfully, this definition is not the final word, as Wellum concludes,

“Chalcedon sets the parameters and puts in place the guardrails by which Christological discussion now takes place, yet it is not the final statement and, in fact, it spurs us on to further reflection within its boundaries. Ultimately it is only Scripture that can serve as our final authority, but we neglect the Chalcedonian Definition at our peril. What is needed is further reflection on Scripture in light of Chalcedon, and, in fact, this is precisely what occurred in the subsequent years of church history. Chalcedon did not end all Christological discussion; instead, it continued to guide and direct further thought in light of more questions and challenges.”¹⁰⁵

While the first few centuries of New Testament studies were not densely populated with commentaries and exegesis on the text of Revelation, the development of Christology within the patristic era laid a significant foundation for future studies. The first few centuries of Christianity embraced a Christological understanding that sought to portray the humanness and divinity of Christ. The tension between recognizing Christ as both fully human and entirely divine has caused debates even to the present day. The text reviewed in this dissertation addresses this tension as Revelation 1 describes the response of one who knew Christ incarnate yet sees Him

¹⁰⁴ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 100.

¹⁰⁵ Wellum, *God the Son Incarnate*, 247.

revealed in glory, attributing descriptions and characteristics previously reserved only for Yahweh. Christology that understands these two natures in one person is significant, and that is what is presented at the close of the patristic period with the Chalcedonian definition. Consistent with Wellum's statement, it is Scripture that one must turn to in order to have final authority on Christology. However, the subsequent years of church history contain Christological development and more works that deal with the content of Revelation, specifically Revelation 1.

The Middle Ages: From Post-Chalcedon to the Dawn of the Reformation

In some circles, the Middle Ages are often given another title (the Dark Ages) due to economic, cultural, and intellectual global declines. Biblical scholarship was no exemption from the category of academic casualties as the post-Roman world turned away from the scholarship of antiquity. The Catholic Church began to decline into the moral hypocrisy that would spark the Reformation. Given the already sparse interaction with the Christology of Revelation, namely in Revelation 1, the search for relevant literature becomes more difficult in an age where scholarship was not as abundant. Allen examines the canonical and eclectic strands of Revelation's transmission in the Middle Ages, noting that Revelation did not receive the same treatment it received during the patristic era in several instances. Allen summarizes,

“Unquestionably, works like the four Gospels, Paul's letters, the Praxapostolos, and Revelation were considered scriptural, inspired, authoritative, and even apostolic in early Christianity and the following centuries, but there is little material evidence to show that these works held a monopoly on these characteristics or that maintaining such characteristics necessitated their bibliographic cordoning-off. Codices, at least those preserve Revelation, are the material spaces where canon fades (but never entirely) and archives reign (but never completely), due to the diversity of social locations in which Greek New Testament manuscripts were produced and used.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶ Garrick V. Allen, “The Sociology of the Book of Revelation in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages: Books and Canon,” in *Manuscripts of the Book of Revelation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 191.

As Allen notes that the canonical transmission of Revelation never fades entirely, it is often relegated to the peripheral vision of the Greek New Testament in the Middle Ages, and manuscripts contain evidence of storage with noncanonical works such as patristic literature and anonymous papyrus fragments.¹⁰⁷ While manuscript tradition may not be as strong in the Middle Ages, a new type of transmission through the form of visual or artistic mediums exemplifies a new methodology for exegesis in the Medieval period. In addition to examining this shift from verbal or written transmission to visual transmission, there are also a few significant authors to note from the Middle Ages which progress the historical examination at hand.¹⁰⁸

Augustine of Hippo (354 A.D. – 430 A.D.) technically falls within the patristic period. However, interaction with his works in the Middle Ages was significant for many scholars, namely Thomas Aquinas. Therefore, his writings are discussed in this section for relevance rather than as an anachronism. His contributions to Christology come primarily from his work on the Trinity and proved to be influential not only to the Christological debates at the dawn of the Middle Ages but also impactful to the modern reader. Augustine responds to Eunomius' assertion of the certain knowability of God in a way similar to Gregory of Nazianzus: "Although nothing can be spoken in a way worthy of God, He has sanctioned the homage of the human

¹⁰⁷ Allen, "The Sociology of the Book of Revelation", 185. Allen's entire chapter provides a deep examination of manuscript transmission and tradition in the Middle Ages. Though his conclusion is that the Bible's bibliography (closed canon) is a modern phenomenon, the article does contain evidence that the modern canon does have a tradition dating back to the patristic period that never fully disappears. This author disagrees with Allen's conclusion concerning canonization being a modern phenomenon, yet to delineate further would run tangent to the specific material of this dissertation.

¹⁰⁸ For additional Middle Age scholarship on Revelation, see David D. Burr, *The Bible in Medieval Tradition: The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2019).

voice, and chosen that we should derive pleasure from our words in praise to Him.”¹⁰⁹ In terms of Christology, Augustine offered glimpses outside of his writings on the Trinity, including an emphasis on the centrality of the redemptive role of Christ as high priest throughout his writings.¹¹⁰ For Augustine, the redemptive role of Christ is central. Augustine contrasted the Neo-Platonism of several of his contemporaries, which implied that man could ascend to God via intellect or other human devices. He held a view that emphasized that God came down to man in the person of Christ rather than man ascending to Him.¹¹¹

A study of Augustine’s interaction with Revelation and Apocalyptic studies reveals his emphasis on the eschatological aspect of the New Jerusalem rather than interacting with the Apocalypse’s Christology. However, his interpretation of Revelation was significant for his era, and his ability to look outside of his timeline offered the possibility of several modern views. “Augustine’s particular genius is to have shown the possibility of interpreting the Book of Revelation without reading it through a particular historico-political context. He steps outside that context, to speak of the destiny of all human beings; his context is moral and anthropological, the entire scope of humanity, from creation to the world’s end (and even beyond), without ascribing apocalyptic significance to any current or past event.”¹¹² This interpretation sets Augustine apart from his contemporaries. It was common in this era to make false predictions concerning eschatological events equating Rome and its subsequent fall to

¹⁰⁹ Augustine, *On Christian Teaching*, 1.14.

¹¹⁰ See Augustine, *Trin.*, 13.12.16-18.23; 13.19.24 for specific statements on the redemptive role of Christ in Augustine thought.

¹¹¹ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 41.

¹¹² Kevin J. Coyle, “Augustine and Apocalyptic: Thoughts on the Fall of Rome, The Book of Revelation, and the End of the World,” *Florilegium*, no. 9 (1987): 20.

apocalyptic events depicted in Scripture. Augustine focused on heaven rather than the implications for earth, though he did indict Rome for its lack of reverence for God.¹¹³ He then moved to discuss the difference between the City of God and the cities of earth, Rome specifically.¹¹⁴ Augustine is undoubtedly one of the most influential figures of the period, and his impact on biblical interpretation is still observed in modern times.

Another significant Middle Ages contributor is one of Augustine's closest followers in thought - St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 – 1274 A.D.). The third part of Aquinas' monumental work, *Summa Theologiae*, begins with a massive treatise on Christ. "Without going so far as to say that the first and second Parts of the *Summa* are merely preparatory, we can see that Christology is essential to the *Summa* and even, in a sense, its high point. The work finds its completion in the discussion of Christ and his gifts: These are, so to speak, what the *Summa* had been aiming toward the whole time."¹¹⁵ In Aquinas' assessment of the person of Christ, he notes many of the same conclusions that Augustine held, including recognizing both the divine and human natures of Christ. Aquinas' primary contribution to moving the conversation forward in the Middle Ages was the articulation of the difference between the person of Christ and the work of Christ - a distinction visited in the final chapter of this dissertation. "Making use of a now standard distinction, we can say that Aquinas talks about the person of Christ, who and what he is, but also about the work of Christ, what he does to bring about human salvation."¹¹⁶ Aquinas pays

¹¹³ See Augustine, *City of God*, 1-4

¹¹⁴ See Augustine, *City of God*, 11ff

¹¹⁵ Michael Gorman, "The Significance of Christology in the *Summa Theologiae*" in *Aquinas's Summa Theologiae: A Critical Guide*, ed. Jeffrey Hause, Cambridge Critical Guides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 207.

¹¹⁶ Gorman, "The Significance of Christology in the *Summa Theologiae*", 204.

special attention to John's description of the work of Christ in Revelation 1:5, "He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."¹¹⁷ Additionally, Aquinas offers an examination of whether Christ descended into hell or not, ultimately arguing that it is fitting that Christ would have descended into hell, citing the Apostles' Creed and Eph 4:9. In doing so, Aquinas also mentions several of Augustine's sermons, further demonstrating the intertwined nature of their theological stances. The premise that Christ descended into hell is an idea discussed in the initial chapter of Revelation, in which John describes Christ as the one holding the keys of death and hades (Rev 1:19). However, Aquinas does not cite this verse in defense of his position. Aquinas is arguably the landmark theological and Christological scholar of the Middle Ages, and his work in *Summa* contains a rich Christology. Yet even for the depth of his understanding of Christ, he still does not make much of the Christology within Revelation 1.

In a departure from examining the literary scholars of the Middle Ages, the most significant shift during the period was perhaps sparked by the lack of intellectual emphasis and the undereducation of the general population. This shift marked a shift away from the traditional verbal or written academic attempts to define the hypostatic union of Christ and towards a visual approach. Cameron measures the impact of the promotion of icons and images in Christianity that dates to the first and second (787 A.D.) councils of Nicaea,

"Far from being marginal extravagances, the Christological disputes of the fourth to sixth centuries, for instance, emerge as lying at the very heart of the process of Christianization: it was critically important, if barely possible, to define in words the content of the faith. The church councils, from Nicaea I (A.D. 325) to Nicaea II (A.D. 787), were no mere theological indulgences, but among the most dynamic historical factors in period; and they were so precisely because of the intractable nature of the faith that was in need of definition. The issue of representation was central: if Christianity

¹¹⁷ Aquinas uses this verse as support on three different occasions: for Christ's Passion being the cause of forgiveness, that the resurrection of souls comes from the forgiveness of sins, and to appeal to the proper method of baptism. See St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.49, 3.56, and 3.66 respectively.

could not be adequately expressed by logical means, resort must be had to image, and where words failed, to the visual image. Thus, the religious image, justified in the early stages as a way of educating the ignorant and illiterate became the staple of Christian society and attracted its own sophisticated theology of representation religious images – icons – stand at the logical end of Christian representation. From Christology – the attempt to define the nature of Christ – the passage of debate to the theory of the image was utterly predictable; and if images were to acquire such significance, the exact matter of their representation must be settled.”¹¹⁸

In essence, Cameron argues that the Middle Ages’ lack of literacy and the permissions granted by the Second Council of Nicaea paved the way for the emergence of art, visual aids, and iconography in the Middle Ages.¹¹⁹ The history of imagery in Christology progressed during this period, depicting more detailed and grotesque imagery of Christ’s passion. “Ultimately, this evolution of art suggests that the more macabre Jesus’ death could be depicted, the more Christ could be appreciated. By elevating Christ’s very human pain, these artists celebrated the divine love and grace He demonstrated.”¹²⁰

The emphasis on imagery spread through Europe with particular developments in the Iberian Peninsula and Germany. Spain is the birthplace of the *Beatus Commentary* on the Apocalypse, believed to have first been illustrated in 775 A.D. and copied or transmitted multiple times dating to the 13th century.¹²¹ Williams attests to the originality of the concept of illustrated exegesis to the Middle Ages, citing other contemporaries of the *Beatus Commentary*

¹¹⁸ Averil Cameron, *Christianity and the Rhetoric of Empire*, Sather Classical Lectures (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 226.

¹¹⁹ For a history of argumentation dating back to first century precedent for iconography in Christology and interpretation, see Aidan Nichols, “Image Christology in the Age of the Second Council of Nicaea,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Christology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 169–182.

¹²⁰ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 40. See also pp. 38ff for a history of Christological imagery in regards to the crucifixion.

¹²¹ See the “Family Tree of the Illustrated Beatus” in John Williams, *Visions of the End in Medieval Spain* (Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 25.

and its successors, such as the earliest manuscript with an image produced in the Iberian Peninsula (711 A.D.) tenth-century rendering of Scripture with ninety pictures placed within the text by the scribe Florentius.¹²² The original *Beatus Commentary* does not survive. However, Williams organizes a census of images depicting events from across Revelation and Apocalyptic literature (mostly Daniel), including multiple images of the exalted Christ in majesty (Rev 4)¹²³ and the worship of the Lamb (Rev 5).¹²⁴ These interpretations offer the first indications of visual exegesis, which plays a large part in the Medieval understanding of and transmission of Scripture. For many in this era, the transmission and reception of images was more straightforward than the reception and transmission of a manuscript or codex. The precedent set for visual interpretation in the Iberian Peninsula was shared across Europe throughout the Middle Ages.

The focus on visual expressions of Christ continues throughout the Middle Ages. Eventually, it culminates in a particularly relevant piece of art stemming from the era of visual exegesis as *Sachexegese* among German artists.¹²⁵ Much like the artistic impressions of the crucifixion, artists continued to strive for theological depth within their works in their mission of capturing an accurate visual interpretation of Christ. In John's authorship of the Apocalypse, he

¹²² While Williams rejects the tradition of illustrated transmission, he cites a potential lineage to a lost illustrated commentary by Tyconius, a north African writer from the late fourth century. While there is no surviving commentary from Tyconius, there can be no consensus, however the potential lineage of illustration to the dawn of the Middle Ages is an interesting possibility. See Williams, *Visions of the End in Medieval Spain*, 24.

¹²³ The inclusion of the four evangelists specifies that the images are likely an interpretation of Revelation 4 as opposed to Revelation 1, however this depiction of the majestic, exalted Christ is noted to be the first from the Iberian Peninsula. Williams, *Visions of the End in Medieval Spain*, 34.

¹²⁴ See Williams, *Visions of the End in Medieval Spain*, 64ff for a complete index of images.

¹²⁵ The term *Sachexegese* has historical precedence as theological interpretation in visual terms. For a full definition, see Natasha O'Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation in Late Medieval and Early Modern Art: A Case Study in Visual Exegesis* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc., 2011), 202.

uses verbal rhetorical devices that have similar intent to the artistic optical devices employed by the artists of the Middle Ages. Albrecht Dürer depicts the revelation of the apocalyptic protagonist and the reaction of John as he beholds the glorified and exalted Christ. The woodcut carving offers the unique perspective of visualizing the apocalyptic vision from the third person perspective, as a reading of Revelation 1 offers John's first-person perspective. O'Hear provides insight into the artistic rendering in the third person, "In the latter case [third person perspective], John is depicted as physically following the visions around, perhaps in heaven itself. In these images, John was depicted as having an important role as witness to and physical participant in the visions, a role which surpasses an emphasis on his own perspective on the experience."¹²⁶ To picture John falling on his face like a dead man as a result of his reverence gives a visual perspective of his recognition of the glorified Christ (Rev 1:17). Additionally, Dürer pays particular respect to the descriptions of Christ, providing careful visual representation for each of John's descriptors (Rev 1:12-16).

¹²⁶ O'Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation*, 210.



Figure 1 D2: Dürer's Depiction of the Exalted Christ, John the Revelator, and the Seven Stars and Stands¹²⁷

For Dürer, it was simpler to carve the image in wood rather than to attempt to express or summarize the Christology being presented, a testament to the difficulty of the task carried out by the historical Councils. O'Hear provides commentary on the woodcut,

“While many textual exegetes, such as Berengaudus,¹²⁸ were indeed more preoccupied with offering their interpretation of the content of the text, rather than engaging with or

¹²⁷ Image of the D2 woodcut credited to Albrecht Dürer, 1498. Accessed via British Museum online: <http://www.britishmuseum.org>, Public Domain.

¹²⁸ It is worth noting that Berengaudus' commentary is a contemporary of the woodcut presented here. Berengaudus' commentary views Revelation as largely symbolic and minimizes John's personal experience and role within the apocalyptic visions. See the following for translation and analysis of Berengaudus' commentary; Derk

evoking its form, it cannot be denied that the overwhelming nature of the visionary experience is more powerfully captured via an image than via a textual description. This comparison may even be extended to John's textual descriptions of his visions. Compare, for example, Dürer's cowering John figure in D2 with the corresponding verses in the Book of Revelation (see Rev 1: 9–20). The verses describe the visionary experience whereas the Dürer image evokes it for the viewer in a more direct way. Following on from this, it would seem that artists have more in common with John's attempts to articulate his actual (or contrived) visionary experiences in words, than do biblical exegetes. For the medieval and early modern artist, John had sought either to capture or to describe something experienced viscerally, visually, and audibly that could not be captured adequately with words, hence his use of 'like language' and strange literary images and metaphors. Such artists, in attempting to visualize his words were consciously or unconsciously trying to 'get at' the vision(s) they believe to lie behind the words, using a medium closer to the 'original' experience, something the artists discussed in this study seem to have implicitly or, in some cases, explicitly recognized."¹²⁹

This interpretation of the usage of imagery among other literary devices, such as allusions and metaphors, marks a significant milestone for this dissertation, as the usage of such devices being intentionally used by John and their implications is a central premise. As John describes a wide-ranging experience in Revelation 1, including noting the Christ he loved and who loved him, now revealed in His glory, it is entirely plausible that he sought to capture the details of the moment through allusion and metaphor where words would fail to describe the picture John sees.

Barnhill notes the emphasis placed on imagery within Apocalyptic literature, namely Revelation, in its original composition. Barnhill's analysis primarily deals with Greek philosophy; however, he notes that the usage of imagery in Rev 1:9-20 impacts the reception by the hearer. He argues that the success of the imagery usage should compel the reader to utilize their imagination to create mental pictures of the event that evoke a positive emotional response, "The way in which John appeals to ethos is not as much through the description of Christ

Visser, *Apocalypse as Utopian Expectation (800-1500): The Apocalypse Commentary of Berengaudus of Ferrières and the Relationship between Exegesis, Liturgy, and Iconography* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996).

¹²⁹ O'Hear, *Contrasting Images of the Book of Revelation*, 210.

(*ekphrasis*), but more that John appeals to Christ. Here John's own voice recedes and the voice of Christ emerges, which is the technique of 'making another speak in our place' to avoid a lack of confidence in the speaker."¹³⁰ While the original receiving community would have had confidence in John as the author or speaker, their trust in his message would have only increased through recognizing the imagery representing Christ as the one being revealed.

The Middle Ages offer a fresh perspective on biblical interpretation and exegesis that marks a shift from the traditional scholarship of the patristics to the artistic and visual representations that spread across Europe for most of the period. A noteworthy development in this era includes a deeper understanding of metaphor, imagery, and other devices that this dissertation argues were initially employed by John in his authorship of the Apocalypse. As the Councils and theologians of the era such as Augustine note, human limitations often cause difficulty in explaining the person of Christ. If this applies to post-apostolic theologians, one must imagine the reaction of one who knew Christ, namely John, to seeing Him fully revealed in His glory and his subsequent efforts to record his vision. The line of thought that begins to be fleshed out in the Middle Ages empathizes with John's usage of rhetorical devices and intertextual references to depict the apocalyptic vision. Subsequent generations would continue to use imagery, but issues for Christianity would soon abound despite its growth. In 1453, the crown jewel of Christian civilization at the time, Constantinople, was conquered by Muslims. The Catholic Church was operating corruptly yet claiming divine authority. The cracks beginning to show in the Catholic Church both morally and theologically led to the *95 Theses*, a document citing both the corruption and insufficient theological stances, being nailed to the

¹³⁰ Gregory M Barnhill, "Seeing Christ through Hearing the Apocalypse: An Exploration of John's Use of *Ekphrasis* in Revelation 1 and 19," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 39, no. 3 (2017): 235–257.

church door in Wittenberg by its author, Martin Luther. However, Revelation itself did not seem to warrant much attention from the most prominent Reformers. An examination of the contemporaries of the era comprises the next section of this review.

The Reformation

While writings on free will, indulgences, infant baptism, or other doctrines specifically targeting the Catholic Church abound during the Reformation, modern scholars note that Revelation in particular gave even the brightest scholars and strongest leaders a sense of hesitation when it came to putting pen to paper on the text itself. Witherington writes,

“It is not surprising that some of the Protestant Reformers were reluctant to make pronouncements about Revelation. Calvin, the great exegete, decided that this was the one New Testament book on which he would not do a commentary. Luther, when he wasn’t busy saying he didn’t understand Revelation, in his first preface to the book expressed serious doubts about its apostolicity and prophetic character, but in his second preface he became enthusiastic about the book, seeing it as chronicling church history (including his own period). John Wesley, in his *Explanatory Notes on the New Testament*, simply passed along the views of earlier exegetes, in particular Johannes Bengel, with the disclaimer that he didn’t necessarily think Bengel was correct but what he had to offer was better than the alternatives. To say that some of the major founding fathers of Protestantism did not know what to do with this book is an understatement.”¹³¹

Luther famously took issue with James, yet was also reluctant to accept Revelation as canonical. Luther’s stance on Revelation is summarized, “in my mind it bears upon it no marks of an apostolic or prophetic character. . . Every one may form his own judgment of this book; as for myself I feel an aversion to it and to me this is sufficient reason to reject it.”¹³² Whether for

¹³¹ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, xi.

¹³² P.F. O’Hare, *The Facts about Luther* (New York, NY: F. Pustet & Company, 1916). O’Hare attributes the original citation to *Sämmtliche Werke*. Additionally, *Works of Martin Luther*, 488-489 continues the quote “There is one sufficient reason for me not to think highly of it, Christ is not taught or known in it; but to teach Christ is the thing which an apostle is bound, above all else, to do.” Luther’s lack of admiration from Revelation stems

personal or theological reasons, Luther seemed to have an aversion to the Apocalypse and generally avoided citing it. However, the book could have bolstered many of Luther's theological tenets. However averse Luther was to Revelation, he had a peculiar interest in eschatology, identifying the church of Rome as the Antichrist or whore of Babylon.¹³³ This is not to say that there was no literature on Revelation within the Reformation period. In fact, Witherington explains that he received personal correspondence from Bauckham stating the contrary. Bauckham argues that some of the Reformers (Heinrich Bullinger, John Foxe, Mariam martyrs) had a keen apocalyptic sense and turned to Revelation as well as Daniel to achieve a greater understanding.¹³⁴ Though Bauckham is correct, a canonical interpretation of Revelation or any study outside of its eschatological content was rare. Despite the reluctance of some of the brightest minds of the Reformation to engage the text of Revelation, Balthasar Hubmaier is a theologian worth examining from this period.

Though Hubmaier is not one of the most widely recognized names from the Reformation, his works have proven to be integral to Anabaptist theology. Much like the Middle Ages, many in the Reformation felt that the end times were upon them. Much like Luther, many Reformers shared a historicist view of Revelation and made efforts to make sense of events in the surrounding world and even make forays into eschatological predictions. Thomas Müntzer identified Pentecost 1528 as the day of the Second Coming, while Hans Hut's *Sieben Urteile*

from his belief that the book does not teach Christ or His deeds clearly. E.T. Bachmann, ed., *Luther's Works* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959), 398.

¹³³ Walter Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline*, vol. 3, Classics of the Radical Reformation (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1981), 317.

¹³⁴ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, xi. For a complete argument, see Richard Bauckham, *Tudor Apocalypse* (Abingdon, Oxford: Sutton Courtney Press, 1978).

anticipated an imminent eschatological event in which Hut's followers believed they were to be participants.¹³⁵ However, Hubmaier actively condemned such practices,

“The day of the Lord is nearer to us than we expect. Therefore, we should be prepared in daily worship, piety, and the fear of God. Concerning this, I very strongly opposed Hans Hut and his followers when they hoodwinked the simple people by claiming a definite time for the last day, namely the next Pentecost. They convinced them to sell their property and leave wife and child, house and field behind, and are now without means of support. Thus, the poor people were convinced to follow him by a seductive error which arose out of ignorance of Scripture.”¹³⁶

Hubmaier's approach would be considered unloving and proud in the present, as he boastfully adds to the conclusion of his writing, “His [Hut's] calculations are in error which I seriously and openly flung into his face. I chastised him severely that he misled the simple people with his ungrounded claims.”¹³⁷ The ignorance of Scripture and these ungrounded claims spurned Hubmaier on even through threats of martyrdom. While Hubmaier has limited interactions with the text of Revelation in his works, he cites the book's conclusion. He references the warning not to add or take away from Scripture (Rev 22:18ff) immediately after demonstrating a canonical consciousness, “The Holy Scripture is such a whole, consistent, genuine, infallible, eternal, immortal Word that cannot wear away not can the smallest letter or the smallest point be changed.”¹³⁸ Hubmaier consistently takes a stance against the misuse of Revelation among other Scriptures, as several contemporaries would instead use the text to advance an agenda or particular prediction.

¹³⁵ Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline*, 317.

¹³⁶ Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline*, 324.

¹³⁷ Klaassen, ed., *Anabaptism in Outline*, 325.

¹³⁸ Balthasar Hubmaier, “Dialogue with Zwingli's Baptism Book,” in *Balthasar Hubmaier*, ed. H. Wayne Pipkin and John H. Yoder, *Classics of the Radical Reformation* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 229.

Many Christians today can appreciate the Reformation and the lineage their faith navigates through this crucial period. However, much like the previous ages, references to Revelation were sparse, and those who engaged in the book's study were relegated primarily to discussions on eschatology. It was not until recent history that works on the Christology in Revelation began to emerge, and it is to modern scholarship that this review turns to in the final section.

The Present Era: Recent Scholarship and the Path Forward

If the Reformation began a drip on the nearly dormant faucet of scholarship pertaining to the Christology of Revelation, the recent century has opened the floodgates. While much of the literature surrounding Revelation and other apocalyptic literature is preoccupied with the eschatological questions that the text inevitably brings out, a few scholars have taken note of a canonical or Christological interpretation of Revelation. In particular, while previous generations such as the patristics and Middle Ages argued whether Revelation had a place in the canon, some authors in modern scholarship, such as Tabb and Bauckham, note the closing canonical capstone, climax, or culmination that the Apocalypse brings. The overall call for canonical consciousness and awareness is parallel to this concept. Additionally, several significant developments in Christology have emerged; while centuries of scholars such as St. Thomas Aquinas and Irenaeus of Lyons recognized the OT figure of Christ and His Messianic identity, recent authors have contributed significantly to Messianic theology and prophecy unfolding in the New Testament.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Though they will not be discussed at length in this review, they are utilized throughout the dissertation. These works are as follows: Joshua W. Jipp, *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2020). Stanley E. Porter, *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007). Michael Rydelnik and Edwin Blum, eds., *The Moody Handbook of Messianic Prophecy: Studies and Expositions of the Messiah in the Old Testament* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2019).

The use of allusion, metaphor, typology, intertextuality, and other literary devices carries significant weight within the thesis statement, as John's authorial intent to draw the reader's attention to a canonical scope is primarily accomplished through the usage of these literary devices. The use of metaphor is not foreign to the arena of Christology. The heritage of metaphor can be linked to the inability of Chalcedon to find the perfect illustration for the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ through parts of history such as the German method of *Sachexegese* in the Middle Ages. As John depicts Christ as the subject of the apocalyptic vision, he implements these devices to pull imagery, descriptions, and titles of Jesus Christ from across the canon to portray the canonical Christ. D. Brent Sandy's contribution to examining apocalyptic language is critical in its application to identifying Jesus Christ as the subject of the apocalypse as he interprets John's usage of literary devices to describe Christ as divine. After concluding a survey of the various descriptions of Christ in Revelation, Sandy makes the following observation,

"In each of these theophanies, it is the same God. Yet each theophany gives a different description of the same God. Why? Because God is a mystery. Because human language is too limited to describe the unlimited God. Because there are only approximate ways for us to visualize God's transcendence, and none of them is adequate in itself. If we reflect on the Bible as a whole, the assignment to reveal God is a big challenge. To reveal him in a systematic way is impossible. Glimpses in many different settings and in extreme terms come together in a mosaic of mystery for understanding the transcendent deity. We have no other language besides metaphor with which to speak about God. . . Each appearance or description of God found in different chapters of the Bible is one piece of a puzzle; each piece is unique and adds something to our understanding of God."¹⁴⁰

This statement provides a crucial observation concerning the context of Revelation 1. The passage reveals the deity of Christ partially through metaphor, a device Sandy asserts is the only way that man can speak about an unlimited God. Continuing this line of thought, Sandy

¹⁴⁰ D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 77-78.

examines the account of Isaiah encountering Yahweh (Isa 6:1) and John's depiction of the exalted Christ,

“Whether Isaiah's or John's human encounters with the divine are out-of-this-world experiences-barely describable. Comparisons in the biblical record of ways God appears to suggest there is no single way to describe God in human terms. In one sense, the inadequacy of language to depict deity may frustrate us. But in another sense, that inadequacy reveals the most important truth: God is transcendent. We simply cannot describe Him. And if some think they can, they have minimized the splendor of Godness.”¹⁴¹

Before this dissertation's first exegetical foray into the text of Revelation 1, Sandy has identified the obstacle John would have faced in describing the exalted Christ. Given the nature of the present argument, Sandy offers critical insights into the various imagery, allusions, and metaphors used in apocalyptic literature and, in several cases, Revelation 1 specifically.

Christology is vastly explored in the modern era, with most systematic, biblical, and historical theology texts containing extensive sections on Christology. Numerous standalone Christological texts construct biblical or historical studies on the person and works of Christ. However, Christology within Revelation is relatively neglected, receiving a few references in some Scripture indexes within these texts.

One recent work in the Christological field that proved inspirational for this particular argument examines what the author calls a robust apocalyptic Christology. Dickson offers an examination of John's use of ἀρνίον (Rev 5). The emphasis for Dickson is the presentation of the ἀρνίον, with Christ's humility and glory being an intertwined paradox, noting the imagery of the lamb depicting a humble Christ that is glorified and worshipped by the nations.¹⁴² Critical to

¹⁴¹ Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, 170.

¹⁴² Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 85ff.

Dickson's approach is his usage of intertextuality to demonstrate the Christological concepts that are essential to his thesis. As Dickson works through the theology of ἀπνίov, he utilizes Christ's teachings on humility in the gospels, noting the glory in humility while also observing the theme of glory in humility in the Old Testament.¹⁴³ A similar approach is taken for this dissertation, as intertextuality is used throughout the Apocalypse and more centrally to the argument at hand, Revelation 1. Another appeal Dickson makes is for readers to not merely look for the prophetic meaning behind the text for fear that the reader will miss the authorial intent. "Many in an effort to explicate the prophetic elements of these verses fail to appreciate the theological and Christological message that is being presented by the author, particularly as it applies to this passage's interpretation of the Lamb."¹⁴⁴ Dickson's work is integral in paving the path for other Christological studies in the Apocalypse. Before naming Rev 1 specifically, Dickson asks, "If much has been gained from analysis of John's use of Lamb and the Christological implications thereof, might there be much to gain from similar analyses of other Christologically heavy phenomena in the book of Revelation?"¹⁴⁵ It is an analysis such as the one proposed by Dickson that this author endeavors upon in the present work with the expectation of demonstrating significant Christological implications from the Apocalypse.

Commentators enjoy forays into the textual mysteries of Revelation more frequently in the present than at any other time in history. While many take the view of the reformer John Calvin and would prefer not to write on Revelation, the desire for eschatological clarity has

¹⁴³ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 102-103.

¹⁴⁴ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 86.

¹⁴⁵ Dickson, *The Humility and Glory of the Lamb*, 132.

driven the pen of many theologians to the page. Many commentaries are typically viewed as practical, pastoral aids rather than tools for the academic arena. While hundreds of commentaries on the Apocalypse exist and dozens are cited later in this dissertation, two commentators, Witherington and Thomas, in particular, offer a robust exegesis of Revelation 1 that yields fruitful insight into the apocalyptic vision.¹⁴⁶

Witherington provides an excellent, visually descriptive commentary that he calls the first of its kind with his innovating socio-rhetorical approach. The book's cover reveals one of his work's more helpful exegetical sections, depicting a Greek alpha and omega. Moving to the content, Witherington's stance on Rev 1:8 is relatively unique among historical interpretations as well as those of his contemporaries. Witherington opts to take an even higher view of Christology in the passage, offering the following explanation, "we hear not only God's name predicated of the Lordly Christ, but he is called Alpha and Omega, letters than begin and end the Greek alphabet. Christ is the beginning and end of history, and by implication, He is in control of everything in between. It is plausible that this usage reflects Isa 44.6, where God [the Father] is called the first and the last."¹⁴⁷ Thomas offers evidence that the speaker could be the Father or the Son but seems to favor the Father as the speaker.¹⁴⁸ Fanning does not engage the idea of Christ as the speaker, yet notes, "Jesus Christ is the fulcrum point of the story of God's creation."¹⁴⁹ Witherington argues the approach that dates back to the earliest Christology

¹⁴⁶ The entirety of the views of these commentators are their own views and the citation of these authors does not essentially equate to an agreement with their works from the author of this dissertation.

¹⁴⁷ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 77.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 80-81.

¹⁴⁹ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 87-89.

articulated in the first-century literature discussed at the beginning of this chapter: that Christ redefined monotheism as the initial audience knew it, and John proudly demonstrates this newly defined monotheism with his descriptions of Christ. Additionally, Witherington adds significant insight into some of the lesser-explored rhetorical devices employed by John, such as the chiasmic pattern within the book's framework, which declares Christ as the proper object of worship within Revelation.¹⁵⁰ This particularly Christological approach to Revelation 1 sets Witherington apart as an integral commentator for this dissertation.

Thomas' commentary offers an expert exegesis with a specific focus on the intertextuality of Revelation. There is no stone left unturned within Thomas' work as he notes the various other occurrences of the vocabulary in Revelation 1. Thomas notes, "Of the 404 verses in the Apocalypse, 278 allude to the OT Scriptures. No other NT writer uses the OT more than this. Yet the book is marked by an entire absence of formal quotations from the OT. . . The author shows familiarity with the other books of the NT also. He uses these much in the same way as he does the OT."¹⁵¹ Not only does Thomas exhaustively cite intertextuality in Scripture, but he also offers solutions and reasoning for the usage of the particular version of the text being referenced and the methodology employed in the rhetoric. Though examples will not be elaborated on at this juncture, Thomas is a significant commentator who is frequently cited throughout this dissertation.

Intersecting with the content of Revelation is the idea of canonical consciousness or canonical theology. The premise behind this approach is to examine the nature of canonical

¹⁵⁰ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 78.

¹⁵¹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 40-41.

Scripture and how to determine the influence of tradition or other sources, such as systematic theology, on the interpretation of Scripture. Two essential authors that have advanced this methodology are Peckham and Spellman. Peckham argues for an intrinsic canon, “the intrinsic canon refers to those writings that are intrinsically canonical by virtue of what the canon is as the result of divine action.”¹⁵² In delineating precisely what he views as a canonical book, Peckham argues for apostolicity or propheticity in authorship, consistency with the rest of the canon and past revelation, evidence of divine authority or inspiration, and tradition.¹⁵³ Peckham’s point of significant note for this dissertation is his identification of Christ as the center of the canon, “At the epicenter of covenant and canon, then, stands Christ. Many have recognized Christ as the center of the canon theologically; the OT points toward the Christ event and is fulfilled (without being nullified) therein (cf. Matt 5:17-18; Heb 1:1-2). However, Christ is also the center of the canon in that (broadly speaking) he appears to ratify the OT and commission the NT.”¹⁵⁴ Peckham’s final noteworthy observation is the nature of Revelation 1 as a self-identifying prophetic testimony where John, an apostle, is divinely instructed to record the following events.¹⁵⁵ Spellman shares much of Peckham’s explanation of the history of the canon, including tests of canonicity and both transmission and receiving history. Spellman makes a noteworthy addition to the observation mentioned in Peckham’s work, noting the imperative in the Greek language (γράφον), “John is to write these things down in a book (εις βιβλίον). The word βιβλίον here has the sense of a complex, intentional composition. Thus, the command from Jesus is not a

¹⁵² Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 19.

¹⁵³ Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 33ff.

¹⁵⁴ Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 24.

¹⁵⁵ Peckham, *Canonical Theology*, 30, 43.

generic directive. John is to behold divinely inspired visions and recount them in a specific book that he is careful to compose. He is tasked with the active role of author as well as the relatively passive role of viewer.”¹⁵⁶ Spellman indicates that the presence and usage of βιβλίον indicates an authorial intent to pass down the words of the Apocalypse, which makes a compelling case for the canonical inclusion of Revelation. Additionally, the command and blessing to the reader in Rev 1:3 indicates what Spellman calls a high expectation for the upcoming content before noting that the chiasmic structure the text shares with Revelation’s final chapter is indicative of its canonical structure within itself.¹⁵⁷ Canonical consciousness is critical to understanding Scripture as a whole, but the intertextuality of Revelation 1 makes this concept particularly significant. Both Peckham and Spellman capture this importance expertly.

The breadth of Bauckham’s NT works is matched by his depth, and the reader can expect a varied bibliography of Bauckham’s works that speak to a variety of the facets found in the argumentation of this study. Bauckham’s *The Climax of Prophecy* contains a rich emphasis on the fulfillment of the OT Scriptures as well as the intertextuality of the Apocalypse with canonical NT books in circulation at the time of authorship. Bauckham notes the methodology of allusion John utilizes and argues that the intertextual relationship between Revelation and the OT is a significant factor in the meaning of the Apocalypse. Bauckham observes, “it is part of John’s meticulous literary artistry that he has worked into his work symbolic features which are not easily noticed. This is not surprising. He was writing a book which he intended to have a status comparable to the Old Testament prophetic books, and he could expect some readers to study it

¹⁵⁶ Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 209.

¹⁵⁷ Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 210.

with the same intensity with which he himself studied the Old Testament prophetic books.”¹⁵⁸

Bauckham’s studies of the numerology and repetition employed by John demonstrate a recognition of authorial intent, noting the significance of the statistics of Christological titles within the Apocalypse.¹⁵⁹ Of particular relevance to this study is Bauckham’s fourth chapter in *The Climax of Prophecy*, which focuses on the theme of the worship of Christ in Revelation.

Bauckham appeals to a shift in the monotheistic concept observed by the early Church in the Apostolic period,

“In the development of Christology in the primitive church, the emergence of the worship of Jesus is a significant phenomenon. In the exclusive monotheism of the Jewish religious tradition, as distinct from some other kinds of monotheism, it was worship which was the real test of monotheistic faith in religious practice. . . Jewish monotheism could not tolerate a mere spectrum between God and humanity; somewhere a firm line had to be drawn between God and creatures, and in religious practice it was worship which signaled the distinction between God and every creature, however exalted. . . Since the early church remained – or at least professed to remain – faithful to Jewish monotheism, the acknowledgement of Jesus as worthy of worship is a remarkable development.”¹⁶⁰

Bauckham observes this practice of the restriction of worship of creatures, namely angels, as it plays out in Revelation 1 to depict John’s Christology. His reaction of worship to the exalted Christ is an acceptance of the deity of Christ. Bauckham notes the chain of communication laid out in Rev 1:1: God, Jesus, angel, John, then Christians. In Bauckham’s view, this chain demonstrates significant authorial intent as Jesus is placed with God as the giver of the vision with a clear point of demarcation between the givers and the instruments of the vision. “The angel belongs with John as an instrument. Implicitly the monotheistic prohibition of the worship

¹⁵⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 30.

¹⁵⁹ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 34ff.

¹⁶⁰ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 118-119.

of angels does not prohibit the worship of Jesus. John has chosen to make his point about the authority for his prophecy by using a tradition about worship.”¹⁶¹ This is just one example of Bauckham’s mastery of understanding the context of Revelation in a canonical, climactic sense and the historical, social, and cultural contexts of the authorship.

Brian Tabb’s study cooperates well with Bauckham’s as he describes Revelation as the canonical capstone of Scripture. Tabb argues “that the Apocalypse presents itself as the climax of biblical prophecy that shows how various Old Testament prophecies and patterns find the consummation in the present and future reign of Jesus Christ, who decisively defeats His foes, saves His people and restores all things. As biblical prophecy, Revelation not only foretells the future but also calls for present obedience to God’s revealed truth.”¹⁶² Tabb divides the initial section of his work into three chapters, one for each person of the Trinity. Of particular note in Tabb’s work is his third chapter on Christ in Revelation, as he takes a comprehensive look at the titles of Christ in the Apocalypse. As noted with Witherington’s commentary, there is some debate concerning the voice of the Lord God and the title of “Alpha and Omega” in Rev 1:8. Tabb classifies the title under his section concerning God the Father, yet later in his discussion on Christ demonstrates that the title is identical to the undisputed description of Christ as the “first and last” in Rev 1:17. Tabb reflects his appreciation for the Christology in Revelation, “It is impossible to overstate the importance and centrality of Jesus in this book of prophecy. . . The disclosure of Jesus’ divine identity and activity in Revelation brings together seemingly divergent and contradictory categories.”¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 135.

¹⁶² Tabb, *All Things New*, 2.

¹⁶³ Tabb, *All Things New*, 64.

Tabb's thorough defense of Johannine Christology is appreciated, as is his approach to recognizing Revelation as a canonical culmination. Tabb's thesis paves the road for this dissertation which argues an intentional usage of intertextuality to demonstrate a canonical depiction of Christ. In his conclusion, Tabb notes that the idea of the Apocalypse as a canonical capstone weaves together various OT texts and solves mysteries described in the NT. Additionally, he ends by exhorting his audience to participate in true worship to God alone. This dissertation aims to accomplish a similar goal while demonstrating John's intentional employment of rhetorical devices to present a canonical Christ.

This modern literature review portrays a progression representative of this thesis itself. The argument of this dissertation flows from the authorial intent of John to demonstrate through his usage of literary devices, including allusions, metaphors, and typology, a canonical depiction of Christ. This is employed in his description of the primary figure in Revelation 1, as John uses a wealth of intertextual references within the initial chapter to reveal the identity of the individual being discussed. As the argument progresses, it becomes evident that the subject of Revelation 1 is Jesus Christ, and He has been the focal point of the redemptive story of the entire canon. The analysis of these literary devices in Revelation 1 and their indication of Christ as the central figure of the canon is detailed in the coming chapters. The assertion that Christ is the focal point of the redemptive story of the canon, but more specifically, the figure describing the apocalypse to John in Revelation 1, requires a careful examination of the remainder of the Revelation being given to John. Therefore, a study of the way intertextuality is woven throughout the book of Revelation and the intentional manner in which John authors the text is essential. As the first chapter of Revelation contains a wealth of Christology, the entire book of Revelation is a goldmine for Christology, both looking forward to the eschatological portrayal of

Christ while reflecting on the accomplished work of the incarnational and canonical Christ. Revelation is the final book of the canon; as such, it is naturally the last, culminating piece of the depiction of the canonical Christ. The authors who have argued for both canonical consciousness in theology and who have demonstrated that Revelation forms a capstone or climax of the entire canon have laid a solid foundation upon which to combine and build upon the central idea in this dissertation concerning the canonical portrayal of Christ in Revelation 1.

Conclusion

While this literature review is comprehensive, it does not claim to be exhaustive. A work detailing the complete history of the interpretation of Revelation, Christological studies, or canonical theology would take a far lengthier work than this one. However, the nature of this literature review should prepare the reader for the argument in the subsequent chapters as the multifaceted review indicates the multifaceted thesis that presents John's revelation of Christ as a canonical culmination. Additionally, as the work progresses, significant authors that write with particular relevance to particular chapters will be reviewed. As a fresh reminder of the thesis of this dissertation, in Revelation 1, John intentionally utilizes literary devices such as allusions, metaphors, and other literary devices from the entirety of Scripture to present a canonical and cumulative presentation of Christ and His work. It is to the defense of this thesis that this work now progresses, beginning with an examination of OT intertextuality in Rev 1.

Chapter 3: John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation 1

Introduction

It has been well noted in recent years that Revelation alludes to the OT with unprecedented frequency among NT books.¹⁶⁴ Contemporary scholars have debated the exact scope of John's usage of the OT as the formal citation seen in other parts of the NT is largely absent.¹⁶⁵ Osborne notes the gap in scholarship, declaring that while a complete work on Revelation's use of the OT was not written at the time of his publication, the study of these allusions is critical.¹⁶⁶ Beale notes the novelty of scholarship on the usage of the OT in Revelation, concluding that the topic had been widely ignored prior to the late 1970s, with only two major works and six journal articles being written on the subject as of his 1998 publication.¹⁶⁷ While the effort to understand the interpretation of the OT in Revelation is relatively fresh, this should not discredit the topic from scholarship. The vast majority of current scholarship appeals to the eschatological understanding of intertextuality, as eschatology has dominated the scope of apocalyptic studies for centuries. In addition to the eschatology of the Apocalypse, a robust exegesis of John's usage of the OT in Revelation reveals a high Christology. This section of the study aims to hone in on the specific allusions or rhetorical devices utilized in Revelation 1 that reference the OT and reveal these Christological truths. The

¹⁶⁴ Thomas notes "of the 404 verses in the Apocalypse, 278 allude to the OT Scriptures. No other NT writer uses the OT more than this." Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 40.

¹⁶⁵ For example, there an absence of citation structure such as "ἔστιν γεγραμμένον" or "it is written" that occurs in the NT when authors quote Jesus citing the OT or cite the text themselves.

¹⁶⁶ Osborne observes, "these allusions are as essential to understanding the book as the symbolism. Virtually every point made comes in some way via an OT allusion." Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 2.

¹⁶⁷ Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 13.

frequency of apocalyptic intertextuality with prophetic books in the OT demonstrates a shared attribute of persecution or oppression amongst the receiving community. According to Green and McDonald, “it is widely held that apocalypticism arises within groups who are oppressed and marginalized. . . the function of apocalyptic literature is a by-product of its social location. In many ways, the writings are tracts for hard times in which the faithful are exhorted and encouraged to hang on in the midst of opposition and persecution.”¹⁶⁸ This observation is helpful as the eschatological understanding of the prophets around the exilic period has commonality with John’s eschatological description of Christ. This distinction is significant to remember throughout the current chapter. Following a brief review of the recent scholarship pertaining directly to OT intertextuality in Revelation and an overview of the methodology, this work will move through the occurrences as they appear in Revelation 1 with the intent of proving John’s intentional usage of the OT to depict a canonically conscious portrait of Christ.

Recent Scholarship on OT Intertextuality in Revelation

The late 20th century produced a wave of contemporary scholars eager to delve into John’s use of the OT in Revelation. One of the earliest of this movement, Beale notes the overall reliance of the apocalyptic author on Daniel 7-12 as his primary apocalyptic foundation while utilizing other OT texts to bolster and augment his apocalyptic and eschatological understanding.¹⁶⁹ Beale’s scholarship strives to reconcile the contextual issues that have baffled apocalyptic scholars for centuries, ultimately opting for a mediating position between John’s

¹⁶⁸ Green and McDonald, eds., *The World of the New Testament*, 260-261.

¹⁶⁹ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 15.

interpretation of Daniel for Daniel's contemporary audience and his own. "In the case of John, the understanding of Christ's death and resurrection and the resulting formation of the church in the midst of persecution certainly influenced his understanding of Daniel and how he viewed it as beginning fulfillment. On the other hand, despite varying degrees of creative exegesis, the apocalyptic authors and John were seen to show respect for the Old Testament contexts to which they were making reference."¹⁷⁰ In other words, Beale argues that John views Daniel and other OT texts as the inauguration or initial prophecy concerning the future fulfillment of prophecy in Christ while still demonstrating a consciousness of their context.

Beale's concept of prophetic fulfillment is integral to the discussion of the present chapter. He notes the priority John places on the original context of the OT as John seems to consciously respect the theological contours of the OT authors. Beale contests, "the reader unfamiliar with the OT is hard-pressed to make any sense of Revelation. In this respect, one certainly should read Revelation in the light of the OT, but not in a pedantically 'literal' fashion. Nevertheless, while the old interprets the new, the new also interprets the old – Scripture interprets Scripture."¹⁷¹ While respecting the context of the OT prophet, Beale opts to give John the final word in the interpretation of prophecy as John enjoys an advanced position in the redemptive-historical scope of revelation and is given the task of unpacking prior revelation by building on and developing the previous revelation rather than separating the prophecy from its original context.¹⁷² The significance of John's prophetic position is highlighted in Beale's

¹⁷⁰ Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 15.

¹⁷¹ Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1088.

¹⁷² Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1088. Greene also identifies several intertextual allusions as "not a pale imitation of the old but its true successor." Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 119.

commentary on Revelation. He interprets Rev 1:3 as John's self-attestation of his prophetic status following the OT prophets' mold as prophetic rather than predictive. He defines John's desire, "to divine disclosure demanding an ethical response, in line with OT 'prophecy,' which primarily addresses present situations and only secondarily foretells."¹⁷³

The most unique aspect of Beale's extensive studies of the Apocalypse's use of the OT is Beale's suggestion to shift the terminology used to describe the relationship between the two works from "allusion" or "reference" to the term "dependence."¹⁷⁴ He lists three categories of dependence: (1) a clear dependence which indicates identical word order to an OT text form that has an identical meaning, (2) a probable dependence which identifies intertextuality where the text forms show some links either through form or unique ideology, (3) a possible dependence or echo which indicates some parallel textual structure or thought that is in a more general sense than the previous two possibilities.^{175 176} The idea of choosing the term "dependence" over other established markers such as "allusion" has traction in Beale's cited study of five apocalyptic references to Daniel which indicate reliance upon a LXX text form. However, the nature of the intertextuality in Revelation and its lack of formal citation is a factor that makes the universal application of Beale's framework difficult.¹⁷⁷ As will be discussed, John's dependence on a

¹⁷³ Beale, *The Book of Revelation.*, 184-185. For further reading on John's identity in the prophetic line, see David Cashmore, "Extending the Prophetic Horizon: Where Did John of Patmos Get All That Stuff?," *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice* 18, no. 4 (November 2010): 2-9.

¹⁷⁴ Beale, "A Reconsideration of the Text of Daniel in the Apocalypse," *Biblica* 67, no. 4 (1986): 543.

¹⁷⁵ Beale credits Paulien for the depth of his studies on the term "echo", calling it his primary contribution to the study of the OT in Revelation. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 20.

¹⁷⁶ Beale, "A Reconsideration of the Text of Daniel in the Apocalypse," 543.

¹⁷⁷ Formal citation is seen throughout the rest of the NT in intertextuality with the OT, usually utilizing what Moyise calls introductory formulae. In contrast, Revelation weaves its words and phrases back into its own

Hebrew/Aramaic or Greek *vorlage* is the subject of heavy debate in scholarship.¹⁷⁸ Given the possibility that John utilized multiple forms of the OT, it is challenging to declare a dependence on one form definitively. Nonetheless, Beale has made significant contributions across numerous works that provide helpful studies in OT fulfillment, the use of the LXX, and the advocacy for examining OT dependencies/allusions on a case-by-case basis.

A significant contribution that is not included in the scope of this work yet provides an important limitation is the discussion of the term “echo.” Jon Paulien articulates the term that has gained traction in apocalyptic and prophetic studies since his 1988 work. He defines an echo as a form of allusion, a “live symbol” that is unconsciously used by the author and has been divorced from its original context.¹⁷⁹ In fairness to Paulien, he primarily utilizes echo in examining the intertextuality of Revelation and non-canonical apocalyptic literature, as he believes the historical understanding of John’s use of non-canonical literature to be heavily overestimated. However, the danger of his presentation is that he does not entirely exclude John’s use of the OT from his category of “echoes.” Paulien argues that symbols would have been diffused into society in a widespread manner and that the presence of such a representation does not guarantee intertextuality. Paulien examines this type of indirect reference in the context of the apocalypse through his understanding of the trumpets in Revelation 8. One example he uses in his argumentation is the idea of vegetation representing the people of God in the OT (Ps 1:3; Isa 5:1-

composition. Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 115 (T&T Clark, 2014), 13.

¹⁷⁸ *Vorlage* is defined as the base text or original source from which the author drew.

¹⁷⁹ Jon Paulien, *Decoding Revelation’s Trumpets: Literary Allusions and the Interpretation of Revelation 8:7-12*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series 11 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1988), 175.

7; Jer 2:21) and in Revelation as being protected by God's judgment (Rev 7:1-3, 9:4) or destroyed by God's judgment (Rev 8:7).¹⁸⁰ While the implications of this text are certainly an interpretative issue due to the symbolism, the suggestion that John would have unknowingly referred to two of his most cited OT books is improbable.¹⁸¹

Scholars have offered additional feedback on the concept of "echoes." Osborne clarifies that echoes represent a thematic connection to a text rather than a linguistic connection.¹⁸² This definition is more succinct and defensible than the one given by Paulien. Beale critiques the explanation offered in Paulien's dissertation,

"He defines an 'echo' as a symbol or wording which has been separated from its original context, and whose core meaning is determined by observing a recurring similar pattern of use elsewhere in the Old Testament. Paulien's analysis of 'echoes' is an advancement in the study of allusions, though his definition is too brief and further clarification is still needed. One problem is that, though he views 'echoes' as unconscious and unintentional, he nevertheless seems to consider them to have a similar degree of allusive validity as his category of intentional 'probable allusions'."¹⁸³

Paulien's study is constructive, as he elaborates on four categories for allusions, filling the gap between certain allusions and non-allusions with probable and uncertain allusions. Here, he makes an error in his study as the criteria are subjective and the categories of probable and uncertain allusions lack distinction between them.¹⁸⁴ Beale adds to the criticism of the use of

¹⁸⁰ Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 176.

¹⁸¹ In terms of the actual number of allusions to the OT in Revelation, the top four most frequently cited are Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and Psalm in that order. Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1082.

¹⁸² Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 24.

¹⁸³ G.K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 20.

¹⁸⁴ Paulien makes the distinction that uncertain allusions should not be considered in interpretation. However, his unclear criteria contribute to a lack of distinction in his categorization. Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets*, 235.

echo and uncertain allusions indicating that Paulien has lacked attentiveness to the Jewish exegetical tradition of the OT allusions that John utilizes in Revelation, “the presupposition for considering the validity of an allusion is the demonstration that the author could have had familiarity with the body of literature from which the purported allusion is a part.”¹⁸⁵

While Paulien’s dissertation is helpful for understanding authentic allusions, his conclusion stops short of attributing authorial intentionality to John. Instead, he argues for seemingly absentminded echoes in some cases. An “echo” is unlikely for an individual as well versed in the OT as John the apostle and an impossibility in the verbal plenary view advocated for in chapter one of this work. With an understanding of John’s affinity for and familiarity with the OT text, the optimal path to follow in this study is to attribute intentionality to his allusions and rhetorical devices. It is unlikely John would have nonchalantly penned a reference to the Scripture he both knew and took seriously. During the apocalyptic vision, John would have been aware of the role of an authoring prophet serving as the mouthpiece of Yahweh. It is worth reintroducing a quote from Bauckham cited previously,

“It seems that John not only writes in the tradition of the Old Testament prophets but understands himself to be writing at the climax of the tradition, when all the eschatological oracles of the prophets are about to be finally fulfilled, and so he interprets and gathers them up into his own prophetic revelation. What makes him a Christian prophet is that he does so in the light of the fulfillment already of the Old Testament prophetic expectation in the victory of the Lamb, the Messiah Jesus.”¹⁸⁶

John is well aware of the OT, utilizing it intentionally, and as Beale has noted, John views himself in the same line of prophecy as the OT prophets. This conclusion narrows the scope of Paulien’s study to either certain allusions or non-allusions. This chapter has a limited

¹⁸⁵ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 19-20.

¹⁸⁶ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, xiii.

range of allusions deployed by John in Revelation 1 that carry significant textual evidence demonstrating definite allusions. Despite disagreement with Paulien's methodology, he has made vital contributions to contemporary apocalyptic studies in several areas pertinent to the use of the OT, including text forms, allusions, and Jewish exegetical methods.¹⁸⁷

If Beale represents one side of the argument, Paulien finds himself mediating between Moyise and Beale. While this author leans towards Beale's understanding of John's use of the OT in the sense of his knowledge and preservation of the OT context, Moyise's corpus of work provides some insights. Like Beale, he advocates for a case-by-case study of intertextual occurrences in Revelation. However, Moyise takes issue with asserting intertextuality,¹⁸⁸ indicating that the NT occurrence of an OT text would "not accept this relocation without a fight (so to speak), but reminds the reader that it once belonged to a different context. A dynamic is thereby established in which the new affects the old and the old affects the new."¹⁸⁹ This conclusion is correct, as the NT is best read in light of the OT and vice versa, as canonical consciousness has been argued to be a critical factor in this dissertation.

Moyise utilizes the same argument in a two-fold fashion that reaches a different conclusion from Beale, (1) intertextuality produces a different perspective to the observation that some of the OT quotations are taken out of context, (2) the presence of a quotation of allusion

¹⁸⁷ For additional contributions from Jon Paulien, see "Dreading the Whirlwind: Intertextuality and the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 5–22. Additionally, Beale's rebuttal to this article follows. G. K. Beale, "A Response to Jon Paulien on the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 23–33.

¹⁸⁸ See also Steve Moyise, "Intertextuality and the Book of Revelation," *The Expository Times* 104, no. 10 (July 1993): 295–298. Steve Moyise, "Intertextuality and the Use of Scripture in the Book of Revelation?," *Scriptura* 84 (2003): 391–401.

¹⁸⁹ Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 18.

means that the clues that enable interpretation to take place are coming from two separate sources. On the first point, he concludes, “since context is essential for meaning, there is in fact no possibility that a quotation can bear the same meaning in a new composition as it did in the old. The actual words might be the same, but all the factors that affect interpretation have changed.”¹⁹⁰ On the second, he likens the two locations or sources of the same text producing a noise similar to an incorrectly tuned radio dial that causes tension for the listener. In asserting that there is no possibility that the quotation can bear the same meaning in a new composition as it did in the old, Moyise stands opposed to the view of direct Messianic fulfillment espoused in this chapter. To assert any intertextuality, Moyise would need to stand in or near the camp of *sensus plenior*, the idea that the OT writers were writing about concepts they did not understand. A rejection of this idea is included later in the chapter. On the idea that the NT context overrides the OT context, Moyise finds companionship in Swete, “the writer has not once quoted the Old Testament and rarely uses its *ipsissima verba*. Seldom does he borrow from it a scene or the suggestion of a vision without modifying the details, departing from his original with the utmost freedom, or combining features which have been brought together from different contexts.”¹⁹¹

Beale offers a solution that he calls “progressive revelation,”

“In terms of a ‘cash value’ of a given prophecy, this approach argues that John ought to have the final word, since he is interpreting from a redemptive-historical stance of greater ‘progressive revelation’ and ‘unpacks’ the earlier revelation. This is merely to say that progressive revelation is crucial in understanding the OT and John’s book, as it is for all of the NT. On the other hand, of course, such ‘progressive revelation’ must not be separated from prior revelation, since it builds on and develops the earlier revelation with hermeneutical integrity.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 19.

¹⁹¹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, xlix.

¹⁹² Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1088.

This chapter's methodology argues that the shape of the canon is Messianic and that the OT authors were consciously writing about the Messiah. Under this presupposition, it is reconcilable to understand that while the chronological sequence may be different for OT authors compared to John, the meaning is the same (See "The Things Which Must Soon Take Place" later in this chapter for an example of this concept).

An additional facet of Moyise's study places the meaning of the text in the hands of the reader rather than the writer. Like the radio analogy described earlier, the reader must decide which station to tune in to. In fairness to Moyise, he rejects the idea that a reader can make a passage mean whatever they would like. However, he does question the attainability of authorial intent and its significance, bemoaning the centuries of interpretative discord among scholars, "If authorial intention is so vital for interpretation, then I would suggest that we are in a perilous state, particularly for the book of Revelation."¹⁹³ The juxtaposition of Beale and Moyise is perhaps best captured in the following quote, "On the view that John's use of Scripture results in a fixed meaning, the task of the reader is to find ways of discovering it. But on the view that John offers us an intersection of textual surfaces, the reader has a much more active role to play."¹⁹⁴ Placing the interpretative weight on the reader undermines the human and divine author and carries dangerous hermeneutical implications. Though authorial intention has found diminishing support in recent scholarship, it is an integral part of the present dissertation to assert that John

¹⁹³ Steve Moyise, "Authorial Intention and the Book of Revelation," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 39, no. 1 (2001): 35–36.

¹⁹⁴ Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 23.

intentionally utilizes the canon to demonstrate the canonical Christ in his inaugural apocalyptic vision.¹⁹⁵

There are certainly more than these three authors who have contributed to the present discussion. However, most scholars find themselves within the camp of one of these three scholars who have regularly interacted with and been at the forefront of the discussion of John's use of the OT for approximately 35 years at the time of the present work. The arguments of these authors have provided the framework for the discussions in the following sections regarding the methodology for interpreting John's use of the OT and identifying the textual tradition from which he wrote.

OT Intertextual Analysis Methodology

While the methodology of interpretation was discussed in the opening chapter of this study, a specific choice has to be made when dealing with the understanding of the New Testament's use of the Old Testament. Chou espouses, "sensitivity to intertextuality helps us bridge exegesis to theology for we follow the connections [the authors] made. Their intertextual work not only shows that they did theology but also shows how we obtain their theological message."¹⁹⁶ As a refresher, the hermeneutical methodology chosen for this dissertation reflects all three areas of history, literature, and theology with a heavier emphasis on literature and

¹⁹⁵ For a history of the reception of authorial intent and a positive argument asserting the significance of authorial intent, See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Meaning of Meaning," in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 29-46.

¹⁹⁶ Abner Chou, *The Hermeneutics of the Biblical Writers: Learning to Interpret Scripture from the Prophets and Apostles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2018), 229.

theology.¹⁹⁷ The literary analysis is done via the concept delineated in Köstenberger and Patterson's work which demands a canonical interpretation - interpreting the individual parts (words or phrases) in light of the whole (the canon).¹⁹⁸ The theological study is also conducted through a canonical lens by examining the direct fulfillment of OT messianic prophecy in Rev 1.¹⁹⁹ In addition, the methodology presented advocates for canonical consciousness.²⁰⁰ This canonical literary and theological approach frames the methodology through which the text is interpreted, but the critical issue of the text itself remains unaddressed up to this point.

The second chapter of this dissertation revealed that the social environment surrounding apostolic and patristic literature influenced the authorial intent as Scripture speaks to various social situations and the interpreters of Scripture apply the text to their context. Similarly, the author's textual culture impacts the authorship and interpretation of the text. With John's apostolic authorship presupposed, examining the text reveals several clues that suggest the author's mother tongue was likely Hebrew.²⁰¹ This further bolsters the idea that John the apostle

¹⁹⁷ See Andreas J. Köstenberger and Richard D. Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*.

¹⁹⁸ Köstenberger and Patterson, *Invitation to Biblical Interpretation*, 25.

¹⁹⁹ Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 27-33.

²⁰⁰ Spellman is quoted in the first chapter directly supporting the connection of the OT and NT through intertextual references which are seen in Revelation among other NT works. Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 178-179. See also Peckham, *Canonical Theology*.

²⁰¹ This argument stems from Mussies' argument concerning morphology and variety of participles in the text. Mussies states "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." The two causes for this "bilingual" textual phenomenon are (1) the influence of the Hebrew/Aramaic on the Greek with the former language being the mother tongue. (2) the author had no mastery of Greek and wrote the Apocalypse in his mother tongue with the translation into Greek coming later. Mussies ultimately does not choose between these two until his conclusion in which he opts to differentiate between the author of the Apocalypse and the author of the Johannine Epistles. While this author disagrees with his final conclusion, his presentation of Hebraisms is helpful. Gerard Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek as Used in the Apocalypse of St. John: A Study in Bilingualism*, *Novum Testamentum Supplements* 27 (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1971), 311; 352-353.

is the author, as the background of the text is also notably Hebrew.²⁰² Given the identity of John as the author and his distinct Hebrew background, it is essential to examine the elements contributing to John's authorship. Witherington notes,

“John had actual visionary experiences but [that] this work is not a mere transcript of such experiences but the literary repristinating of them. One must also take into account John's previsionary influences, as well as his postvisionary redaction of his source material. It is neither a purely literary product nor a mere exercise in exegesis of the OT texts, but some combination of revelation, reflection, and literary composition.”²⁰³

In light of this observation and the possibility of the scribal practices of the first century influencing John on either side of the apocalyptic vision, scrutinizing the textual culture of the first century is a worthwhile foray.

The various Hebrew hermeneutical methods employed in the first century would have, at the very least, influenced the textual culture from which John wrote. At most, these hermeneutical methods potentially could have affected John's scribal choices when describing the apocalyptic vision detailed in Rev 1. *Peshat* (פְּשָׁט) is the most common interpretative method employed by Hebrew Bible scholars, and the widely accepted post-apostolic definition indicates a “plain meaning of the text,” which stands in contrast to *derash* (דְּרַשׁ), the “hidden meaning of

²⁰² Farrer notes that John was a Hebrew name at the time of Revelation's authorship and was not adopted by Gentile Christian families until a later date. He also attests to the character of the writing of Revelation indicating a Hebrew author. Farrer provides a noteworthy summary of the Hebrew elements of the text, “In Revelation, the visionary experiences, the calendrical schemes, and symbolisms of the elements, the Jewish lore, the angelology, and the strictness of legal rule are brought into entire subjection to Christ; but they are all there nonetheless.” A. Farrer, *The Revelation of St. John Divine: Commentary on the English Text* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 37-38.

²⁰³ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 14. It is worth noting that the quote in context is an analysis of Fekkes' quote, “For all that Revelation is visionary, it is not *ad hoc*. And for all that its use of Scripture is implicit, it is not superficial. Jan Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development*, The Library of New Testament Studies (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 290.

the text.”²⁰⁴ As פָּשַׁט appears in the Hebrew Bible (Lev 6:4, 1 Sam 19:24, Eze 26:16, et al.), the semantic range includes “to strip off, make a dash, stretch out, extend, or make plain.”²⁰⁵ Additionally, פָּשַׁט is paralleled in some instances in the LXX by ἀποκαλύπτω, which carries four possible definitions: (1) to uncover and bring into view what is invisible, (2) to remove a cover or a veil from, (3) to bring into the open, make public knowledge of, (4) to make known what is unknown.²⁰⁶ At a linguistic level, it would be feasible to assert that the parallels between פָּשַׁט and ἀποκαλύπτω (the origin word for John’s Greek title of the Apocalypse, ἀποκάλυψις) may indicate John’s preference for this hermeneutical method. However, scholars such as Loewe argue that such a definition of *peshat* is anachronistic, a sentiment that Brewer echoes, arguing that the view was necessitated by the variety of exegetical methods presented in the post Tannaitic or Amoraic eras as rabbis strayed into more of a *derash* interpretation of Scripture.²⁰⁷ Halivni does not divorce the historical usage of *peshat* from its definition, arguing that before and during the Talmudic period rabbis preferred the “simple, plain meaning” over the *derash* citing the three utterances of “no text can be deprived of its *peshat*” within the *Talmud*.²⁰⁸ Brewer offers five criteria that are never explicitly stated but heavily alluded to in first-century Hebrew scribal practice when utilizing *peshat*. Two, in particular, are worth considering when

²⁰⁴ David I Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 30 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 14.

²⁰⁵ BDB, s.v. פָּשַׁט , 832.

²⁰⁶ GELS, s.v. ἀποκαλύπτω, 75.

²⁰⁷ Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, 14.

²⁰⁸ David Weiss Halivni, “The Meaning and History of the Noun Peshat,” in *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1998), 52-54.

analyzing John's use of the OT in Revelation: that Scripture does not have a secondary meaning and that there is only one valid text form of Scripture.²⁰⁹

In response to the first of Brewer's criteria, the danger of considering John's usage of the OT as strictly *peshat* is the assumption of the author's knowledge of the primary meaning. An example of this can be found in most Messianic texts, such as Daniel 7 and the reference to the Son of Man. For evangelical scholars such as Tanner, this is "one of the most profound messianic prophecies in the Old Testament."²¹⁰ On the contrary, scholars such as Buchanan deny any connection to the Messiah based on elements such as the simile expressing "one like a Son of Man," indicating the presentation of a mythical figure.²¹¹ Throughout Scripture, there is significant evidence that points to Christ as the fulfillment of this specific prophecy, most notably the fact that Jesus' frequent reference to Himself is a reference to this title.²¹² Additionally, He utilizes a direct allusion to Daniel 7 in His teaching on its connection with the Second Coming (Matt 24:30-39, Luke 21:27-31). This particular reference will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. However, the emphasis of this example is a denial of supporting John's understanding of the OT as strictly *peshat*.²¹³

²⁰⁹ Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, 165, 169-171.

²¹⁰ J. Paul Tanner, "Daniel 7:13-27: The Glorious Son of Man," in *MHMP*, 1127.

²¹¹ G. W. Buchanan, *The Book of Daniel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2005), 190. Throughout his commentary, Buchanan sides with Porphyry (232 A.D. – 305 A.D.) in identifying much of Daniel as being fulfilled through Judas Maccabeus. He cites Jerome's argumentation against Porphyry's view, but ultimately points towards the Maccabean rebellion as the fulfillment of prophecy rather than the Second Coming. This skepticism stems to a presupposition that Daniel was not genuinely authored by Daniel but rather in the second century BC by Antiochus IV Epiphanes or another author. G. W. Buchanan, *The Book of Daniel*, 389.

²¹² The use of "Υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου" or "Son of Man" appears approximately 84 times in the Gospels and is usually a self-designation by Jesus.

²¹³ It is noteworthy on the topic of Hebrew hermeneutical strategies that the text of Daniel 7 is originally Aramaic, though it appears in Hebrew in the MT.

On Brewer's second point, *peshat* loyalists in the scribal community would never have condoned using texts such as the LXX or the *Targums*.²¹⁴ Scholars such as Garrick Allen argue in several circumstances that John is utilizing a Greek *vorlage* of the OT.²¹⁵ Based on these two criteria for an accurate *peshat* reading of the OT, it is evident that John did not adhere to a strictly *peshat* reading of the OT but instead authored Revelation in a way that protected the integrity of the original text while also pointing to fulfillment in the NT. John's use of the OT is unique from that of other NT authors. Royalty argues, "It is not pesher, midrash, or rewritten Bible; it contains nothing that could clearly be called a quotation, a fulfillment formula, or a typology. And yet the Apocalypse is 'a tissue of quotations,' soaked with scriptural references from around the Bible."²¹⁶

Classifying John's exact Hebrew hermeneutical method would be an extrabiblical assumption, but he provides textual clues concerning his view of the fulfillment of Scripture. The classification of John's hermeneutic becomes difficult compared to the Gospels or the Pauline corpus, as these bear similarities to other rabbinic works. However, John's usage in Revelation offers a unique approach. Comparing Revelation to the rest of the NT, Moyise offers, "The book of Revelation, however, never uses the introductory formulae to introduce its Old Testament references, but weaves its words and phrases into its own composition."²¹⁷ He connects this

²¹⁴ Brewer, *Techniques and Assumptions in Jewish Exegesis before 70 CE*, 171.

²¹⁵ This concept is discussed deeper in the next section. See Allen, ed., "Textual Pluriformity in Jewish and Christian Antiquity," in *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 39–104.

²¹⁶ Robert M Royalty and Robert M Jr Royalty, "Don't Touch This Book!: Revelation 22:18-19 and the Rhetoric of Reading (in) the Apocalypse of John," *Biblical Interpretation* 12, no. 3 (2004): 282.

²¹⁷ Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 14.

unique approach with the reason for the neglect of the study of the use of the OT in Revelation. Edersheim notes 456 references to the Messiah within the OT. Yet, many of these were not echoed in rabbinical literature due to the particular utilization of *derash*, *peshar* (exact reading or close paraphrase of the text that shows fulfillment in contemporary, usually Intertestamental events), or *sod* (the hidden, mystical, supernatural bearing of Scripture).²¹⁸ Based on the unique textual form of the OT allusions in Revelation and the Messianic oversight in many rabbinic interpretations, perhaps an alternate view is the most beneficial for understanding John's use of the OT.

The method employed in this dissertation for understanding John's understanding of the OT is similar to the direct fulfillment methodology proposed by scholars in the camp of Rydelnik, Blum, and Sailhamer among others.²¹⁹ Kaiser critiques the extrabiblical assumption of John's Hebrew hermeneutical method, calling such presuppositions "dubious" in specific reference to Edersheim's shortcomings in Messianic interpretation.²²⁰ Immediately following this section, Rydelnik and Blum lay out three essential views concerning the Hebrew Bible's revelation of the Messiah: (1) The Bible is God's inspired and authoritative Word. (2) All of the

²¹⁸ A. Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), 163. See Appendix IX in this volume for a full list of Messianic passages and their rabbinic interpretation.

²¹⁹ There are several scholars that advocate for the presence of Christ in the OT. For example Longman argues that Christ is the *telos* or goal of the OT as he asserts, "it appears incontestable that Jesus is indeed in the OT." Tremper Longman III, "Christotelic Approach," in *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament*, ed. Brian J. Tabb and Andrew M. King (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022), 73-75. Four other mediating views concerning the revelation of Christ in the OT are discussed in this source. For further study, see Brian J. Tabb and Andrew M. King, eds., *Five Views of Christ in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2022).

²²⁰ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "Foreword," in *MHMP*, 11.

Hebrew Bible reveals the Messiah. (3) The Hebrew Prophets understood they were writing about the Messiah.²²¹

The notion that the prophets understood that they were writing about the Messiah is perhaps the most contested, yet it is the most vital concerning authorial intent. In John's Gospel, Jesus cites the work of Moses (the Torah) as being written about Him (Jn 5:45-47). In contrast to Jewish teaching of the first century, Moses is cited as the accuser of Israel rather than the intercessor for Israel. Carson notes the implications of Moses as the accuser, "If scrupulous adherence to the law brings people to hope for salvation in the law itself and to reject the Messiah to whom the law pointed, then the law itself, and its human author, Moses, must stand up in outraged accusation."²²² Jesus Himself cites the reason for the change in Moses' position concerning the Israelites - their rejection of Jesus and Moses' teachings regarding Him. Borchert notes that the literary context of this passage also demonstrates Christ as the Lord of the festivals as the first stage of the festival cycle had been completed. "The chapter is a moving illustration of Jesus as Lord of the festivals and of the fact that He came to His own people but they did not receive Him (Jn 1:11)."²²³ For Rydelnik and Blum, this passage is an essential example of the case for their third principle, that the prophets themselves understood that the Messiah was their subject matter. "How could Moses be the one to accuse them if he himself did not understand his

²²¹ Rydelnik and Blum, eds., *MHMP*, 26.

²²² D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 266.

²²³ Borchert, *NAC: John 1-11*, 248.

own words? For Jesus' words to have any force. Moses needed not only to write about the Messiah but also to understand that he was writing about the Messiah."²²⁴

The emphasis on authorial intention pertaining to Messianic typology and fulfillment finds a small niche among many modern scholars' text-critical views. Sailhamer strongly argues for reading the intent of the OT authors as Messianic,

“The books of the OT were written as the embodiment of a real, messianic hope—a hope in a future miraculous work of God in sending a promised Redeemer. This was not an afterthought in the Hebrew Bible. This was not the work of final redactors. I believe the messianic thrust of the OT was the whole reason the books of the Hebrew Bible were written. In other words, the Hebrew Bible was not written as the national literature of Israel. It probably also was not written to the nation of Israel as such. It was rather written, in my opinion, as the expression of the deep-seated messianic hope of a small group of faithful prophets and their followers.”²²⁵

Osborne, having already been cited for his notation of the significance of understanding allusions in Revelation in the opening paragraph of this chapter, follows up with the identification of typology as the interpretative key to understanding the OT due to the numerous allusions in Revelation specifically. “The key interpretive element is typology. As in the Gospels with Jesus, now the current time of trouble and the final conflagration are presented as reliving and fulfilling the prophecies of the OT.”²²⁶ Postell provides a helpful discussion of specific typological instances, concluding, “though many frequently try to understand the OT through the lens of the NT, this study in OT typology has shown that the OT illuminates the NT and provides a fuller and more meaningful context for identifying Jesus as the One of whom Moses in the Law

²²⁴ Rydelnik and Blum, eds., *MHMP*, 27.

²²⁵ John H Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44, no. 1 (March 2001): 22–23.

²²⁶ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 2.

and the Prophets did indeed write (Jn 1:45).”²²⁷ Moyise, who has been noted for his emphasis on the reader rather than the author in the interpretative process, concedes that some references are intentionally typological.²²⁸ Revelation was written to a real, contemporary audience, just as Daniel, Ezekiel, and Zechariah were written to an original audience. However, the implications for future generations can be summarized by highlighting the Messianic prophecy as John does in Revelation 1. The significant conclusion from these arguments is that Revelation 1 is best interpreted in light of the OT and the typology and Messianic prophecy within the texts alluded to provide the key to understanding the implications of the text.

The understanding that Revelation, among other NT texts, is best read in light of the OT summarizes one of the three tenets of Rydelnik’s compositional/canonical approach in his position of direct Messianic fulfillment in the text. The three tenets of his approach, shared by Sailhamer and Horbury, are “(1) The books of the Hebrew Bible were composed with a Messianic intent. (2) The final canonical shape highlighted the original Messianic intent. (3) The New Testament is read through the Hebrew Bible.”²²⁹ A caveat with Rydelnik’s proposed direct fulfillment understanding of prophecy is that he downplays the system of typical fulfillment, and his method does not seem to leave room for interpreting OT figures as types and the NT Christ as their antetype or fulfillment.²³⁰ Psalm 2 is an example of what is traditionally called a Royal Psalm, yet it contains a distinct Messianic flavor. Cole argues that the literary context of Psalm

²²⁷ Seth D. Postell, “Typology in the Old Testament,” in *MHMP*, 173.

²²⁸ Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, 83.

²²⁹ Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 27-33.

²³⁰ Tabb advocates that both typology and direct fulfillment are characteristic of John’s use of the OT in Revelation. Tabb, *All Things New*, 16.

1's presentation of a royal, influential military figure could have seen some parallels to David, but the eschatological implications of Psalm 2 describe the figure as none other than the Messiah.²³¹ In this sense, the allowance exists for types who offer parallels but do not offer the fulfillment aspect that the Messiah brings. To disallow types completely would be to deny the hermeneutical tradition dating back to Irenaeus, as he utilizes the term in his declaration of Christ as the focal point of Scripture, "If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling. For Christ is the treasure which was hid in the field, that is, in this world (for 'the field is the world'); but the treasure hid in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and parables."²³² Therefore, an essential aspect of the methodology for this dissertation is the inclusion of typology.

The rejection of *sensus plenior* as a hermeneutical method is another critical claim in the methodology of this dissertation.²³³ Silva defines *sensus plenior* as "the view that passages of Scripture contain a meaning (or meanings) intended by God that was in addition and unknown to the historical meaning intended by the human author" and defends the view "anyone who believes that the primary origin of the Bible lies in an omniscient and foreseeing God can hardly doubt that there is considerable meaning in the biblical text that the human authors were not fully

²³¹ Robert L. Cole, *Psalms 1-2: Gateway to the Psalter* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 1-11.

²³² Irenaeus, *A.H.*, 4.26.1.

²³³ For a discussion of *sensus plenior* and arguments both for and against it, see "Fuller Meaning, Single Goal," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 167-232.

aware of.”²³⁴ Silva’s view carries a dangerous implication: if the author directly inspired by the Holy Spirit could not understand what they were writing, it is tenable that nobody could understand what they were writing at the time. Silva’s counterpart, Kaiser, espouses as much, “we do not deny that the OT prophets often had a plethora of detail within the compass of a single concept – including near and far fulfillments with a prophetic foreshortening of the time perspective. But we cannot agree that this also involved a dual sense or meaning for the prophecy (e.g., literal and spiritual).”²³⁵ A common paraphrase of the *sensus plenior* is that the biblical authors were writing better than they knew. Kaiser’s rebuttal does not allow for this possibility, as the author would have recognized the Messianic nature of the prophecy; he was recording such as in the previous example of Jesus’ citation of Moses.²³⁶

In summary, the hermeneutical methodology employed in this study of John’s use of the OT is that John read the OT in the same way that the prophets understood it, as a direct Messianic fulfillment that identifies the use of typology in the OT yet recognizes the canonical consciousness of the authors. Christ understood Himself as the fulfillment of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings (Luke 24:44). Rydelnik and Blum note that by this declaration, Christ is not simply indicating that there are scant references in the OT that are pointing to the Messiah,

²³⁴ Walter C. Kaiser Jr. and Moisés Silva, “Contemporary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,” in *Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2007), 291. It is noteworthy that this is Silva’s chapter and that Kaiser seems to argue for an opposing view.

²³⁵ Walter C. Kaiser, *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2001), 63.

²³⁶ “How could Moses be the one to accuse them if he himself did not understand his own words? For Jesus’ words to have any force. Moses needed not only to write about the Messiah but also to understand that he was writing about the Messiah.” Rydelnik and Blum, eds., *MHMP*, 27.

but rather that the entire Hebrew Bible is Messianic at its core.²³⁷ In addition, they strongly assert that the view advocates for canonical consciousness, “[the view] observes a canonical shaping that recognizes the messianic nature of the text. This view asserts that when the Hebrew text is established through textual criticism, a close reading of that Hebrew text in its canonical context will result in a Messianic interpretation.”²³⁸ Viewing Christ as the center of the text does not imply that every verse contains an explicit Messianic reference, but it demands that every text be understood with Him in mind.

John’s view of the text was influenced by witnessing the life, ministry, death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, events that the prophets prophesied concerning. John’s apostolic advantage allowed him to utilize the OT to emphasize the text’s fulfillment in Christ. Osborne and McKnight articulate, “John uses the OT with faithfulness to the original context but at the same time with freedom to transform it so as to apply its larger thrust to the new context of his churches.”²³⁹ The new context of the destination of churches places them as the recipients of the canonical capstone. The seven churches are the first recipients to enjoy the position of receiving a completed canon. The readers in the churches would have been challenged and encouraged by the letters they received. Tabb notes, “Revelation achieves this goal by depicting the idolatry of their cultural context and their identity as followers of the Lamb through the lens of the Old Testament Scriptures and the teaching of Jesus.”²⁴⁰ In other words, the OT and the teachings of

²³⁷ Rydelnik and Blum, eds., *MHMP*, 27.

²³⁸ Rydelnik and Blum, eds., *MHMP*, 89. The text criticism referenced here is the basis for the next section on *vorlage*.

²³⁹ Grant R. Osborne and Scot McKnight, *The Face of New Testament Studies: A Survey of Recent Research* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2004), 324.

²⁴⁰ Tabb, *All Things New*, 9.

Jesus (NT) provide the foundation for which Revelation was written in its position as the canonical capstone, and Christ's role as the fulfillment of all Scripture places Him at the focal point of the final book in the canon. Leithart summarizes John's use of the OT, "John does not use the OT 'expositionally' but 'compositionally.' He writes *with* Scripture rather than *about* it. John paints an apocalypse, and the OT is his pallet."²⁴¹ John's description of Christ in Revelation 1 is canonically conscious, viewing Christ as the direct fulfillment of all Messianic prophecy and typology.

A final clarification in studying John's use of the OT in Revelation is distinguishing between thematic allusions and literary or textual allusions. Both methods necessitate an emphasis on the text, as a critical element in discerning an allusion is the author's intent. "If an author's meaning can be discerned by examining their text, then the presence of verbal, thematic, and structural parallels can function as a set of criteria for determining whether or not an author actually has a precursor text in view."²⁴² Tabb describes these two methods as the most reliable measures for determining the legitimacy of an OT allusion in Revelation and titles them "thematic coherence" and "verbal coherence" respectively.²⁴³ Beale highlights the significance of parallels seen through both thematic and verbal coherence, "the telltale key to discerning an allusion is that of recognizing an incomparable or unique wording, syntax, concept, or cluster of motifs in the same order or structure."²⁴⁴ Thematic coherence involves the citation or usage of an

²⁴¹ Peter J. Leithart, *Revelation 1-22*, vol. 1 & 2, The International Theological Commentary on the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments (London; New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 5.

²⁴² Spellman, *Toward a Canon-Conscious Reading of the Bible*, 163.

²⁴³ Tabb, *All Things New*, 17.

²⁴⁴ Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 31. An additional criterion of verbal cohesion discussed in the fourth chapter hinges on the number of words in a sequence. Beale suggests "some believe

OT theme, such as the Messianic theology advocated by its proponents mentioned in this section. As thematic coherence does not require an exact citation but rather a convincing argument for the authorial intent in both the original text and the NT, the evidence is typically less concrete than verbal coherence. As the burden of proof seems to weigh slightly heavier on verbal coherence, further analysis of verbal coherence requires an examination of the text tradition, or *vorlage*, from which John wrote.

On the *Vorlage*: Which OT Text Tradition Did John Use?

The previous section articulated the hermeneutical approach with which this author views the OT and espouses that this methodology is similar to how John viewed it in terms of its meaning and fulfillment. Revelation leaves no doubt that John was a scholar of the OT; his intertwining of the message of the OT without directly citing it in Revelation demonstrates his mastery of the text. However, the inquiry that remains unanswered is how John would have viewed the OT from a linguistic, textual aspect. It is conceded from the outset that a confident, decisive answer to this question is unachievable given that the author cannot be consulted. However, the aim is to provide a brief reconciliation to the conundrum that has already been presented by John's apparent uses of both a Hebrew and Greek *vorlage*.

As the OT was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic, a natural assumption for John's *vorlage* would be a Hebrew base text such as the MT. Additionally, John's Hebrew

that an allusion must consist of a reproduction from the OT passage of a unique combination of at least three words. Though this may be a good rule of thumb, it remains possible that fewer than three words or even an idea may be an allusion." Beale, *Handbook*, 31. The discussion of this rule takes place in the fourth chapter as the application of the rule is more feasible when comparing testaments of the same language (for example, three words in Hebrew does not necessarily equal three words in Greek). Though the LXX may match in some instances, this rule is primarily applied in chapters four and five.

background has been discussed and explains much of the Hebraisms and solecisms present in the text. The case for John's use of Hebrew (or Aramaic in the case of Daniel) in the most recent century finds its roots in Charles' commentary. He supports this claim with certainty that John never directly quoted from the LXX, but rather John translated directly from the Hebrew or Aramaic text. Charles concludes, "An examination of the passages based on the O.T. makes it clear that our author draws his materials directly from the Hebrew (or Aramaic) text, and apparent never solely from the [LXX] or any other version."²⁴⁵ While Charles is correct that John never directly quotes the LXX or another Greek version, it is worth recalling that John does not directly cite the OT in Revelation in any textual form but utilizes allusions. John's use of indirect quotation is the root of the present discussion, as formal citations written in other parts of the NT make identifying the *vorlage* in those instances a more straightforward task.

Witherington, though he opts to deny apostolic authorship, concedes that the author of the Apocalypse utilized the Hebrew OT in a "natural" way and that some of the apparent textual issues can be explained by this, "it is possible to argue that Revelation reflects Semitic interference (i.e., the Greek of an author who thinks in a Semitic language and struggles to translate) and even that the author is deliberately archaizing (in this case Semitizing)."²⁴⁶ Porter summarizes three possible theories for the nature of Revelation's language containing the tension of Greek with Hebrew and Aramaic influences, (1) The language is Greek at its core, with variations being explainable, (2) The Greek is a translation,²⁴⁷ (3) the language is a Jewish-Greek

²⁴⁵ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxvi.

²⁴⁶ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 50.

²⁴⁷ Porter identifies Thompson as the key proponent of this view. In his monograph, he concludes, "We are led to the conclusion that here we are dealing with translation Greek and, furthermore, Greek which is intelligible primarily to readers familiar with Semitic languages. An ordinary non-Jew could hardly be expected to understand

hybrid in use in first century Palestine.²⁴⁸ His article refutes the second and third positions, concluding that a simple comparison with the contemporary Greek of the first century is not a valid comparison and that his study reveals that any Semitic interference with the Apocalypse cannot be proved but instead argued at specific points.²⁴⁹ Porter's final point may not be entirely true within the scope of apostolic authorship given John's Hebrew background. However, the scholarship of the last century does seem to fixate on specific instances in the Apocalypse rather than the book as a whole.²⁵⁰

In light of the tension concerning Semitic influence on the Apocalypse, it is only logical to consider the first point Porter proposes, that the text of Revelation is essentially Greek with explainable differences. The LXX version was necessitated by expanding Hellenism, with Greek becoming a widespread language among both Jews and Gentiles.²⁵¹ The acknowledgment of LXX influence in recent scholarship begins at the dawn of the 20th century as Swete argues that the LXX or another Greek version was undoubtedly John's base text, citing familiar phraseology of the Greek versions of the OT and relegating any Hebrew remnants to "traces" that are

that the future tense contains a past reference, along the lines of the LXX instances cited above." Steven Thompson, ed., "Semitic Influence on Verbal Syntax," in *The Apocalypse and Semitic Syntax*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 47.

²⁴⁸ Stanley E Porter, "The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion," *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 4 (October 1989): 582–583.

²⁴⁹ Porter, "The Language of the Apocalypse in Recent Discussion," 599-600. See full article for complete argument.

²⁵⁰ In addition to Porter, Thompson, and other scholars mentioned in this chapter, see Kenneth Newport, "Semitic Influence on the Use of Some Prepositions in the Book of Revelation," *Bible Translator* 37, no. 3 (July 1986), 328-324. and Kenneth G C Newport, "Semitic Influence in Revelation: Some Further Evidence," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 25, no. 3 (1987): 249–256.

²⁵¹ For a discussion on the usefulness of the LXX in understanding the OT in the first century, see Garrick V. Allen and J. A. Dunne, eds., *Ancient Readers and Their Scriptures: Engaging the Hebrew Bible in Early Judaism and Christianity* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 113-115.

explainable in every occurrence.²⁵² Swete concedes that Revelation's style implies the author's familiarity with the Hebrew and Aramaic texts.²⁵³ Thomas proposes a solution that allows for Hebrew influence in a Greek world, "For one so full of the OT as John was, the Greek of the LXX with its unchallenged Semitisms must have had its influence, but it cannot be assumed too quickly that every proposed case of Hebrew or Aramaic influence is a valid one. Each instance must be decided on its own merit."²⁵⁴ John's usage of the OT reflects the LXX in some circumstances, though this does not discard Hebrew tradition. Tov, who also appeals to the need to examine textual similarities on a case-by-case basis, notes the faithfulness of the LXX to the translations of OT books containing the most frequent occurrences of intertextuality with Revelation.²⁵⁵ Sailhamer emphasizes the significance of the LXX,

"In the Greek Septuagint, for example, we have a version of the OT nearly a thousand years earlier than the Masoretic text. That is not to say that the Masoretic text is always, or even often, a late, or inferior, text. It is rather to suggest that in the early versions of the OT we have a viable alternative witness to the meaning of the text of Scripture, and thus the potential for an alternative biblical theology. For a text-oriented approach to OT theology, such early versions are of inestimable value. When we add to this the fact that the NT writers often used the Septuagint version of the OT in their quotation of the OT, it becomes quite clear that we can scarcely overestimate the importance of these early biblical translations."²⁵⁶

²⁵² Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cl.

²⁵³ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cl.

²⁵⁴ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 40.

²⁵⁵ Tov notes the faithfulness of the LXX to the Torah with minor editorial differences in Daniel, Ezekiel, Psalms, and Zechariah. He does note Isaiah contains some variances from the MT, but is overall faithful to the text tradition that predates the MT. Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, 3rd ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 135-137. Additionally, Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint in Biblical Research*, 3rd ed. (Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, IN, 2015), 206-216.

²⁵⁶ John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 205.

The concession of John's use of the LXX is not a denial of Semitic influence upon the text of Revelation. The proposed path forward is to examine the text at each occurrence of intertextual allusion and consider the source material in each instance.

A final factor contributing to the alleged paradox concerning John's *vorlage* is the conditions or nature of his authorship. Swete notes that the "nature of the work precluded the author from a direct appeal to his source."²⁵⁷ Though Swete does not clarify the "nature" of the work he refers to, he introduces an interesting concept. Considering John's reception of the events of the first chapter in particular, he experiences the apocalyptic vision on Patmos, presumably exiled there because he was preaching the Gospel (Rev 1:9). While the text does not detail John's punishment on Patmos, some exploits have been made in the study of John's confinement.

"[Patmos] was, however, used for the less drastic punishments of 'deportatio' and 'relegatio.' The former involved loss of civil rights and forfeiture of property, while the latter involved only compulsory residence in a designated area, to leave which was a capital offence. Tertullian speaks of John as '*in insulam relegatus*': he had been a lawyer, and may be assumed to use the term correctly. We have no means of judging the value of the tradition on which he relied, but it seems reasonable to accept its veracity. . . The point of 'relegatio' was to remove a person far from his old associations and so keep him out of mischief."²⁵⁸

While the exact punishment style in John's circumstance is unknown, it is plausible to contend that the nature of the provenance of John's apocalyptic vision and the intent to separate John from his old associations did not allow for access to the biblical text, thus forcing John to recall the OT from memory. Thomas notes, "An investigation of the allusions in this commentary will bear out the conclusion that John drew from both. With a mind steeped in both

²⁵⁷ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cxxxiv.

²⁵⁸ Joseph N. Sanders, "St John on Patmos," *New Testament Studies* 9, no. 2 (January 1963), 76.

the Hebrew and Greek OT, it is not too surprising that John might have done this. . . His use of the Scriptures fluctuated between the Hebrew originals and the Greek translation, as his Spirit-directed mind led him to do.”²⁵⁹ Whiteley attests that the author’s OT background is the most critical factor in understanding the text, “The most important idea that contributes to understanding the text is the assumption that it refers to the OT. It becomes evident that the author had a set theological worldview based on the OT, and it is necessary to grasp this worldview before one understands the meaning of the text.”²⁶⁰

In conclusion, the methodology for approaching the *vorlage* of the intertextual allusions to the OT in Revelation 1 will contain examinations of both Hebrew (MT) and Greek (LXX) elements. As previously noted, John knew of and drew from both textual traditions. Allen argues that if someone as well versed in Hebrew tradition as John were to utilize a Greek tradition, he likely did so with the supposition that the Greek version was a faithful interpretation of the Hebrew text.²⁶¹ Charles’ conclusion for the grammatical irregularities within Revelation is perhaps a conclusion for this vein of thought, “While [John] writes in Greek, he thinks in Hebrew, and the thought has naturally affected the vehicle of expression.”²⁶² Beale adds to Charles’ thought, advocating for the authorial intentionality behind the unusual authorship methodology in Revelation,

“But was this intentional on John’s part or an unconscious by-product of his Semitic mind? It seems that his grammatical “howlers” are deliberate attempts to express Semitisms and Septuagintalisms in his Greek, the closest analogy being that of the Greek

²⁵⁹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 41-42.

²⁶⁰ Iwan Whiteley, “A Search for Cohesion in the Book of Revelation, with Specific Reference to Chapter One,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (2006): 311-312.

²⁶¹ Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 90.

²⁶² Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, cxliii.

translations, especially that of Aquila. The fact that most of the time the author does keep the rules further points to the solecisms being intentional. Why did John write this way? His purpose was deliberately to create a “biblical” effect in the hearer and thus to demonstrate the solidarity of his work with that of the divinely inspired OT Scriptures.”²⁶³

The most effective method of ascribing a textual tradition to John’s use of the OT in Revelation is to examine the Semitic influence on the Greek text on an occurrence-by-occurrence basis. In short, the answer to the initial question of this section is to espouse that John utilized at least Greek and Hebrew *vorlages* and was possibly versed in Aramaic translations such as the *Targums*. Following this evidence, the discussion moves to the case-by-case analysis of OT intertextuality in Revelation 1 and John’s intent to reveal the canonical culmination of Christ.

OT Intertextuality in Revelation 1

As the focus shifts to the exegesis of the intertextual descriptions or titles of Christ, a significant limitation to highlight for the present chapter is that the following study focuses on the OT intertextuality with the initial Apocalyptic vision. Nearly all the titles and descriptions of Christ in this chapter contain further implications via intertextuality with NT passages or within Revelation itself. The study of these implications within their NT or Apocalyptic context is conducted in this dissertation's fourth and fifth chapters, respectively.

The Things Which Must Soon Take Place (Rev 1:1, 19)

John’s initial salutation in the apocalypse is written in an epistolary form that demonstrates textual similarities with Daniel’s declaration of Yahweh as the revealer of mysteries to Nebuchadnezzar (Dan 2). Beale and McDonough show that John patterns the

²⁶³ Beale, *NIGCT: Revelation*, 96.

entirety of Rev 1:1 on the broader structure of Dan 2 (2:28-30, 45-47), noting that even the title, Ἀποκάλυψις, is an allusion to Dan 2 as similar usages of the word appear five times in the passage in the Greek base text when describing Yahweh’s “revealing” of the mysteries in the king’s dream.²⁶⁴

The first piece of textual evidence for intertextuality with Dan 2 is John’s use of σημαίνω rather than γνωρίζω in his declaration of intent to “make known” the things that will come to pass. Σημαίνω has a range of meanings, with the first definition fitting the context of Rev 1:1: (1) to make known, report, communicate; (2) to initiate something respecting the future, indicate, suggest, intimate; (3) to explain something enigmatic, to mean, to signify.²⁶⁵ Γνωρίζω has two definitions: (1) to cause information to become known: make known, reveal; (2) to have information or be knowledgeable about something, to know.²⁶⁶ Beale notes that the LXX rendering of Dan 2 and the Greek of Rev 1 are the only two places in the canon where “ὁ δεῖ γενέσθαι” and “σημαίνω” appear together, highlighting the likelihood of John intending a direct reference. Beale explains,

“Daniel recounts the symbolic vision seen by the king and then interprets it: each section of the colossus represented a major world kingdom, the last of which would be defeated and replaced by God’s eternal kingdom. In this light, the likely reason that the LXX translator did not choose γνωρίζω but σημαίνω to render the Aramaic verb ‘make known’ was to underscore the precise kind of communication under discussion in Daniel 2, which was symbolic communication. σημαίνω can overlap with the more general and abstract idea of ‘make known’ in the sense of ‘indicate,’ ‘declare,’ and ‘be manifest.’ However, its concrete and, at least, equally used sense is that of ‘show by a sign,’ ‘give [or make] signs [or signals],’ or ‘signify’ (the latter of which is chosen by the Douay, KJV and

²⁶⁴ Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1088.

²⁶⁵ BDAG, s.v., σημαίνω, 920.

²⁶⁶ BDAG, s.v., γνωρίζω, 203.

NASB [marg.] translations for Rev. 1:1). It is this idea of symbolic communication which σημαίνω typically has when it is not used with the general sense of ‘make known.’”²⁶⁷

Ultimately, Beale concludes that the prophecies in Revelation can best be interpreted through symbolism (when the literal definition is not clearly stated, as in the closing verses of Rev 1) due to the nature of σημαίνω and its use in symbolic communication.²⁶⁸ Apocalyptic literature such as Daniel and Revelation are brimming with allegorical imagery, which John notes as he opens the Apocalypse with a direct reference to the symbolic account of the stone destroying the statue in Dan 2. This intertextual reference helps the reader determine how John viewed his own prophecy and sheds light on the optimal hermeneutical route to progress through the rest of John’s reference to Daniel’s interpretation of the dream of Nebuchadnezzar.

The primary point of intertextual interest in the opening verse occurs through John’s use of “ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι,” rendered in the NASB95 as “the things which must take place.” The prepositional phrase “ἐν τάχει,” literally meaning “in quickness,” modifies the text resulting in the translation, “the things which must soon take place.” This marks a departure from the base text in Daniel, where the “things which must take place” are modified by “בְּאַחֲרֵי יָמֵינוּ” in the MT (literally meaning “in latter days”) and “ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν” in the LXX (literally meaning “in the last days.”) Beale interprets this departure, “ἐν τάχει (“quickly”) is a deliberate substitute for Daniel’s “ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν” (“in the latter days”; e.g., Dan. 2:28) and connotes neither the speedy manner in which the Daniel prophecy is to be fulfilled nor the mere possibility that it could be fulfilled at any time, but the definite, imminent time of fulfillment,

²⁶⁷ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 296.

²⁶⁸ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 297.

which likely has already begun in the present.”²⁶⁹ This modification of the text carries significant implications. As John understands his position in the prophetic role (Rev 1:3), he is making a prophetic, interpretative decision based on the apocalyptic vision he has received.

In its original context, Daniel’s interpretation of the king’s dream is traditionally viewed as a condemnation of Gentile kingdoms that would oppress Israel: Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, which culminates in the destruction of these kingdoms and the inauguration of the kingdom of God. While the symbolism in the dream merits its own study, the significant factor in the scope of this dissertation is the stone that is cut out without hands (Dan 2:34, 45). Daniel prophesies as to the significance of the stone, noting that by describing the vision to Nebuchadnezzar, he was given a glimpse of a future event to occur “in the last days,” which would culminate with the inauguration of the kingdom established by Yahweh that lasts forever (Dan 2:44). The significance or identity of the stone that crushes the statue depicting the strength and glory of earthly kingdoms has been the subject of debate. Goldingay concludes that the passage potentially indicates Israel itself or symbolic imagery for God’s sovereignty and power in establishing an eternal regime.²⁷⁰ He concludes, “there is no indication that Daniel understood the rock to denote a personal messiah.”²⁷¹ However, he concedes that by the time of the NT, this passage was associated with other “rock” or “stone” passages (Isa 8:14; Ps 118:22; Luke 20:17-18), “it turns out that (according to Christian conviction) the one who initiated the ultimate downfall of worldly empires and the establishment of God’s rule was the man Jesus. His virgin

²⁶⁹ Beale, NIGCT: *Revelation*, 181-182.

²⁷⁰ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, vol. 30, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1989), 51-52.

²⁷¹ Goldingay, *WBC: Daniel*, 60.

birth makes a parallel point to the picture of the rock breaking off without human involvement.”²⁷² The inclusion of NT passages sheds light on the canonical significance of the vision.

Reading this vision in its canonical context yields evidence that strongly favors a Messianic interpretation. Beale identifies the stone, which expands to become a mountain that fills the whole earth, as the fulfillment of the temple motif of Scripture, ultimately culminating in Christ, “The Old Testament temple represented God’s presence on earth, and Jesus now represents that presence in the midst of his followers. Jesus makes it abundantly clear in Matthew 24 (and parallels) that Israel’s temple will be destroyed. Nevertheless, another temple would arise instead in the form of Jesus and his followers.”²⁷³ Boice favors a canonical interpretation, citing four passages (Matt 21:42-44; Isa 8:14, 28:14; 1 Pet 2:6-8) before concluding, “These passages (and others) make clear that the rock of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is Jesus Christ - a divine Christ, ‘not [made] by human hands’ - and the mountain of the dream is his kingdom.”²⁷⁴ Daniel’s description of the stone that was “cut without hands” preserves the deity of Christ. Goldingay opts to interpret the passage in the context of the virgin birth, though it also shares significance with Ps 118:22 and the indication that the rejected stone has become the capstone.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Goldingay, *WBC: Daniel*, 60.

²⁷³ G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 17 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 187. See also 144-153.

²⁷⁴ James Boice, *Daniel: An Expository Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 1989), 38-39.

²⁷⁵ Boice identifies Psalm 118:22 with an account of the building of Solomon’s temple (1 Kings 5-6) that is not explicitly found in Scripture. The origin of this account is not cited in his commentary, but is likely a *midrash* from antiquity. “This refers to something that happened in the building of Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem. The stones for the temple were quarried far from the temple site, according to detailed plans supplied by the temple architects, and they were transported to the site and assembled without the noise of stone-cutting tools. Early in the construction a stone was sent that did not seem to fit. Since the builders did not know what to do with it, they laid it

Estes, though he denies that the verse in context is necessarily a messianic prophecy, notes the significance of this rejection, “Using the image of builders who reject a stone that is subsequently elevated to a place of status in the edifice. . . The Lord, however, transformed into treasure what humans perceived as trash, as the discarded stone became the focal point of the building. What humans reviled; the Lord valued.”²⁷⁶ This finds its fulfillment in the NT through the passion narrative of Christ in each of the four Gospels.

In light of the canonical evidence, the evidence points to understanding the “things which will take place in latter days” and the “stone” in Dan 2 as a Messianic reference.²⁷⁷ The primary difficulty with this passage is not the “who” in identifying the stone, but rather the timing of events. This eschatological concept lies outside the scope of the current study. However, a premillennial understanding of the millennial reign of Christ yields a consistent interpretation of the “stone” which will inaugurate the promised Messianic kingdom (2 Sam 7) and strike down the nations and rule over them with a rod of iron (Rev 19:15). An amillennial view, while agreeing that Christ is the cornerstone, would perhaps view the stone’s growth into a mountain as the geographical growth of Christianity. On the contrary, the premillennial view concludes that the Messiah crushes all kingdoms, as in the Dan 2 passage, and that the church is not the

aside and forgot it. Later when they came to place a large capstone on their now nearly completed structure and sent to the quarry for it, they were told that it was not there, that it had already been sent up. They searched for it, found the stone that had been laid aside earlier, and installed it. It fit perfectly. Thus, “the stone the builders rejected [became] the capstone.” Boice, *Daniel*, 37-38.

²⁷⁶ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73-150*, vol. 13, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 395.

²⁷⁷ For additional study, see Andrew M. Woods, “Daniel 2:29-45: The Times of the Gentiles and the Messianic Kingdom,” in *MHMP*, 1115-1125.

conqueror.²⁷⁸ The sequence of events is a more delicate aspect of the interpretation of this chapter, but the goal of this dissertation focuses on the “who” in Rev 1 just as the interpretation of Dan 2 intends to focus on who is being identified as the conqueror of the earth, Jesus Christ.

John’s direct reference to Daniel’s “ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι” and his contrast with Daniel’s “אֲנִי חִנְדִּישׁ” or “ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν” with his own “ἐν τάχει” indicates that John saw the current apocalyptic vision he received as the rapidly approach “last days” which Daniel discussed. These last days include Christ’s conquering of earth’s kingdoms (Rev 19:15). Given John’s dependence on Daniel as his most cited OT work, it is unlikely that he would have directly quoted the words of Daniel nonchalantly or without understanding the reference from a work in which he was well versed. Montgomery notes from the language in Dan 2:45, “Daniel has delivered God’s interpretation, not his own; therefore, the dream and its explication are true and reliable.”²⁷⁹ It is evident that John views himself as revealing the message given to him by God (Rev 1:1). This prophecy was not taken lightly, as it contains a specific blessing for those who hear and read it (Rev 1:3). Therefore, John is practicing intentionality through his direct reference. Reading the OT in light of the new and vice versa, John’s reference to Daniel bolsters the argument for the Messianic interpretation of the passage.

John’s purpose in Rev 1 is to introduce the protagonist of the apocalyptic vision, the canonical Christ. Beale and McDonough conclude, “whereas Daniel expected this fulfillment to occur in the distant future, the ‘latter days,’ John expects it to begin in his own generation.

²⁷⁸ For further research on the amillennial v. premillennial interpretation of this passage, see J. Dwight Pentecost, “Daniel,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck (Colorado Springs, CO: Victor Books, 1985), 336.

²⁷⁹ James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1926), 179.

Indeed, it has already started to happen, as the references to beginning fulfillment of OT prophecy in chapter 1 bear out (cf. 1:5, 7, 13, 16).”²⁸⁰ As indicated in this quote, the remainder of chapter 1 demonstrates the beginning of the fulfillment of OT prophecy through Jesus Christ. John begins his apocalyptic capstone of the canon with a description of the conquering, smiting stone of Dan 2 which will turn mighty nations in chaff, the capstone which was initially rejected by the builders (Ps 118:22; 1 Pet 2:6-8), and the cornerstone of the Church (Eph 2:20). John’s initial chapter opens with a declaration that the events communicated in Daniel concerning Christ will soon take place. The fulfillment of OT prophecy has already begun through the incarnation of Christ, which John experienced in addition to the apocalyptic vision he experiences in Revelation. Like the first chapter, the first verse is centered on Christ as the fulfillment of canonical prophecy.

I AM (Rev 1:4, 8, 17-18)

From the outset of this discussion, it is conceded that this specific title in Rev 1:4, 8 is not a direct reference to Jesus as John clearly differentiates between “him who is, and who was, and who is to come” and “Jesus Christ” (Rev 1:4). However, the intertextuality of this title provides a foundation for occurrences that do reference Christ, such as “I am the First and Last” (Rev 1:17) or the association of Christ with the Alpha and the Omega. John’s rendering of the preferred title of Yahweh is an exact replication of the LXX version of Ex 3:14 and Yahweh’s interaction with Moses during his calling, ὁ ὄν, or literally “Him being.” The whole context includes “Ἐγώ εἰμι ὁ

²⁸⁰ Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1088.

ὄν,” which is literally “I am Him being.” The Hebrew “אֲנִי הוּא אֲנִי” is literally “I am who I am.” Stuart argues that Moses would have probably heard this as, “I cause to be because I cause to be.”²⁸¹

The Greek rendering of this Hebrew solecism is a prime example of the grammatical oddities discussed earlier in the chapter. Charles notes, “The Seer has deliberately violated the rules of grammar in order to preserve the divine name inviolate from the change which it would necessarily have undergone if declined. Hence the divine name is here in the nominative.”²⁸² Swete condemns the grammatical structure, “Besides ‘solecisms’ the Apocalypse has, to borrow another term from Dionysius, a large number of ‘idiotisms.’ The idiosyncrasy of the writer shews itself sometimes in a startling phrase such as 1:4 ἀπὸ ὃ ὢν καὶ ὃ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος, or 1:8 ἐγὼ εἰμι τὸ ἄλφα καὶ τὸ ὦ.”²⁸³ Wallace defends the author’s choice, citing the occurrence in 1:4 as the lone example in Scripture of a nominative construction following a preposition. He contends that this is an intentional choice by the author, “The seer is no doubt alluding to Ex 3:14 in the LXX, a text well familiar to early Gentile Christians. . . He is driving his audience back into the OT by preserving the very forms found in the LXX, even when they lack concord in the new context.”²⁸⁴ Robertson asserts John’s intentional choice to commit this grammatical irregularity, “This use of the articular nominative participle of εἰμι after ἀπο instead of the ablative is not due to ignorance or a mere slip (λαψυς πενναε), for in the next line we have the regular idiom with

²⁸¹ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2006), 121.

²⁸² Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 10.

²⁸³ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cxix.

²⁸⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 62-63.

ἀπο τῶν ἑπτα πνευματων. It is evidently on purpose to call attention to the eternity and unchangeableness of God.”²⁸⁵ Though the structure is odd, Beale identifies it as the first and most famous solecism in the book of Revelation, indicating one of the clearest allusions, before agreeing that the source is Ex 3:14, “The complete threefold clause in Rev. 1:4, ‘the one who is and who was and who is coming,’ is a reflection of Exod. 3:14 together with Isaiah’s twofold and threefold temporal descriptions of God (cf. Isa. 41:4; 43:10; 44:6 48:12), which themselves may be developed reflections on the divine name in Exod. 3:14.”²⁸⁶ The broad consensus is that John deliberately ignored grammatical rules to preserve this direct reference to the divine name or description from Ex 3:14. Evidently, this text was familiar to John’s audience, or at least he presupposes that it is, and he “drives the audience back into the OT by preserving the very forms found in the LXX, even when they lack concord with the new context.”²⁸⁷ Wallace provides a helpful illustration for the modern audience as he compares the grammatical irregularity to an American asking, “do you believe in We the People?” While the grammar in this statement is awkward, transitioning the wording to “do you believe in us the people?” loses the allusion to the United States Constitution’s preamble.²⁸⁸ Given the overwhelming evidence supporting John’s direct reference to Ex 3:14, it is best to approach the text from the original context.

Exodus 3:14 details Moses’ response to Yahweh in which he asks the name of the God of Israel so that he may tell the sons of Israel. Yahweh’s response is “אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה” and that he

²⁸⁵ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 1:4.

²⁸⁶ Beale, *John’s Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 324. See also Beale’s argumentation for John’s intentional use of solecisms to create a “biblical” effect to show solidarity with the OT. Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1089.

²⁸⁷ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 64.

²⁸⁸ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 63.

may notify the sons of Israel that “אֱלֹהֵי” has sent Moses to them. Durham argues, “The answer Moses receives is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a name. It is an assertion of authority, a confession of an essential reality, and thus an entirely appropriate response to the question Moses poses.”²⁸⁹ At the conclusion of his linguistic study, Stuart argues the contrary, advocating for the interpretation of “אֱלֹהֵי אֱשֶׁר אֱלֹהֵי” as a name with a purpose and function, “The name should thus be understood as referring to Yahweh’s being the creator and sustainer of all that exists and thus the Lord of both creation and history, all that is and all that is happening - a God active and present in historical affairs.”²⁹⁰ In the context of Revelation’s use of the phrase, Thomas argues that this should be understood as the divine name for Yahweh, appealing to both Ex 3:14 and Isa 48:12.²⁹¹ The debate concerning whether the passage reveals a new divine name or an attestation to the eternity or authority of Yahweh is too lengthy to be examined in the present argument.²⁹² The focus must remain on John’s intent in citing this divine name or description in Rev 1.

Tabb espouses that these two occurrences of “I am” in particular highlight the authority of Yahweh, “God is utterly supreme and central in the Apocalypse. He is the beginning and end of all reality, ‘the Alpha and the Omega’ (Rev 1:8) . . . God simply *is*, as he declared to Moses, ‘I am who I am’ (Ex 3:14; cf. Rev 1:4). Only God is absolute and self-determining. Everything else

²⁸⁹ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1987), 38.

²⁹⁰ Stuart, *NAC: Exodus*, 121. Additionally, Stuart compares Moses’ omission up to this point in Exodus with the omission of the divine name in Esther. It is evident that Yahweh was already known as the name of Yahweh to the Patriarchs (Gen 4:26, 9:26, 12:8, 26:25, 28:16, 30:27)., making the assumption that “I am” is the name of Yahweh an interesting textual issue. Stuart, *NAC: Exodus*, 120.

²⁹¹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 110.

²⁹² For a survey of the history of interpretation of the passage, see Jonathan M Platter, “Divine Simplicity and Scripture: A Theological Reading of Exodus 3:14,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 73, no. 4 (November 2020): 295–306.

is contingent, created by God, and sustained by the divine will.”²⁹³ Whether the original intent signifies the divine name or a divine attribute, John emphasizes the authority from whom he has received the apocalyptic vision concerning Christ. Sovereignty belongs to “I am,” God, who initiates the communication chain of the apocalyptic vision. John’s Gospel is well known for recording Jesus’ “I am” statements, and He records the identification of Christ as unified with the Father (John 10:30-33).²⁹⁴ This is a picture of the divine authority being handed to Jesus as the next in the communication chain of the message of Revelation and as the protagonist of the apocalyptic vision. In the fifth chapter, the use of the title within Revelation as it pertains to Christ will be discussed, leaning heavily on the intertextuality with the OT demonstrated in this section.

The Faithful Witness, The Firstborn of the Dead, and The Ruler of Kings (Rev 1:5)

Witherington hails the following two verses, Rev 1:5-6, as an indication of the high Christology John possesses.²⁹⁵ No fewer than five OT allusions appear in these verses concerning the person or work of Christ. These verses mark a shift from the opening four verses of the chapter. John’s first two OT allusions were indirect references to Christ concerning His status as the fulfillment of prophecy and the deity/authority of Christ, respectively. The OT

²⁹³ Tabb, *All Things New*, 29.

²⁹⁴ The “I am” statements include: Bread of life (John 6:35, 48), Light of the World (John 8:12), the gate (John 10:7), the Good Shepherd (John 10:11), the Resurrection (John 11:25), the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6), the True Vine (John 15:1), and an explicit “Εγώ ειμι” concerning His eternal generation and deity (John 8:58). These references are revisited in chapter 4 of this dissertation.

²⁹⁵ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 74-76.

allusions in the following two verses are titles, characteristics, or actions attributed to Christ that represent the fulfillment of OT prophecy.

The genitive construction of the beginning of the verse marks a continuation of the description of the provenance in the epistolary format. Here, Christ is described as the one giving the apocalyptic vision. This is immediately followed by attributing three titles to Christ that contain OT parallels. The three titles following the name of Christ are listed in the heading of this section, and each could demand its own section. However, these three titles of Christ are linked by a common background which necessitates grouping these together as the literary context of their OT counterparts stems from Psalm 89 (Ps 88 LXX).

From a linguistic perspective, the three titles attributed to Christ in Rev 1:5a all share parallels to Ps 89 (88 LXX). The first is the faithful witness, appearing as “ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός” in Rev 1:5 with an additional modifier translated “the faithful witness in the sky (or heavens)” in the LXX (Ps 88:37) “ὁ μάρτυς ἐν οὐρανῷ πιστός.” The Hebrew (Ps 89:37) rendering of this title appears “וְעַד בְּשָׁמַיִם נִאֲמָר” and carries a similar meaning “and even the faithful witness in the sky.” In the context of Revelation, the quotation of this title produces a grammatical irregularity similar to that of “ἀπὸ ὃ ὦν” from Rev 1:4. Wallace, noting the peculiarity of the reference, places this quotation in the classification of a nominative in apposition to oblique cases. This classification leads to the observation, “the quotation from Ps 89:38 preserves the case of the original (LXX); the Seer juxtaposes this nominative to the genitive so as to identify the faithful witness with Jesus Christ.”²⁹⁶ Charles explains the Hebraism further, “Since the Hebrew noun in

²⁹⁶ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 62. The definition of this nominative in apposition is as follows, “an appositional construction involves two adjacent substantives that refer to the same person or thing and have the same syntactical relation to the rest of the clause. The second substantive is said to be in apposition to the first.” In the

the indirect cases is not inflected, the Seer acts at times as if the Greek were similarly uninflected, and simply places, as in the present instance, the nominative in apposition to the genitive; i.e., ὁ μάρτυς in apposition to Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.²⁹⁷ Swete highlights the author's background influence in this irregularity: "Such irregularities may be partly attributable to Semitic habits of thought—a Greek could scarcely have permitted himself to use them."²⁹⁸ In the original literary context, the faithful witness in the sky is likened to the moon. Beale argues the significance of the reference in its context in Revelation,

“The phrase is an allusion to ‘the faithful witness’ of Ps. 88:38 (89:38, MT) (LXX), which refers specifically to the unending witness of the moon, and which is compared to the unending reign of David's seed on his throne (likewise Ps. 88:20 [89:20, MT]). Just as Exod. R. 19.7 applies the ‘first-born’ from Ps. 89:28 (MT) to the ‘King Messiah,’ and Gen. R. 97 sees Ps. 89:37 (MT) as a messianic prophecy, so John applies the phrase directly to the Messiah's own faithful witness which led to the establishment of his eternal kingship.”²⁹⁹

Much like the occurrence in Rev 1:4, the grammatical irregularity bolsters the claim that John is writing with Psalm 89 in mind.

The second title, “ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν,” translated “the firstborn of the dead,” is another Messianic reference reflected in the context of Ps 89:28. Though less direct than the first, the basis of the intertextual similarity comes from the term “πρωτότοκος” translated from “בְּכוֹר” in Hebrew. The composition of the sentence is entirely different in the original context. The LXX (Ps 88:28) reads “κάγω πρωτότοκον θήσομαι αὐτόν” or “I will make Him my firstborn,”

source, Wallace identifies the quotation as coming from Ps 89:38, though the LXX and NASB95 both contain the reference in Ps 89:37.

²⁹⁷ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 13.

²⁹⁸ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 6.

²⁹⁹ Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, 329.

while John simply attributes the title, “ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν” or “the firstborn of the dead.” The common word only varies by case, with πρωτότοκος appearing in the nominative and πρωτότοκον in the accusative. The term carries two definitions; the first is literal and indicates the firstborn in order of birth, while the second is commonly identified with Christ as the firstborn of a new humanity which is to be glorified, pertaining to having a special status associated with a firstborn.³⁰⁰ A word study may not be as beneficial in understanding this reference as examining the surrounding context for clues about John’s intended meaning.

The interpretation of this Psalm is a quintessential example of the *peshat* (plain meaning) and *derash* (hidden meaning) debate from earlier in the chapter. Briggs, among other commentators, seems to opt for a *peshat* to read the Psalm as a royal Psalm, attributing several of the Messianic references to Israel or David. He observes concerning πρωτότοκον “The term is not used in the Davidic covenant, though implicitly involved if other kings are also to be considered sons of God; but it was used in the more fundamental covenant with Israel, “Israel is my son, my first-born (Ex 4:22)”³⁰¹ However, the evidence for a Messianic reading is substantial if the canonical context is considered. The context of Psalm 89 is often descriptive of David, and the Psalm originates with a reference to the Davidic Covenant (Ps 89:3). The Davidic Covenant is widely viewed as Messianic, indicating that Yahweh will establish a permanent throne and

³⁰⁰ BDAG, s.v., πρωτότοκος, 849.

³⁰¹ Charles A. Briggs and Emilie G. Briggs, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Psalms*, International Critical Commentary (New York, NY: C. Scribner Sons, 1906), 260.

kingdom for the descendant of David.³⁰² As a whole, the Psalm laments the oppression Israel faces, perhaps due to the potential loss of the Davidic dynasty in the face of the exile.

However, the promise of the descendant from the Davidic Covenant kindles hope for the Psalmist. The Davidic Covenant is an extension of the promised seed in the *protoevangelium* (Gen 3:15). Rydelnik notes the canonical context, specifically referencing Ps 89 in a footnote for the quote,

“The rest of the Hebrew canon makes extensive direct and thematic allusions to Gen 3:15, firmly identifying the woman’s seed as a royal and messianic figure. Perhaps the most significant way that later biblical writers develop the ‘seed’ theme is in the Davidic Covenant. David is promised a ‘seed’ who will have an eternal house, kingdom, and throne (2 Sam 7:12-16), reminding the readers of the promise of the royal seed described in Genesis (3:15; 17:16; 35:11; 49:9-10.”³⁰³

The πρωτότοκος is a continuation of the “seed” motif, as John demonstrates an understanding of Christ as the fulfillment of this promise. The Davidic Covenant originally is found in a literary context where Israel searched for a king, unwisely choosing a weak king in Saul (2 Sam 8:4-5, 19-22). Psalm 89 offers a further interpretation of the Davidic Covenant; the context suggests that as mighty as King David is, his authority and glory pale compared to the promised seed, who would establish His throne forever. Merrill notes the abundant affirmation from the NT concerning the Messianic nature of Psalm 89, also identifying Rev 1:5 as an intertextual reference.³⁰⁴ John’s usage of πρωτότοκος to reference the promised seed suggests an indication that he views Christ as the fulfillment of this canonical motif.

³⁰² Note the parallel in 2 Sam 7:12 “I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.” Ps 89:29 “So I will establish his descendants forever and his throne as the days of heaven.”

³⁰³ Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 144.

³⁰⁴ For further study, see chart in Merrill, “Psalm 89: God’s Faithful Promise of Messiah,” in *MHMP*, 639.

The final title, “the ruler of the kings of the earth,” rounds out the threefold description of Christ in the epistolary introduction. Like the first two, this title has an OT intertextual counterpart in Ps 89. The title appears “ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς” (Rev 1:5) and in the LXX context, “ὕψηλὸν παρὰ τοῖς βασιλεῦσιν τῆς γῆς.” The LXX proves faithful to the original Hebrew rendering “גָּדֹל מִלְּמֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל” with both reflected in the NASB translation, “the highest of the kings of the earth.” The main linguistic variance concerns John’s “ὁ ἄρχων” and the Psalmist’s “יִשְׂרָאֵל” or “ὕψηλὸν.” The Hebrew “יִשְׂרָאֵל” is an adjective modifying “מֶלֶךְ” which carries the simple definition of “high” and, in this instance, denotes the particular exaltation of the Davidic king above earthly monarchs.³⁰⁵ The Greek “ὕψηλὸν” carries a similar meaning, serving to describe a high, physically elevated (i.e., a mountain) or denoting something or someone as worthy of high esteem.³⁰⁶ John’s deviation from the base text, “ὁ ἄρχων” is typically defined as “one who has eminence in a ruling capacity, a ruler, lord, or prince,” and Rev 1:5 is identified as the lone NT occurrence where this particular word is attributed to Christ specifically.³⁰⁷ It can best be translated as the NASB offers - “the ruler.” John’s variance is not troubling, as both words allow for the description of a well-esteemed ruler or king. Kaiser notes four attributes of this king that are consistent throughout the OT, He is divine, eternal, anointed, and righteous.³⁰⁸ These characteristics disqualify any earthly king and point directly to the actual “ruler of the kings of the earth.” He is Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

³⁰⁵ BDB, s.v. יִשְׂרָאֵל, 751.

³⁰⁶ GELS, s.v. ὕψηλὸν, 708.

³⁰⁷ BDAG, s.v., ἄρχων, 140.

³⁰⁸ Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 128-129.

The implications of the three titles drawn from Ps 89 have produced several theories about their significance. The three titles may represent the three persons of the Trinity. Tenney's work reflects the conclusion that the three titles represent the past work of the witness, the present work of the firstborn of the dead, and the future reign of Christ.³⁰⁹ Witherington espouses that the three titles exemplify model characteristics for John's audience that he offers to reassure them in the face of persecution - that they should be faithful to death, they will follow Christ in the resurrection, and rule with Him.³¹⁰ Swete views the three as a reflection of the purpose in Revelation, "The threefold title μάρτυς ... πρωτότοκος ... ἄρχων answers to the three-fold purpose of the Apocalypse, which is at once a Divine testimony, a revelation of the Risen Lord, and a forecast of the issues of history."³¹¹ While there is some truth to be gleaned from each of these views, perhaps the best conclusion comes from the prophetic fulfillment in light of the Davidic Covenant. Kraus responds to the Psalmist's questions for Yahweh in Ps 89,

"Does he break the covenant? Indeed, he has dissolved it! He has hidden himself and placed his servant in the midst of his enemies as one scorned and despised. Here the OT comes upon an inconceivable situation. But the NT proclaims that Jesus is the offspring of David in whom all the promises of God are fulfilled (Acts 13:23). The promise to David has here proved itself in אמונה. In the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the prophecies (Rom 1:2) that were tied to David in the OT are fulfilled. The prophets looked, as it were, through the provisional primal image of David to the exalted Christ (Acts 2:30-31). He is בכור (v. 27), πρωτότοκος, and therefore also ὁ ἄρχων τῶν βασιλέων τῆς γῆς (Rev. 1:5; Ps. 89:28, LXX)."³¹²

³⁰⁹ Merrill C. Tenney, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1963), 77.

³¹⁰ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 76.

³¹¹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 7.

³¹² Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, Continental Commentary (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 211.

John's position in redemptive history places him in a position to articulate the culmination of Psalm 89 and identify the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant in Jesus Christ. John's dependence on the source of Psalm 89, a Messianic Psalm, indicates Messianic intent. "The origination of all three expressions from Psalm 89 reflects a major authorial intent to direct attention to the fulfillment of the promises made to David regarding an eternal kingdom in 2 Samuel 7."³¹³ The unending, faithful witness to the moon represents the everlasting kingdom promised in the Davidic Covenant. He conquers death and rulers of the earth alike. In the apocalyptic vision, John recognizes that Christ returns to inaugurate the promised kingdom through his intentional connection to the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant through the use of titles descriptive of the Messiah in Psalm 89.

By His Blood: Freedom from Sin and the Kingdom of Priests (Rev 1:5, 6)

The epistolary introduction concludes with an expansion of the identification of Christ as the giver of the message of Revelation. John continues his description of Christ through a doxology in which the three-fold epithet of Christ from the previous section is articulated. Following these titles, the role of Christ's atoning blood in freeing believers from the confines of sin and in inaugurating the kingdom of priests is articulated. The culmination of this work of Christ is seen in the four Gospels, but the prophecy concerning the work of Christ has deep OT roots, and the grammatical structure of this occurrence demonstrates an allusion.

Textually, the construction "λύσαντι ἡμᾶς ἐκ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν" features the verb "λύσαντι." This verb is an aorist active participle from "λύω," which has a wide semantic range,

³¹³ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 70.

including “to untie, remove, set free, or destroy.”³¹⁴ Only in Rev 1:5 and the LXX of Isa 40:2 is the verb used to describe setting one free from sin.³¹⁵ The LXX construction reads, “λέλυται αὐτῆς ἡ ἁμαρτία,” which can be translated as “she has been freed from her sin.”³¹⁶ The Hebrew word used in the MT is “הִצִּיחַ” from the root “הִצִּיחַ” which translates “to be pleased with, accept favorably” or in this context, “to make acceptable, satisfy (by paying off debt).”³¹⁷ The translation of the LXX demonstrates a unique cohesion between Rev 1:5 and Isa 40:2 in the sense that the freedom from sin described in both instances is from the same source.

The thematic cohesion shows that the source of the freedom or release from sins is the glorified Christ that John depicts in the Apocalypse. It is possible that Israel did not grasp the basis of its independence from sin. Israel perhaps viewed their iniquity as being erased due to their time of service and suffering in Babylonian exile.³¹⁸ Smith argues against such a conclusion, “[Isa] 43:25 (53:6-12; 55:7) makes it abundantly clear that God is the one who blots out the guilt of transgressor when people repent of their sins. God sweeps away their sins because He is the one who redeems them (44:22) through the servant of Isaiah 52-53.”³¹⁹ Though the suffering Israel sustained during the exile can be viewed as a type of punishment for sin, there is no salvation given simply because of suffering for sin; Isaiah intends to depict a divine

³¹⁴ GELS, s.v. λύω, 437.

³¹⁵ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 83.

³¹⁶ The NASB95 translates this phrase, “That her iniquity has been removed.”

³¹⁷ BDB, s.v. הִצִּיחַ, 953.

³¹⁸ Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1969), 35.

³¹⁹ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66, The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 94-95.

act through which God compassionately forgives Israel in a manner that they may take comfort in (Isa 40:1).³²⁰ The people of Israel cannot continue to bear the burden of their terrible fate nor can they rescue themselves on their own.³²¹ The entire focus of the latter half of Isaiah is the post-exilic restoration of Israel; He is able and intentional in redeeming His people.³²² The literary context of Isaiah reveals God's redemptive plan through His son, the Suffering Servant. It is through the blood of Christ that freedom from sins comes. Beale elaborates that Rev 1:5 alludes to the sacrificial and priestly nature of Christ, "OT priests accomplished sanctification and atonement for Israel by sprinkling the blood of sacrificial animals (Ex 24:8; Lev 16:14-19). This may be a typological fulfillment of Israel's redemption from Egypt by the blood of the Passover Lamb, as is evident in the clear allusion to Ex 19:6 in 1:6."³²³

The blood of Christ releases believers from sin, which has been part of Yahweh's plan as evidenced throughout the canon. The continuity of the language between Isa 40:2 and Rev 1:5 demonstrates this common theme. Though the shedding of Christ's blood as a propitiation for the Christians' sin is depicted in the NT, the OT prophecy concerning His work on the cross is integral to the canonical portrayal of Christ in the initial chapter of Revelation.

Christ's blood is the means by which the believer is freed from sin and the kingdom of priests is inaugurated. Christ is portrayed in the initial Apocalyptic vision as both sacrifice and high priest, both essential elements of the priesthood. The kingdom of priests is a canonical theme with OT roots, linking directly to the depiction of Christ in Revelation 1.

³²⁰ Smith, *NAC: Isaiah 40-66*, 95.

³²¹ Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66*, 36.

³²² Elliot E. Johnson, "The Message of the Servant Songs," in *MHMP*, 922-923.

³²³ Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1090.

The verbal cohesion between Rev 1:6 and Ex 19:6 is similar. The Hebrew text in Ex 19:6 reads, “ממלכת כהנים,” which literally translates “a kingdom of priests.” The LXX translation reveals the textual similarities, with the text reading “βασιλειον ιεράτευμα” to indicate a kingdom of priests. Rev 1:6 reads “βασιλείαν ιερεῖς,”³²⁴ from the same lexical root as the occurrence in Exodus. The marginal difference between the two is “ιεράτευμα” representing “priesthood” or “body of priests” with the word “ιερεῖς” translating “priests.”³²⁵ The Hebrew word “ממלכת” refers to “a kingdom of priests (priests and kings at once in their relation to the nations).”³²⁶ In its context, the reference in Exodus can be traced to the Levitical priesthood given to Moses on Sinai. In contrast, the text in Revelation describes a new priesthood inaugurated by the blood of Christ.

Despite the apparent distinction between the two types of priesthoods, the themes are more similar than the reader may perceive on the surface. In the context of Exodus, the portrayal of the kingdom of priests can be defined,

“Israel as a “kingdom of priests” is Israel committed to the extension throughout the world of the ministry of Yahweh’s Presence. ממלכת here is exactly what it appears to be, a noun in construct relationship with כהנים, and it describes what Israel was always supposed to be: a kingdom run not by politicians depending upon strength and connivance but by priests depending on faith in Yahweh, a servant nation instead of a ruling nation.”³²⁷

³²⁴ Thomas indicates that some manuscripts display the text “βασιλείς και” which depicts individual believers as kings. While Christ allows believers to rule with Him, the focus here is more on the corporate kingdom rather than the individual. The accepted reading “βασιλείαν ιερεῖς” reflects this. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 75.

³²⁵ GELS, s.v. ιεράτευμα, 338. GELS, s.v. ιερέυς, 338.

³²⁶ BDB, s.v. ממלכת, 463.

³²⁷ Durham, *WBC: Exodus*, 263.

In this definition, Israel is called to serve the world and serve Yahweh through the priesthood; the focus is on service rather than authoritative rule. The priest's service involved standing between God and humans with the role of bringing people closer to God and helping dispense the truth, favor, justice, discipline, and holiness of God to others.³²⁸ However, despite the call to be the light to the Gentiles (Isa 43:10-13), Israel often ignored their obligation to fulfill this requirement of the priesthood (Isa 40-55).³²⁹ The description in Rev 1:6 functions as a reminder to the readers to serve as priests to God in the world. The kingdom of priests in Revelation is not limited, "The priestly office established by the OT law was hereditary, and only members of Aaron's family were eligible. Jesus Christ has provided a new family relationship by which all believers have a priestly ministry to God."³³⁰

As OT priests had unmediated access to God, the readers of Revelation are reminded that the blood of Christ has provided uninhibited access to the Father. Christ's blood removed the obstacle that man's sin placed in this relationship as He conquered sin and death on the cross.³³¹ Sacrificial blood inaugurated the Aaronic, Levitical priesthood (Ex 24:4-8; 29:10-21), and it inaugurates the priesthood to which all believers are called in Revelation. Malone argues that the

³²⁸ Stuart, *NAC: Exodus*, 422. Stuart continues to detail four ways in which Israel was intended to carry out this action, "(1) Israel would be an example to the people of other nations, who would see its holy beliefs and actions and be impressed enough to want to know personally the same God the Israelites knew. (2) Israel would proclaim the truth of God and invite people from other nations to accept him in faith as shown by confession of belief in him and acceptance of his covenant, as Jethro had already done. (3) Israel would intercede for the rest of the world by offering acceptable offerings to God (both sacrifices and right behavior) and thus ameliorate the general distance between God and humankind. (4) Israel would keep the promises of God, preserving his word already spoken and recording his word as it was revealed to them so that once the fullness of time had come, anyone in the whole world could promptly benefit from that great body of divinely revealed truth, that is, the Scriptures." Stuart, *Exodus*, 423.

³²⁹ Beale and McDonough, "Revelation," 1090.

³³⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 71.

³³¹ Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 430.

Rev 1:6 description of the royal priesthood confidently extols “believers are appointed priests at the moment they are released from sin and purchased for God, events clearly seen as completed. . . already believer-priest-kings can declare God’s praiseworthy acts to the nations and perhaps intercede for the nations.”³³² Proclaiming the gospel of Christ to the nations is the responsibility of the believer-priest-king with praise and service to the King of kings comprising the sacrifices laid upon the altar.

The royal priesthood is a canonical theme that can be traced back to Exodus. The blood used to inaugurate the priesthood in Rev 1:6 is superior to that of its OT counterpart, and unimpeded access to God is accomplished through this blood of Christ. The parallels between the passages demonstrate John’s intent to depict a canonical understanding of the priesthood and exhort his readers to carry out the priestly duties that Christ’s blood has provided.

Behold! He is Coming with the Clouds! (Rev 1:7)

The coming of Christ comprises a central theme of the Apocalypse. It is arguably the topic of the entire book of Revelation. Thomas concludes, “The content of v. 7 confirms its important contribution. It tells the topic of the whole book: the coming of Jesus Christ. To do so, it uses a conflation of two OT passages: Dan. 7:13 and Zech. 12:10.”³³³ The following two sections dissect this proclamation of Christ’s coming and the passage’s strong OT connections. The current focus is the first half of the verse, which describes the manner in which Christ comes and His appearance, while the next area of the study observes the reaction of those who see Him.

³³² Andrew S. Malone, *God’s Mediators: A Biblical Theology of Priesthood*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 43 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 161. Malone additionally expresses confidence in the dependence of Rev 1:6 on Ex 19:6, confirming the link between corporate Israel and corporate Christians. Malone, *God’s Mediators*, 166.

³³³ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 76.

In the first half of Rev 1:7, John calls His readers to a state of worship with the imperative “Ἴδοὺ” which translates “behold” and prompts the attention of the audience, exhorting them to look on with reverence at the object of the speaker’s attention.³³⁴ John intends to raise the awareness of the audience to the fact that “ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν,” which translates “He is coming with the clouds.” Yet John does not reveal novel information. Instead, he alludes to a prophecy that he is witnessing the fulfillment of before his own eyes. Dan 7:13 (LXX) reads, “ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο” which translates, “behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming.” The Greek versions do not yield an exact match. The Hebrew text reads “וַאֲרָרְוּ עִם־עַנְנֵי שָׁמַיָא כְּבָר אֶגְשׁ אֶתְהָהּ הַנָּא” which translates “and behold with the clouds of the heaven, one like a Son of Man came coming.” In the case of Rev 1:7, scholars theorize that John perhaps used a blend of the LXX and the MT or a Greek version revised to mirror the MT.³³⁵ The most significant departure is that John initially omits the title “Son of Man” before including it later in the initial Apocalyptic vision (1:13). The context of the imminent arrival of the Son of Man in Daniel clues the reader on the identity of the One who is given the title, He is like the Ancient of Days yet also distinguished from Him.

“Daniel used the Hebrew adjective with the Aramaic plural ending (עליונין) to refer to the ‘one like a son of man’ as Most High, distinguishing him from the Ancient of Days, for whom he used the normal Aramaic expression (עליא) when designating him as Most High. By using these distinct forms for ‘Most High’ consistently, Daniel identified both the Ancient of Days and the one like a son of man as the Most High, even as he distinguished them from one another. In this passage, Daniel communicates that the one like a son of man will be enthroned alongside the Ancient of Days, that he comes with the

³³⁴ BDAG, s.v., ἰδοὺ, 468.

³³⁵ “Ultimately, the textual form of Dan 7.13 and Zech 12.10, 12 in Rev 1.7 best reflects a Greek tradition revised towards the proto-MT. . . All that can be said with certainty is that John was aware of a revised Greek form [of the text] that circulated in the form of an exegetical tradition connected to Jesus’ sayings. The tradition was, by this time, circulating in a Greek form that closely resembled the proto-MT stream, representing a ‘set but independent text form.’” Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 121-122. Other scholars point to a similar combination construction in Matt 24:30. Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1090.

clouds as Yahweh does elsewhere (e.g., Pss 18:10; 97:2; 104:3, etc.), that he receives service and worship—described with terms only elsewhere used for describing obeisance done for deity, and that he will receive the everlasting kingdom which shall not pass away, which is exactly how God’s kingdom is described. The Ancient of Days is described as Most High with one term, while the one like a son of man is described as Most High with another.”³³⁶

The Son of Man title highlights the humanity of the individual described. The One who comes with the clouds has the appearance of a quintessential human, outwardly demonstrating a man as one made in the image of Yahweh.³³⁷ This combination of human elements with an equation to the Ancient of Days illustrates a figure that is both divine and human. “Dan 7:13-14 should have prompted the reader to look for a Messiah who would be both human on the one hand, and yet able to receive worship on the other hand, i.e., He would need to be both human and divine. That is exactly what the virgin birth of Jesus of Nazareth provides.”³³⁸ The title is an ideal fit for a description of Christ’s mission and defines His role as the Messiah by combining both the humility and glory of Jesus Christ.³³⁹ He uses this title regularly to refer to Himself in view of His fulfillment of this prophecy.³⁴⁰

³³⁶ James M. Hamilton Jr., *With the Clouds of Heaven: The Book of Daniel in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* 32 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 152-153.

³³⁷ Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel*, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries* 23 (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1978), 142-143.

³³⁸ Tanner, “Daniel 7:13-27: The Glorious Son of Man,” in *MHMP*, 1132. Tanner cites Rowe in support of his position. Rowe offers a threefold defense for the Messianic view of the “Son of Man” title including the similarities the coronation of the Davidic king in Psalm 2, His identity as the leader of the saints of the Most High, and clouds representing a heavenly being. R.D. Rowe, “Is Daniel’s ‘Son of Man’ Messianic?,” in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 94-96.

³³⁹ F.F. Bruce, “The Background to the Son of Man Sayings,” in *Christ the Lord: Studies in Christology Presented to Donald Guthrie* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1982), 70.

³⁴⁰ This title appears 84 times in the gospels.

The second element of this allusion that is essential to identifying the Son of Man with Jesus Christ is the presence of the “νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ” or “clouds of heaven.” Cloud imagery is often used in the OT to signify the presence of Yahweh (Ex 13:21; 16:10; 19:9; Lev 16:2; Deut 1:33; 1 Kings 8:10; Isa 19:1). Additionally, the NT reflects similar imagery in the Transfiguration accounts (Matt 17:5; Mk 9:7; Lk 9:34-35). Christ also refers to this cloud imagery, and it becomes a frequent eschatological reference to His Second Coming (Matt 24:30; 26:64; Mk 13:26; 14:62; Lk 21:27). While the cloud represents the presence of God, the Lord is also described as riding on a cloud. (Ps 68:4; 104:3-4; Isa 19:1; Nah 1:3). In contrast, the Canaanite deity Baal, frequently depicted in the OT as the nemesis of Israel and Yahweh, is also described as a cloud rider.³⁴¹ In the context of Daniel, the Ancient of Days and Son of Man stand in opposition to the evil kingdoms of the world that take the image of beasts, and the superiority of the former two figures is demonstrated. The “cloud rider” motif would appear to belong only to Yahweh. However, the one like a Son of Man is also associated with the ability to ride the clouds, which would have been astonishing in this OT context as this was previously a privilege ascribed only to Yahweh.³⁴² Tanner observes two critical conclusions that the cloud motif provides, associating the imagery with “Jesus’ ascension to the Father’s right hand, and His return in glory to claim His victory and impose His kingly rule upon the world He created for which He went to the cross.”³⁴³ This second conclusion contains numerous events and attributes of Christ which are part of John’s depiction of the glorified Christ. He is portrayed as the

³⁴¹ John Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, Hermenia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 286-294.

³⁴² Tremper Longman III and Daniel G. Reid, *God Is a Warrior*, Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic, 2010), 67.

³⁴³ Tanner, “Daniel 7:13-27: The Glorious Son of Man,” in *MHMP*, 1135.

sacrificial Lamb, the risen Lord, and the victorious King. That He is described in Rev 1:7 as coming with the clouds further cements the evidence that He is the Son of Man described in Dan 7:13-14.

The implications of the description of Christ as the cloud rider appeal to the deity and authority of Christ. He is identified with Yahweh through attributes previously attributed only to the Father, yet they are now associated with Christ. He is authoritative over all the nations, the beasts of Dan 7, the beast of Revelation, and their followers. His authority subdues all nations in fulfillment of Yahweh's covenant with Abraham (Gen 12:3). John's initial imperative to behold ("Ἴδου") the cloud rider will be heeded by all on earth and their reaction is recorded in the second half of Rev 1:7.

Every Eye Will See Him, Even Those Who Pierced Him (Rev 1:7)

The second half of Rev 1:7 contains the remorseful refrain describing the reaction of those who will look upon Christ's glorious appearance as He comes with the clouds. The second half of the verse contains strong OT intertextuality, as with the first half. As the glorified Christ reveals Himself, all will share in the guilt of the crucifixion of Christ. However, while this imagery convicts the heart of a believer, the followers of Christ can view this as a depiction of hope. In contrast, the tribes of the earth who are not followers of Christ have no such hope in this scene as they realize that the judge has come to proclaim His judgment.

The phrase in Rev 1:7 is written "καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς" and translates "and every eye will

see Him and those who pierced Him will wail because of Him, all the tribes of the earth.”³⁴⁴ The OT parallel in Zech 12:10 is written in Hebrew, “וְהָבִיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר-דָּקְרוּ וְסָפְדוּ עָלָיו” which translates “then they will look on Me whom they pierced and yes they will mourn for Him.”³⁴⁵ The Hebrew structure is more helpful than the LXX in this scenario, as scholars note that John’s translation of this passage in Rev 1:7 and in his gospel (Jn 19:37) seems to derive from a blend of Hebrew and Greek translations.³⁴⁶ While the verbal structure is similar, a noteworthy observation is that the title initially seems to reference Yahweh in Zech 12:10. The first person “אֵלַי” combined with the identification of Yahweh as the speaker in this verse seems to indicate that He is the one who is pierced. Calvin argues that the reference refers to the piercing of God’s heart due to Israel’s rejection of Him.³⁴⁷ However, Yahweh cannot be literally pierced, therefore understanding the Father as the one who is “דָּקְרוּ” requires a metaphorical or figurative understanding, such as piercing Him in the sense of profaning His name.³⁴⁸ However, Unger argues that should Zechariah have intended an allegorical interpretation, a better word choice would have been “נָקַב” rather than “דָּקַר” as the former verb is used to demonstrate piercing in the

³⁴⁴ More functionally, the NASB95 translates the text, “and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him.” (Rev 1:7).

³⁴⁵ “So that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him.” The text continues, “as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn” (Zech 12:10 NASB95).

³⁴⁶ “It is more probable that both Gospel and Apocalypse were indebted to a Greek version of the prophecy other than the LXX., perhaps to some collection of prophetic testimonies.” Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 9. “Ultimately, the textual form of Dan 7.13 and Zech 12.10, 12 in Rev 1.7 best reflects a Greek tradition revised towards the proto-MT.” Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish Textual Culture*, 121-122. “The use of Dan. 7:13 and Zech. 12:10 is complicated by the fact that neither the MT nor the LXX seems to be behind the readings.”

³⁴⁷ John Calvin, *John*, ed. Alister McGrath, The Crossway Classics Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 437.

³⁴⁸ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1956), 237.

sense of blasphemy elsewhere in the OT (Lev 24:11, 16).³⁴⁹ On the premise of a literal translation, it is reasonable to proceed under the conclusion Stuart proposes, “the context of Zech 12:10, specifically the excessive mourning in 12:11-14 as over one dead, combined with the verb’s [יָקַרְוּ] consistent usage throughout the OT, suggest that Zechariah foresees the literal piercing of the Lord at the hands of His covenant people. The NT makes clear how this happens through the incarnate Son.”³⁵⁰ Additionally, the subject of the one mourned is elaborated further in Zechariah. “That the one ‘mourned’ for is compared to a ‘firstborn son’ in Zech 12:10 is not a coincidence, since the same word (πρωτοτόκω) is used to describe the king in Ps 89:27 and Jesus in Rev 1:5.”³⁵¹ This evidence from the Hebrew text aids in arguing that John understood Christ as the subject of this passages as He alludes to it in Rev 1:7.

In theme, the evidence demonstrates the universal mourning of all of the peoples of the earth at the sight of the Second Coming of Christ. The mourning is not limited only to those who physically pierced Christ but is expanded “to those who in every age share the indifference or hostility which lay behind the act.”³⁵² The fact that John has added the phrases “every eye” and “of the earth” to his allusion to Zech 12:10 in Rev 1:7 universalizes the context to expand to all people. It is probable that the believers on earth will look upon Him and mourn Him, feeling conviction for their sin, while the “tribes of the earth” will mourn the coming judgment for their sin, creating a dyad of the themes of repentance and judgment.³⁵³ Osborne explains that the

³⁴⁹ Merrill F. Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 216.

³⁵⁰ Daniel E. Stuart, “Zechariah 12:10-13:1: The Pierced Messiah,” in *MHMP*, 1295.

³⁵¹ Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1090.

³⁵² Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 9.

³⁵³ Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1090-1091.

ambiguity is intentional, “it is likely that a deliberate ambiguity is introduced here, with the reader expected to see a repentance theme in light of the Zechariah parallel and yet a judgment theme in light of the switch from Israel in Zechariah to ‘the peoples of the earth’ here.”³⁵⁴ Christ-following Jews and Gentiles comprise the repentant portion of the tribes of earth, while those who are unrepentant make up those who mourn over their sin and face judgment.

John describes Christ in a manner consistent with OT terminology that he heard Christ describe Himself with during the Olivet discourse (Matt 24:30). To argue that the Holy Spirit inspired Zechariah to articulate the crucifixion and the future Messianic fulfillment of his prophecy is within reason,

“Zechariah simply makes this assertion without commenting on how it will happen; the NT clarifies how this messianic prophecy finds direct fulfillment in the incarnation, crucifixion, and second coming of Jesus (c.f. Jn 1:1; 19:37; Lk 23:48; Rev 1:7). Surely God has already provided the Israelites with the theological framework necessary to understand the incarnation and crucifixion through Isa 53 and Zech 9-14 so that when He would come to suffer in the person of Jesus, He would come to a people theologically prepared for the idea.”³⁵⁵

Though Christ will judge every person, the believer with a repentant heart may look upon Christ at His Second Coming with contrition and mourn over the cost of their sin - sending Jesus to the cross. In contrast, the proud servants of the beast will weep at the impending judgment of their repentant hearts. Every eye will see Him, and all the earth will stand before Him and wail in fulfillment of the Zechariah prophecy. This example of intertextuality depicts Christ as the redeemer and righteous judge.

³⁵⁴ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 69. Osborne also observes that this ambiguity continues throughout the Apocalypse as a major theme.

³⁵⁵ Stuart, “Zechariah 12:10-13:1,” 1298.

One Like a Son of Man: A Visual Description of the Glorified Christ (Rev 1:13-15)

The attributes, work, and person of the glorified Christ are depicted throughout the Apocalyptic prologue. In this section of verses, John attempts to describe the sensory nature of Christ – His appearance, characteristics, and voice. As John experiences this knee-buckling vision, He uses familiar terminology to depict Christ, whom he recognizes as fully divine. In his description of the glorified Christ, John uses OT imagery primarily from Daniel and Ezekiel, namely the description of the Ancient of Days in Daniel.³⁵⁶ The significance of John’s use of this terminology cannot be understated, as he intentionally appeals to the deity of Christ. “While in Daniel the Son of Man is distinguished from the Ancient of Days, here the Son of Man is described as if He were the Ancient of Days.”³⁵⁷ The significance of the intertextuality of these references is expanded in the fifth chapter.

The first description in Rev 1 that demonstrates verbal and thematic cohesion with the OT is Christ’s white, full-length robe girded with a golden sash. Christ’s presence amongst the lampstands, His churches, is indicative of His priestly duties. The robe, described with the *hapax legomena* adjective “ποδήρη,” carries significant implications in OT and Jewish literature. Jesus’ long robe suggests kingly authority (Isa 22:21), the purity of the high priest (Ex 28:4; 29:5-9), or both.³⁵⁸ It was not uncommon for Jewish scholars to identify the high priest’s clothing with the

³⁵⁶ This self-declaration used by Christ in the NT has substantial OT roots. Wright explains that the term “Son of Man” in its original context might be likened to the modern term “mister,” simply referring to a man who merits respect due to his position in the home. However, in the context of Daniel 7, Wright clarifies that the term takes on a twofold definition. The Son of Man in this instance represents the saints (man) and is also closely related to Yahweh. He argues that this passage likely influenced Christ’s statement that the Son of Man would come on the clouds at his trial and the accusations of blasphemy that followed. Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 155-158.

³⁵⁷ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 81.

³⁵⁸ Tabb, *All Things New*, 49.

foot-length tunic.³⁵⁹ The OT gives the background of the high priestly outfit, listing the tunic (הַכְּתָנֶת), the robe of the ephod (מְעִיל הָאֵפֹד), the ephod (הָאֵפֹד), breastplate (חֹשֶׁת הַבְּרִיטָה), and the intricately or skillfully woven band of the ephod (בִּצְבָּצָב הָאֵפֹד) (Ex 29:5). The LXX seems to combine the robe of the ephod with the breastplate, opting to use the term “ποδήρη” to indicate a full-length robe.³⁶⁰ John also describes a golden sash upon Christ (Ex 28:4; 29:5; 39:29). This description stems from Daniel’s depiction (Dan 10:5) and represents both royal and priestly honor. The similarity to the dress of Yahweh in Dan 10:5 is indicative of the judgment that would be inflicted by the angelic messengers commissioned by Christ later in Revelation.

Additionally, the high priest was adorned with the priestly turban as well as a holy crown (Ex 29:6). This combination of head adornments is seen elsewhere in the OT, namely Ezek 21:25-27. In this passage, God punishes Israel by instructing the kingly line to remove the turban (priestly imagery) and the crown (kingly imagery) until “He comes whose right it is” to wear it. The Messiah is depicted as the future wearer of the turban and the crown, indicating the regal and priestly authority of Christ. The Messiah will fulfill the role that previous monarchs and priests fell short of. “From the ashes of Israel’s fallen leadership, the Messiah will arise to singlehandedly take the turban and the crown. In the midst of separation from God, the Messiah will mediate and restore His people. [Ezekiel] shows that all of Israel’s hope and functions converge in Him.”³⁶¹ The priestly and kingly robe worn by Christ as He stands amongst the symbolic lampstands demonstrates His authority, His role as High priest, and His status as the

³⁵⁹ Ross E Winkle, “‘Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man’: Dress Imagery in Revelation 1 as an Indicator of High Priestly Status,” *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 50, no. 2 (2012), 168.

³⁶⁰ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 15.

³⁶¹ Abner Chou, “Ezekiel 21:25-27: The Hope of Israel,” in *MHMP*, 1080.

hope of His people. He has risen to fulfill a position that no previous individual in the history of Israel could. The fact that the robe represents two roles is paramount, “the significance of this is that Christ is portrayed as the kingly and priestly figure. . . the ambiguity may be [intentional] due to the possibility that both a king and a priest are in mind.”³⁶²

Secondly, the head and hair of Christ are described as white wool, like snow, “αἱ τρίχες λευκαὶ ὡς ἔριον λευκὸν ὡς χιών.” This description is reminiscent of the Ancient of Days in Dan 7:9. Here, the text describes the Ancient of Days, “וְשַׁעַר רִאשֵׁי הַקְּעָמָר נְקִיִּים,” which translates “the hair of His head was like pure wool.” The LXX highlights the verbal cohesion between the passages, “καὶ τὸ τρίχωμα τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ ἔριον λευκὸν καθαρὸν.” The constructions are similar with minor exceptions. It seems John has adopted the snow-like (χιών) appearance of the Ancient of Days’ clothing and applied it to His hair.³⁶³ While this is a physical attribute, the fact that John bestows a divine description upon the glorified Christ indicates His divine attributes. The word “χιών,” used for snow in Rev 1:13, can be used to describe perfect whiteness in the sense of purity.³⁶⁴ Additionally, the eternity of both the Ancient of Days and the glorified Christ is in view, “White hair is a sign of old age and an apt symbol of God’s eternal nature, already emphasized in this passage by the title ‘Ancient of Days.’”³⁶⁵ Swete theorizes that the hair represents Christ’s unchangeable nature contrasted with decay typical of

³⁶² Beale and McDonough, “Revelation,” 1092.

³⁶³ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 100.

³⁶⁴ BDAG, s.v., χιών, 546.

³⁶⁵ Stephen R. Miller, *NAC: Daniel*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1994), 204. See also Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 100.

man, His sinlessness, and His suffering.³⁶⁶ The optimal conclusion is that Christ's white, wool-like hair symbolizes His eternity, His deity, and His purity. He is eternal and should be afforded the great respect and admiration given to an elder, He is equated to the Ancient of Days, and He is sinless.

Third, His eyes are like a flame of fire and His feet are like burnished bronze (Rev 1:14-15). These references each find their root in Dan 10:6. Here, the subject is a heavenly messenger that matches the description of Christ in Rev 1:13-15. Arguably, the individual described here is Yahweh.³⁶⁷ In Revelation, angelic beings are occasionally described in the same manner as the glorified Christ, but the attributes belong to Christ. Therefore, it is plausible that whether the individual in Dan 10 is Yahweh or His messenger, the adornments reflect characteristics of Yahweh. However, given the connection to Dan 10 and its relevance to this dissertation, this author supports the position that Yahweh is the one portrayed in Dan 10. This figure is John's inspiration for the portrait he paints in his description of the initial Apocalyptic vision. John writes, "οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλόξ πυρός," which translates "His eyes are like a flame of fire." Similarly, Daniel described the heavenly figure, "יְיָ־וַיִּצְיַן יְיָ־פְלִיִּן," (MT) "οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ λαμπάδες πυρός" (LXX). The constructions similarly represent fire, though the medium of the fire is different. John describes a flame (φλόξ), whereas the two versions of Daniel use a torch (יְיָ־פְלִיִּן) and a lamp (λαμπάδες). In the OT, fire is often a symbol of judgment, as Daniel elsewhere describes God's throne being swallowed in flames which signifies the wrath of God

³⁶⁶ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 16.

³⁶⁷ For an argument of the identity of the heavenly man in Dan 10 as Yahweh, see Miller, *NAC: Daniel*, 281. "That this person was God seems to be the correct view not only because of the overwhelming effect of his presence on Daniel but because of the similar description of the theophany presented in Ezek 1:26–28 and the even closer parallel to the portrait of Christ in Rev 1:12–16."

being poured out upon the wicked.³⁶⁸ The eyes of Christ are flames with connections to judgment and destruction of the wicked, thus the penetrating nature of His gaze is in view. Osborne concludes, “Most scholars note the extent to which this pictures the divine insight that penetrates to the core of the human situation. As in Daniel, however, this goes beyond that to include also the fierce judgment of the God who knows and acts against those who disobey him.”³⁶⁹ The allusions “can convey the notion of penetrating vision and the associated idea of supernatural intelligence in regard to what is seen. This penetrating intelligence, which was associated with quick intelligence, and, when appropriate, with righteous wrath, is now attributed to the risen and glorified Christ (Mk 3:5, 34; 10:21, 23; 11:11; Lk 22:61).”³⁷⁰ The optimal conclusion is to conclude that this is an attribution of deity and an attestation to the piercing judgment of Christ. He is depicted in identical imagery to Yahweh and shown as the all-seeing judge who pierces the hearts of men.

Christ is again likened to the description of Yahweh in Dan 10:6 through the mutual description of brazen feet. John describes Christ’s feet as fine bronze, “οἱ πόδες αὐτοῦ ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ.” Likewise, Daniel describes the feet of Yahweh as “וּמַרְגְּלָיו כְּעֵיִן נְהָשֶׁת קָלִיל” (MT) and “οἱ πόδες ὡσεὶ χαλκὸς ἐξαστράπτων.” John’s use of “χαλκολιβάνῳ” is perplexing, as he is the only biblical author to use the term (Rev 1:17; 2:18), and the exact nature of the term is unknown.³⁷¹ In antiquity, the term indicated a metal of great brilliance or a brightly shining/

³⁶⁸ Miller, *NAC: Daniel*, 204.

³⁶⁹ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 90.

³⁷⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 101. See also Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 28.

³⁷¹ BDAG, s.v., χαλκολιβανον, 1076.

brightly flashing metallic compound.³⁷² Similar conclusions can be drawn from the term “ἐξαστράπτων” which modifies “χαλκός” to indicate a flashing or gleaming quality of the metal.³⁷³ The brilliance of the metal in view of the bare feet of Christ amid the seven lampstands demonstrates two conclusions. First, the high priest would perform duties barefooted, and the bare feet of Christ represent His active participation in this role.³⁷⁴ Second, He represents purity as a shining, rare, pristine metal. In this sense, the description serves to “bring attention to Christ’s movement among the churches to inculcate purity. This inculcation was done by Christ’s rendering of judgment in cases of moral shortcoming.”³⁷⁵ The awe-inducing purity of Christ and His judgment are the central themes in this OT allusion.

Lastly, His voice is like the sound of many waters, “ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν.” This section’s final descriptor of Christ references two OT prophets. Like several other images describing the Son of Man, Daniel illuminates the canonical background of this image. Dan 10:6 describes the voice of Yahweh, “וְקוֹל דְּבָרָיו כְּקוֹל הַמְּוִן,” which translates “the sound of his voice was like the voice of a tumult.” The final word in the sequence, “וְהַמְּוִן,” can be defined as a rush, roar, or a sound made by an immense multitude. This indicates a link to the multitude of waters described in Rev 1:15. However, the source of the water imagery is found in Ezekiel (Ezek 1:24; 43:2). In Ezek 1:21, the sound of the voice of the Almighty is likened to the sound of abundant waters among other imagery. Here, the sound is not associated with a wild, tempestuous sea but rather represents an overwhelming, commanding, or threatening loudness in

³⁷² Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 16.

³⁷³ BDAG, s.v., ἐξαστράπτω, 346.

³⁷⁴ Winkle, “‘Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man,’ 354-356.

³⁷⁵ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 102.

the image of rushing water.³⁷⁶ “The sound of God’s voice was the same as John described in his opening vision in Rev 1:15, which also was a theophany.”³⁷⁷ Ezek 43:2 mirrors the same imagery and includes the word “διπλασιαζόντων” to emphasize the greatness of the sound of the voice of Yahweh.³⁷⁸ The water imagery depicts the glory of God and presents another example of the culmination of divine imagery in the Christology of Revelation.³⁷⁹ Christ’s deity, authority, and power are on display as the sound of His voice is equated with the voice of Yahweh in the OT.

These verses demonstrate strong examples of intertextuality in both theme and verbal construction. The overarching theme of the section is that John views the glorified Christ or Revelation as equivalent to Yahweh in the OT. He is the high priest-king according to the order of Melchizedek. He is the only one worthy to wear the regal and priestly garments. Christ is as awe-inducing as Yahweh in terms of visual appearance and the reader should be moved to worship Christ as the OT saints worshipped Yahweh. He is the divine judge; nothing escapes the piercing gaze of Christ. He is powerful yet performs all of His divine duties in the midst of the lampstands indicating His proximity to His Church. Each of these descriptions plays a significant role in the Apocalypse but are rooted in the OT. As the visual description of Christ has been satisfied, John moves to conclude his portrayal of Christ by illustrating the sword of His mouth before recording Christ’s self-declarations.

³⁷⁶ Leslie C Allen, *WBC: Ezekiel 1-19*, vol. 28, (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1990), 35.

³⁷⁷ Lamar E. Cooper Sr., *NAC: Ezekiel*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1994), 70.

³⁷⁸ GELS, s.v. διπλοῦς, 172.

³⁷⁹ Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology*, 552-553.

Out of His Mouth Came a Sharp Two-Edged Sword (Rev 1:16)

Having established that Christ's return as the judge will strike fear and mourning into the hearts of the unbelieving tribes of earth (Rev 1:7), the instrument of His judgment will be evaluated in this section. Out of the mouth of Christ comes a “*ῥομφαία δίστομος ὀξεῖα*,” a unique phrase for a sharp, two-edged sword that pierces hearts and perceives genuine intentions.

In terms of verbal cohesion, textual evidence is much more substantial for a unified NT theme of the sword of Christ's mouth than in the OT. In the OT, the sword is often used to depict Christ's judgment upon the nations through war with their enemies (cf. Eze 38). However, one reference within the Servant songs of Isaiah indicates the prophecy that the Messiah's weapon of judgment would be a sharp sword. The Hebrew text in Isa 49:2 reads, “*וַיַּשְׁמֵם פִּי כְּתַרְבֵּן חֲדָה*” which translates “He has made my mouth like a sharp sword.” Here, Yahweh prepares the Servant to carry out His ministry as the judge by making His mouth as a sword. This simile creates the imagery that the Word of the Servant will be sharp, perceptive, and powerful.³⁸⁰ The LXX rendering of Isa 49:2 reads that the mouth of the Servant has been made like a “*μάχαιραν ὀξεῖαν*” or “sharp sword.” A notable departure can be observed here, as John opts to use “*ῥομφαία*” rather than the more common “*μάχαιρα*” to describe the weapon of Christ's mouth. However, as further research in the next chapter will show, the word “*ῥομφαία*” is only used once in the NT outside of Revelation, and the word is less common than “*μάχαιρα*” in the OT, though the two are often used as synonyms.³⁸¹ The description of the sharpness of the instrument is shared between the two passages as the word “*ὀξεῖαν*” is shared between them. The Servant's identity,

³⁸⁰ BDB, s.v. תַּרְבֵּן, 352

³⁸¹ GELS, s.v. ῥομφαία, 614. See also Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 18.

as in the other Servant songs of Isaiah, is the Messiah. He is “an ideal Israel who is all that God intended the nation to be, in contrast to the exiled Israel who failed to fulfill God’s purposes. The ideal Israel will deliver exiled Israel from bondage (Isa 49:5, 8-13) and will carry out God’s ideal for Israel by bringing God’s salvation to the nations (Isa 42:6; 49:6).”³⁸² In the broader context, the passage describes “the calling and role of the Servant, a role that is larger than gathering Israel, namely, to bring the salvation of the Lord to the ends of the earth.”³⁸³ The Messiah wielding a sharp sword as the instrument of His judgment upon the nations is clearly fulfilled in Rev 1:16, as is the theme from Isaiah that He is a light and salvation to the nations.

Through theme, an additional example of the weaponization of Christ’s oral judgment can be found in Isa 11:4. The Hebrew text contains the word “מִשְׁבֵּט” from “שֶׁבֶט” which typically indicates a blunt weapon or object such as a rod, staff, or scepter and is also viewed as a symbol of authority.³⁸⁴ The authority and role of the Son of Man to impart judgment through a royal decree is demonstrated in the OT (Dan 10:21-12:13), and the regal imagery here could be a reference to Christ as the divine king rather than as the divine warrior-judge. It is plausible to identify this as a metaphorical scepter indicating the authority of the Servant rather than a contradiction. Smith expounds upon a symbolic view,

“Since lips do not literally slay people, it is clear that the authority of the word of this ruler is fully identified with the execution of his will. No one can resist his power and no injustice will remain in his kingdom. The aim is not to present a negative view of the

³⁸² Robert B. Chisholm Jr., “Isaiah 49:1-13: The Ministry of the Servant of the Lord,” in *MHMP*, 946.

³⁸³ Jon Morales, *Christ, Shepherd of the Nations: The Nations as Narrative Character and Audience in John’s Apocalypse*, Library of New Testament Studies (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 117.

³⁸⁴ BDB, s.v. שֶׁבֶט, 986.

uncontrolled slaughter of wicked people, but to emphasize that everything will be guided by principles of justice, upright behavior, and consistent faithfulness.”³⁸⁵

It is noteworthy that the LXX translation of this verse does not include a depiction of any instrument in particular. “καὶ πατάξει γῆν τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ” translates “and I will strike down the earth with the Word of my mouth.” The absence of a specific weapon or item from the LXX favors a symbolic view of Christ’s judgment. Beale argues,

“The context in the entire chapter shows that Isa. 11:4 is not used as a literal depiction of destruction but is viewed as the Son of man’s oral pronouncement of a guilty verdict against the ‘kings’; the pronouncement occurs as part of a courtroom scene in which the Son of man is on his throne, after which the kings are delivered over to punishment ‘to execute vengeance on them because they have oppressed his children and his elect,’ who will eat with the Son of man and receive ‘garments of glory’ as a token of their vindication.”³⁸⁶

Additionally, Christ’s sovereignty over the nations and role in the salvation of His people are also attributes characterized by the sword. Isa 41:2 exhorts the people of Israel to recall that it is not the Assyrian gods that have spurred the Assyrians to war but that Yahweh has stirred them and has the power to subdue them. He can make kings and nations like dust with His sword of judgment. God has given the Assyrian king power to turn his enemies into dust, yet it is Yahweh who ultimately holds this power to destroy His opposers with the sword of His mouth. This same imagery is used to encourage the Israelites that He is stronger than the gods of the nations and will bring Israel victory over their enemies through His sovereignty. Smith argues,

“The main purpose of this salvation oracle is to offer a message of hope to fearful people by assuring them that God will help and strengthen his people in the midst of this trial. Their problems will be carried far away just like chaff being scattered by the wind (41:16a). God’s fulfillment of his promises will result in great rejoicing and words of

³⁸⁵ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1-39*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2009), 273. See also Brevard Childs, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 103.

³⁸⁶ Beale, NIGCT: *Revelation*, 962.

praise and honor to the Holy God of Israel (41:16b). Fear will turn to salvation and redemption from trouble will result in thankful praise to the Holy One. Indeed, all praise goes to God Almighty.”³⁸⁷

The same hope of salvation can be seen in the Apocalypse as Christ gives victory and salvation to His people through the judgment of His sword. Those who are His faithful followers have no cause to fear as Christ promises victory over the beast and his armies. He has the power to turn those who oppose Him and His people into chaff and dust with the sword of His mouth.

The themes of judgment and salvation are seen in the OT and Apocalyptic occurrences of the description of the judgment of Christ’s mouth. The sword's sharpness indicates the depth of the judgment, as the sword of the Servant’s mouth will reveal the innermost being. “Decisions will be based on the true nature of the heart (1 Sam 16:7). Status, money, or political influence will not derail this new Davidic ruler’s perspective on justice, for idle boasts, excuses, deceptive lies, and false information by the guilty will not prevent the truth from being known.”³⁸⁸ It is at the appointed time depicted in the Apocalypse that the fulfillment of this Messianic prophecy occurs as portrayed in Rev 1. “Isa 49:2 points to the Servant’s commission to establish justice on the earth. When the time comes for the Lord to inaugurate His kingdom of justice and peace, He will accomplish the task effectively through the Servant – His sword and arrow, as it were.”³⁸⁹ The Servant and Messiah of Isaiah is the glorified Christ of Revelation, and He is coming swiftly to bring His authoritative, piercing judgment to man and salvation to His followers.

I Am the First and Last and the Living One (Rev 1:17-18)

³⁸⁷ Smith, *NAC: Isaiah 40-66*, 137.

³⁸⁸ Smith, *NAC: Isaiah 1-39*, 272-273.

³⁸⁹ Chisholm Jr., “Isaiah 49:1-13: The Ministry of the Servant of the Lord,” in *MHMP*, 948.

Christ's self-declaration near the conclusion of the initial chapter of Revelation is a familiar refrain for an OT scholar such as John. In the OT, Yahweh describes Himself as "the First and Last" (Isa 44:6; 48:12), and He is regularly called "the living God" (Josh 3:10; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Hos 1:10). Textual cohesion is more robust in the NT for the latter of the titles. However, Christ's declaration identifies Himself with the eternal Yahweh. The first of the titles, "the First and Last," depicts a strong indication of the deity and eternity of Christ.

Textual similarities between Rev 1:17 and the Isaiah texts seem fainter than others discussed in this chapter, but the evidence is still substantial. Isa 44:6 reads "אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרִי" which translates "I am the First and Last." Similar phrasing comprises the same statement in Isa 48:12, "אֲנִי רִאשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרִי." The primary words of the phrase, "רִאשׁוֹן" and "אַחֲרִי" are defined as "former, chief, or first" and "coming after or behind," respectively.³⁹⁰ The deviation between the two readings becomes evident in the LXX translations. Isa 44:6 is written, "Ἐγὼ πρῶτος καὶ ἐγὼ μετὰ ταῦτα" which literally translates "I am the first and I am after these things." Isa 48:12 takes a different approach, "ἐγὼ εἰμι πρῶτος, καὶ ἐγὼ εἰμι εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα" which translates "I am the first and I am into the ages (or eternity)." The two Isaiah verses in the LXX share the word "πρῶτος" with Rev 1:17 in a clear example of cohesion in the first half of the title. The second half becomes more complex, as the two Isaiah references and Rev 1:17 all use a different word or phrase for "last." Isa 44:6 uses the phrase "μετὰ ταῦτα," which translates "after these things" and is deployed elsewhere in Revelation (cf. Rev 4:1). Isa 48:12 uses the construction "εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα" which translates "into the ages" or "everlasting" and emphasizes the eternity of

³⁹⁰ BDB, s.v. רִאשׁוֹן, 911. BDB, s.v. אַחֲרִי, 30.

Yahweh.³⁹¹ Rev 1:17 contains the common adjective used to describe the last or ending thing, “ἔσχατος.” All three phrases are in the same semantic field, though the exact verbal cohesion is not present for the latter half of the declaration.³⁹²

Thematic evidence demonstrates that the title used of Yahweh in the OT is undoubtedly in mind for John and is attributed to Christ in Rev 1:17. In the context of Isaiah, Yahweh’s declaration that He is “the First and Last” is a polemical statement differentiating Himself from idols or other objects claiming to be divine that have been human inventions (Isa 41:4; 43:10; 44:6; 48:12-13). That He is the Lord and the First and Last in these two references forms “a characteristic triad, emphasizing the oneness, the uniqueness, and the eternity of God.”³⁹³ Smith contests that this is not simply a statement on eternity but is a reminder about the imminence of God with His creation, “This is not an abstract philosophical statement of his eternity but a reminder that his works span the whole scope of history from the beginning to the very end of time. This claim would give assurance to the audience that God knows all about their past problems and will be around to help them in the future.”³⁹⁴ Yahweh is also the one true force or power that encompasses the totality of the past, present, and future (Isa 41:4).³⁹⁵ The title claims

³⁹¹ GELS, s.v. αἰών, 19. The word is often used in the NT to mean “forevermore” as used in the next verse (Rev 1:18).

³⁹² Robertson argues that the title is used specifically of Yahweh in Isa 44:6; 44:8 but used of Christ throughout the Apocalypse (Rev 1:7; 2:8; 22:13). Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 1:17.

³⁹³ James Muilenburg, “The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 40-66,” in *The Interpreter’s Bible*, vol. 5 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1956), 559.

³⁹⁴ Smith, *NAC: Isaiah 40-66*, 226.

³⁹⁵ Childs, *Isaiah*, 317.

God's "sovereignty and divine control over history."³⁹⁶ Not only does this title illustrate these attributes of Yahweh, but it also attests to the reliability of God's word throughout eternity.³⁹⁷

This understanding of God and His Word contributed to the foundation from which John's readers would have been instructed. Bauckham summarizes the impact of the Isaiah passages,

"In those chapters of Isaiah, the designation encapsulates the understanding of the God of Israel as the sole Creator of all things and sovereign Lord of history, which [Isaiah] so magnificently expounds and asserts polemically against the idols of Babylon. Unlike human-made gods, this God is the utterly incomparable One, to whom all nations are subject, whose purpose none can frustrate (cf. Isa. 40:12-26). It is precisely this exclusive monotheistic faith that determines the prophetic outlook of Revelation."³⁹⁸

Similar attributes are thus ascribed to Christ as depicted in Rev 1:17, "The first and last" (as seen in Isa) signifies Christ's status (With God) as the origin and goal of everything, especially His role at the beginning and end of history, that is, in forming and then moving God's creation toward its divinely intended purpose."³⁹⁹ Christ is eternal. He perseveres into eternity as seen in the immediate context of the self-declaration that He is "the First and Last" (Rev 1:18). The "I am" statements of the OT attributed to Yahweh (Ex 3:14; Isa 44:6; 45:6, 18, 22; 46:4, 9; 47:10; 48:12) form the basis of the structure of the "I am" statements familiar to Johannine literature.

³⁹⁶ "This self-introduction formula claims sovereignty and divine control over history. God is the one who has "acted, worked" (*pā'al*), the one who has "done, performed" (*āšā*) his deeds to direct the course of history from the beginning of time until the last events in history. Therefore, God can be rightly called "the first and the last." Smith, *NAC: Isaiah 40-66*, 130. See also Hugh G. M. Williamson, "The First and Last in Isaiah," in *Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages*, ed. David J. A. Clines and Heather A. McKay, *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series* 162 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 95-108.

³⁹⁷ Christopher Seitz, "Isaiah 40-66," in *New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 6 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2001), 387.

³⁹⁸ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27.

³⁹⁹ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 103.

In summary, as this title appeals to, Christ shares in the eternality, oneness, uniqueness, and trustworthiness of Yahweh. Mounce articulates how the two titles described in this section function together to speak to the audience of Revelation, “In Isa. 44:6 God declares, ‘I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God’” (cf. Isa 48:12). The title emphasizes the absolute sovereignty of God. Thus, in Revelation, the words ‘Do not be afraid’ come from a sovereign being. Even death holds no terror because he is the Living One who has conquered death and holds it in his power (v. 18).”⁴⁰⁰ Christ has conquered death. The divine, glorified Christ is coming to be a comfort to believers as He was to John (Rev 1:17) and to inspire contrition and repentance among the people of earth (Rev 1:7).

I Have the Keys of Death and Hades (Rev 1:18)

As the chapter concludes, Jesus continues to speak to John, who is recovering from his initial reaction to the exalted Christ. The two previous titles in this chain that claim the eternality of Christ and the One who has life in Himself give Christ the authority to give life and to consign or release one from death.⁴⁰¹ John is described as falling on his feet as though dead (“ὡς νεκρός”). Christ comforts John by assuring him that He holds the keys of Death and Hades (“ἔχω τὰς κλεῖς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ᾗδου”). Unlike the more evident allusions or direct references to the OT John uses in his descriptions of Christ in the apocalyptic vision, the keys of death and Hades do not enjoy a particular intertextual connection with the OT but are instead the product of

⁴⁰⁰ Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 61.

⁴⁰¹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 112.

a thematic metaphor.⁴⁰² This is intended to mean that the metaphor involved (the keys as a representation of authority) calls attention to a particular theme within the OT, the authority of Yahweh, and now Christ, over Death and Hades.

Death and Hades are closely associated throughout antiquity. The two are observable in nearly every culture, especially the pagan religions that thrived in the first century. Bass provides a helpful description of the two ideas and their personification in the OT, as they both are described in personal terms as speaking (Death in Job 28:22), being insatiable (both in Hab 2:5; Hades in Prov 27:20, terrorizing (Death in Ps 54:5; Hades in Ps 17:6; 114:3), and are attributed human parts (Death is described as having a soul in Jonah 2:5; Sheol has a hand in Hos 13:14 and a belly in Jonah 2:3).⁴⁰³ He notes this personification and its particular relevance in Revelation, “most important for the background of Revelation, Death, and Hades appear together frequently in the OT. When they appear together, they are usually personified and seem to be inseparable brothers as they are consistently paired together in Revelation (1:18; 6:8; 20:13,14).”⁴⁰⁴ The close association of Death and Hades is evident throughout the OT, a fact that John consciously regurgitates throughout the Apocalypse.

From a textual and linguistic standpoint, as has been lamented, there is not one particular passage of Scripture that shares linguistic commonality with Rev 1:18’s use of (ἔχω τὰς κλεῖς τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ᾗδου). However, an exegesis of the text guides the identification of the OT theme. A plain reading of “κλεῖς” leaves the reader with the standard definition of the word, “(1)

⁴⁰² For a discussion on metaphor possibilities in Apocalyptic, see Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, 189-194.

⁴⁰³ Justin W. Bass, *The Battle for the Keys: Revelation 1:18 and Christ’s Descent into the Underworld*, Paternoster Biblical Monographs (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2014), 25.

⁴⁰⁴ Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 26.

something used for locking, a key. (2) A means of acquiring access to something, a key.”⁴⁰⁵

However, the “key” to understanding the key of Rev 1:18 lies in the symbolism, “The keys are the symbol of authority, as we speak of honouring one by giving him the keys of the city.”⁴⁰⁶

This assessment of authority is consistent with the OT context involving the authority granted by keys. The account of the “key of David” in Isaiah 22:20-24 details the supplanting of the ineffective Shebna with Eliakim as the steward of the royal household. Watts describes the coronation of Eliakim as the “fullest description of this position of honor and authority that exists in Scripture.”⁴⁰⁷ Eliakim’s exact role and the corresponding responsibilities within the palace are numerous, but the primary emphasis for this study is the authority in the position and the symbolism represented by the key of David. Ganzel’s investigation reveals that in the historical context of this passage, there was one singular holder of the keys. This would have been a significant palace official controlling access not only to the palace entrances and exits but additionally to protect the sanctity of the holy places, especially given Eliakim’s vestment description in the passage (Isa 22:21).⁴⁰⁸ This authority over both royal and priestly functions is consistent with John’s description of Christ’s attributes in Rev 1 (see “The Ruler of the Kings of the Earth” and “He Has Freed Us from Our Sins by His Blood”). The evidence demands that the “κλεις” be taken as a symbol of authority and power.

⁴⁰⁵ BDAG, s.v., κλεις, 546.

⁴⁰⁶ Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Rev 1:18.

⁴⁰⁷ John D.W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33*, Revised., Word Biblical Commentary 24 (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2005), 346.

⁴⁰⁸ Tova Ganzel, “Isaiah’s Critique of Shebna’s Trespass: A Reconsideration of Isaiah 22.15–25,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 39, no. 4 (June 1, 2015): 483-485.

The authority and power Christ holds in Rev 1:18 are over “τοῦ θανάτου καὶ τοῦ ᾄδου.” One obstacle to overcome in identifying a particular OT allusion to this reference is understanding the final word, “ᾄδου,” the genitive of “ᾄδης.” The origin of the word comes from “ἴδε,” which means “to see,” and is given an alpha privative, which provides the word with the connotation, “the unseen world.”⁴⁰⁹ It replaces the Hebrew “לִּישׁׁ” in the LXX and is defined as “the underworld, the abode of the dead.”⁴¹⁰ The Hebrew “לִּישׁׁ” appears more than 65 times in the OT and carries the base definition of “underworld” with a semantic range that includes being defined as a pit or a place of exile for Israel among other renderings.⁴¹¹ It is a place of no return, gloom, utter darkness, deepest night, utter darkness, and disorder, where even light is like darkness (Job 10:21-22). At the pinnacle of the metaphorical darkness, Pearson recognizes the context of the Hebrew world, “The Hebrews regarded death as the certain and proper end of all intercourse with earthly life. Likewise, the relationship between the dead and God was considered ended. To the religious mind of the Hebrew, this was the most terrifying thought of all. Fellowship with God was the highest of all good, and in Sheol that would be no more.”⁴¹² The evidence surrounding the two words, death and Hades, indicates that they were often viewed together. One particular OT occurrence that personifies both ᾄδης (לִּישׁׁ) and θάνατος can be found in Hosea 13:14. Swete espouses a similar structure between the LXX Hosea 13:14 and

⁴⁰⁹ Fred B Pearson, “Sheol and Hades in Old and New Testament,” *Review & Expositor* 35, no. 3 (July 1938): 309.

⁴¹⁰ GELS, s.v. ᾄδης, 10. For a history of translation in Judaism and in the first century A.D. see also TDNT, s.v. ᾄδης., 146-148. Witherington also notes that this occurrence of ᾄδης is a reference to the OT Sheol. Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 82.

⁴¹¹ BDB, s.v. לִּישׁׁ, 983.

⁴¹² Fred B Pearson, “Sheol and Hades in Old and New Testament,” 306-307. (Ps 6:5; Isa 38:18)

Rev 1:18.⁴¹³ The evidence for this is not well supported from a linguistic sense, as the two verses only seem to share the use of the possessive genitive case in their Greek forms. In the immediate context, Yahweh is portrayed as having power over death and $\lambda\iota\alpha\psi$. Additionally, Yahweh is described in the OT as one who “kills and makes alive; He brings down to Sheol and raises up” (2 Sam 2:6). The contexts indicate a unified truth, it is Yahweh (Hos 13:14) and Christ (Rev 1:18) who have the power over death.

Christ has overcome death, as the first half of Rev 1:18 describes, He is alive for the ages of the ages, forevermore “εις τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.” Most scholars agree that Christ is portrayed as powerful and authoritative over life and death. Thomas concludes, “Keys symbolize authority. Hence, the present expression means that he is in charge of death and Hades, a divine prerogative according to Rabbinic tradition of the time.”⁴¹⁴ Bass concludes, “Revelation 1:18 teaches that Satan has now lost the ‘keys’ because Christ has stripped him of all his power and weapons forever. Along with the audience of Revelation, all who are in Christ can take great solace in the truth that Christ has the power over the keys of Death and Hades.”⁴¹⁵ Mounce notes the significant link between this particular reference and the Christology of John,

“It declares that in his essential nature, Christ possesses life and therefore is to be understood in sharp contrast to the dead (or inanimate) gods of paganism. Even though he experienced death in the course of his earthly ministry, he is alive forever. He has in his possession ‘the keys of death and Hades.’ This grants him power and authority over their domain (cf. Matt 16:19). According to Jewish literature, power over these keys belongs to God alone. That they now are in the possession of Christ is evidence of the high Christology of the Apocalypse.”⁴¹⁶

⁴¹³ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cxxxvii.

⁴¹⁴ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 112.

⁴¹⁵ Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 117.

⁴¹⁶ Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 61-62.

This final Christological description of Christ and many of its predecessors in Rev 1 represent the thrust of this chapter's argument. Christ is described with attributes and titles reserved for Yahweh in the OT, and He is the fulfillment of prophecy. John recognizes Him as this fulfillment and draws heavily on OT content to portray Christ in a canonical light.

Conclusion

The hermeneutical method of examining John's use of the OT on a case-by-case basis reveals a consistent pattern demonstrating that his use of the text indicates an intentional identification of Christ as the fulfillment of the canon. A critical conclusion of this chapter is to note that many of the OT titles or descriptions attributed to Yahweh are now imputed to Christ. John utilizes texts from each of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible throughout the Apocalypse and, most relevantly for this discussion, in Rev 1. This intentionality demonstrates John's effort to depict a canonical portrait of Christ as he sees in the inaugural vision of the glorified, resurrected Christ. John does not merely view himself as a reporter of events but rather understands himself to be in the prophetic line in the mold of the OT prophets (Rev 1:3) and understands the position he holds as the author of the capstone of the canon. As Bauckham asserts, the Apocalypse "is a book designed to be read in constant intertextual relationship with the Old Testament. John was writing what he understood to be a work of prophetic Scripture, the climax of prophetic revelation, which gathered up the prophetic meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures and disclosed the way in which it was being and was to be fulfilled in the last

days.”⁴¹⁷ As John employs literary devices to highlight intertextuality and demonstrate canonical consciousness for the OT, he applies similar methodology to his use of the NT. Several OT intertextual occurrences in Rev 1 are also written about in the NT and have similarities through textual or thematic cohesiveness. As this dissertation progresses, the close of the discussion on OT intertextuality leads to the initiation of the study of NT intertextuality in Rev 1.

⁴¹⁷ Richard Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy* (London, UK: T&T Clark, 1993), xi.

Chapter 4: New Testament Intertextuality

Introduction

As the search for canonical, Christological cohesion with Rev 1 moves from the OT to the NT, a similar approach must be maintained with sensitivity to the gap in scholarship concerning Revelation's use of the NT. As the previous chapter argues, the interest in John's use of the OT in Revelation has experienced a sharp increase in the recent century. In contrast, the examination of the use of the NT in the Apocalypse is typically limited to studies in thematic cohesion or an assessment of motifs that are consistent with those in the NT. Several factors have contributed to this lack of interest, as several conclusions must be presupposed to assert textual cohesion. For example, an agreement with the later date of authorship for Revelation must be maintained to argue any textual allusion to the NT - similar to those demonstrated with the OT in the previous chapter. Additionally, it is necessary to concede that OT intertextuality is more likely and more plausible to prove than intertextuality with the NT; thus, the number of titles examined in the previous chapter exceeds those in this chapter. These obstacles and factors impacting the study of John's use of the NT will be discussed in the following sections concerning the plausibility of John accessing the NT and the methodology for observing such instances. Following these sections will be a case-by-case analysis of apparent intertextuality, allusion, or other forms of coherence with the NT as they occur in Rev 1.

Could John Have Cited the NT?

The answer to the question posed by the heading is more attainable than a definitive answer concerning whether John actually did cite the NT or not. This section builds on suppositions made from arguments earlier in the dissertation regarding background issues such

as the authorship and the date of Revelation. Such issues must be resolved coherently and cohesively with the following argumentation to properly defend the conclusions of this chapter and the dissertation as a whole.

The issue of the date of Revelation is an essential component of this argument as an earlier date would prove damaging to the idea of Revelation serving as the canonical capstone and, more relevantly, the author's ability to use the NT in the composition of this capstone. If one accepts the later date of authorship (the final decade of the first century, traditionally around 95 AD), the possibilities for this argument become more feasible. In that case, it is defensible that at least one of the seven churches of Asia Minor (Ephesus) had received its own canonical Pauline epistle (likely in 62 AD).⁴¹⁸ Swete recognizes the significance of the later date concerning John's use of the NT, "If we accept the later date of the Apocalypse, it may be assumed that the Churches of Asia were already in possession of some of the earlier books of the New Testament. Certain of the Pauline Epistles, and if not one or more of our present Gospels, some collection or collections of the sayings of the Lord were probably in their hands, and familiar to our author."⁴¹⁹ Swete's hypothesis highlights the significance of the later date of Revelation for the thesis proposed in this dissertation.

The proposed date of authorship has already been discussed in brevity earlier in this dissertation, but the topic deserves further attention due to its relevance to this chapter. The tradition for the late date stems back to Irenaeus, who attests that John's apocalyptic vision was

⁴¹⁸ "Paul wrote Ephesians near the end of his two-year imprisonment in Rome and at roughly the same time as Colossians and Philemon, in AD 62." Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 19.

⁴¹⁹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cli.

given nearly in his own day (born in 130 AD) and directly attests that this was during the reign of Domitian (81-96 AD).⁴²⁰ This quote is directly cited and supported by Eusebius in his description of the persecution of Domitian, which he attests was the persecution that sent John to Patmos with emphasis on Domitian's fourteenth year.⁴²¹ There is some debate concerning the translation of Irenaeus' work. Scholars have argued the intent of the historian. They have questioned whether he intended to merely state that John was alive until the reign of Domitian or whether he was referring to the authorship of the Apocalypse occurring during this period. Most scholars seem to indicate that Irenaeus was referring to the Apocalypse as the subject, even those who hold to an earlier date.⁴²²

In his commentary, Witherington provides a helpful seven-point argument for the later Domitian era date.⁴²³ Other commentators widely discuss some of the points, such as the condition of the churches in Asia and the identification of Rome as Babylon. Of particular note within Witherington's list are two specific points: 1) John's Christology contrasting the lordship and deity of Christ with that of the emperor worship practiced in post-Nero Rome, and 2) the epistolary form of Revelation reflecting knowledge or form of the Pauline corpus. These two

⁴²⁰ Irenaeus, *A.H.*, 5.30.3

⁴²¹ Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.*, 3.18.1-3.18.5.

⁴²² For further citation, see Beale's quote and following footnote "The majority of patristic writers and subsequent commentators up to the present understand Irenaeus's words as referring to the time when the Apocalypse 'was seen.'" Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation.*, 20. It is worth noting that even those who opt for a later date, such as Robinson, argue that Irenaeus intended to say that the Apocalypse was written during the Domitian era. Robinson argues that Irenaeus was correct on either the date or author of Revelation but not both. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2000), 197-199.

⁴²³ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 4-5.

points provide evidence for the later date of Revelation while also bolstering the central idea for this chapter – that John’s Apocalypse indicates John’s use of the NT.

On the Christology of Revelation’s contrast with the practice of emperor worship in first century Asia Minor, it is essential to examine the context of such worship during the period of Domitian specifically. Imperial worship cults were an ascending force in the first century, with many emperors elevating themselves to a status equivalent of a deity and demanding reverence from their subjects. Historical evidence indicates that at least three of the Apocalypse’s destination cities (Ephesus, Pergamum, and Smyrna) were hubs for local imperial cults.⁴²⁴ Imperial cults elevated the emperor to a status equivalent to the pagan deities often worshipped in first-century Rome, and Domitian, in particular, was exalted and glorified distinctly. Evidence from Ephesus demonstrates that Domitian was held in similar regard to Zeus, with the presence of the Olympics, a festival traditionally attributed to Zeus, inaugurated in Ephesus during the reign of Domitian (around 89/90 AD).⁴²⁵ Additionally, Friesen notes evidence from the currency minted in Ephesus to support the association of Domitian with divinity.

“The numismatic evidence from Ephesus provides a significant image of the association of Domitian and Zeus Olympios. During his reign, the Ephesian mint produced a coin with the head of Domitian and the title Δομιτιανός Καίσαρ Σεβαστός Γερμανικός; on the obverse. On the reverse is an image of Olympian Zeus, an unprecedented symbol in Ephesian coinage.”⁴²⁶

⁴²⁴ Steven J. Friesen, *Twice Neokoros Ephesus, Asia, and the Cult of the Flavian Imperial Family* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1993): 41-49.

⁴²⁵ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 119. Friesen also notes that the games were discontinued as a result of the *damnatio memoriae* suffered by Domitian. This supports both the apparent self-deification of Domitian through this ceremony and the condition of Ephesus during the proposed period in which John authored the apocalypse.

⁴²⁶ Friesen, *Twice Neokoros*, 119. See also J. Nelson Kraybill, *Imperial Cult and Commerce in John’s Apocalypse* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1996), 27-31.

The system of imperial emperor worship was intended to elevate a ruler such as Domitian and place him on the same plane as the worshipped deities such as Zeus. The imperial cult was crafted to control the empire's citizens through this imperial worship. Two scholars explain the social expectations implied by first-century imperial cult worship, "the imperial cult was a *religio* in that it bound the residents of the cities together in the broader context of empire. All members were expected to participate in the imperial cult. . . there was a social expectation that one would voluntarily participate to demonstrate one's 'faith' in the empire."⁴²⁷ Friesen argues that Asia Minor was the cutting edge of imperial cult activity at the close of the first century and that John denounces the cultic institution as originating from Satan, declaring the social contract that the imperial cult demanded as a blasphemous contract upheld by violence and intended to destroy those living a godly life.⁴²⁸ Witherington's work bolsters the claim that the Apocalypse was speaking to a late first-century audience. He argues that the imperial worship described thus far was rampant in Asia Minor during the reign of Domitian.

"It is possible that John, knowing full well about [the temple/imperial cult in] Pergamum, conceives of heaven as the Christians' assembly hall where the divine decrees would be read out and justice would finally be done by Christ, who is truly 'our Lord and our God,' in contradistinction to the emperor Domitian. If so, his high Christology is hardly just a religious statement; it is a political one as well."⁴²⁹

The evidence of the influence of the historical context of the late first century on the authorial intent of Revelation is a strong indicator that John wrote it during the reign of

⁴²⁷ W. Howard-Brook and A. Gwyther, *Unveiling Empire: Reading Revelation Then and Now*, Bible & Liberation series (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 103. For further research on the invasiveness of the imperial cult in cities which John wrote to, see the chart in this source on p. 104.

⁴²⁸ Steven Friesen, "Ephesus - Key to a Vision in Revelation," *The Biblical Archaeology Review*. 19, no. 3 (May 1, 1993), 34-37.

⁴²⁹ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 24.

Domitian. The date accepted by this author agrees with the solid patristic, internal, and external evidence that points to a date later in the reign of Domitian, around 95 AD.

After determining the date of the Apocalypse to be later, there is still a burden to prove that John could have come in contact with the other writings of the NT. Twenty-one of the other twenty-six NT books were written as letters. The transmission of circular letters in conjunction with the authorship of the apocalypse during the Domitian period allows for John to have familiarity or knowledge of most of, if not all, of the NT corpus. In the case of the canonical Epistles, these letters were transmitted by a letter carrier who utilized a network to safely and effectively transport the letters.⁴³⁰ The textual evidence in the Pauline corpus points to Paul's use of letter carriers. Though the language does not explicitly identify the individual as the letter carrier, Paul often notes individuals that are with him at the time of writing and/or coming to the receiving congregation.⁴³¹ Notably, Acts seems to have the most explicit mention of a letter carrier as Paul, Barnabas, Judas, and Silas are sent with a letter to disseminate the information given at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:22-32). The circular nature of many of the epistles demands the need for other letter carriers, those who would take letters described by one scholar as "indispensable vehicles for [the NT's] dissemination and preservation, and that they established a pattern in this respect for the future."⁴³² In summary, the letter carrier contributes to

⁴³⁰ For a full treatment of the ancient practice and methods of letter carrying, see Bronwen Neil and Pauline Allen, eds., "Difficulties in Spreading the Word," in *Greek and Latin Letters in Late Antiquity: The Christianisation of a Literary Form* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 94–115.

⁴³¹ Phoebe is commended by Paul in Romans and asks the church to receive her (Rom 16:1-2). 1 Corinthians identifies Stephanus, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as coming to the receiving congregation (1 Cor 16:17-18). Titus and two others are sent in 2 Corinthians (2 Cor 8:16-24). Similar occurrences are found in at least Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

⁴³² Martin R. P. McGuire, "Letters and Letter Carriers in Christian Antiquity," *The Classical World* 53, no. 5 (1960), 150.

the plausibility of the transmission of the NT as individuals were tasked with ensuring the canonical epistles spread. To conclude that a figure as prominent as John the apostle would be unaware of the circulating literature at the denouement of the first century does not comply with the evidence presented here.

The likelihood of John's familiarity with portions of the NT is nearly certain when both the authorial components of date and authorship by John the apostle are accepted. Thomas, a proponent of both a late first-century date of authorship and apostolic authorship, supports this claim, asserting that John seems to know and use parts of the NT in a similar manner to his use of the OT, "it is fairly conclusive that he reflects some dependence on Matthew and Luke, and is possible that he knew 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Colossians, and Ephesians. He possibly knew Galatians, 1 Peter, and James also."⁴³³ The claim that John uses the NT in a similar fashion to how he used the OT is a critical conclusion. However, John does not use the NT to the extent that he cites the OT, his apparent usage of both the NT text and NT themes signal authorial intent for canonical cohesion. Having established the plausibility that John had the opportunity to utilize the NT, the focus moves to depicting the methodology through which it will be demonstrated that John has done so in his depiction of the glorified Christ in Revelation 1.

⁴³³ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 41. Thomas also cites Charles as support for this position, even though Charles does not seem to hold to the apostolic authorship theory. In his commentary, Charles lists the exact same NT sources as Thomas before proposing an exhaustive list of intertextual occurrences. Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxxxiii.

New Testament Intertextual Analysis Methodology

If John utilizes the NT in a similar manner to the OT, the methodology employed to examine the text will be identical to that with which this author approached the OT in the previous chapter. As the trend of studying the use of the OT in Revelation has expanded over the last fifty years, the use of the NT, or even its plausibility, has not enjoyed the same level of study. This would seem to pose challenges to formulating a consistent NT intertextual analysis methodology. However, the canonical approach with which this dissertation examines the text demands a consistent hermeneutic across both testaments. Due to the similarity in methodology, much of the previous chapter's method is presupposed here, and a few definitions and clarifying statements comprise this section.

As the previous chapter sought to prove, the story of Scripture permeates with unified themes and thoughts called examples of “cohesion” in this dissertation. Barr argues that constructing a cohesive theological account between the Old and New Testaments is a task that need not be pursued. He concludes that OT theology is self-contained without reference to the NT, demonstrating separation between the two fields. His argument suggests that the theology of the two testaments has such a gap that “they are not congruent, not even closely analogical.”⁴³⁴ He concludes that this “should be accepted, rather than the vast amounts of further energy be poured into a task that has proved neither necessary nor salutary.”⁴³⁵ Despite his apparent aversion to canonical cohesiveness, Barr clarifies that the firmest pieces of evidence indicative of

⁴³⁴ James Barr, *The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective, The Concept of Biblical Theology: An Old Testament Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1999), 186.

⁴³⁵ Barr, *Concept*, 188.

an appeal to the OT by the NT are the quotations and indirect references found in the text.⁴³⁶

While the previous chapter dealt with Revelation 1's intertextuality with the OT, refuting Barr's perspective is critical to the progression of the dissertation concerning the NT. If the NT, Revelation included, is not cohesive with the OT, this entire study is at risk of being categorized under Barr's "neither necessary nor salutary" classification. Additionally, as this dissertation utilizes identical methodology in examining the role of the OT and NT in Revelation 1, it is significant to argue for the validity of Revelation's use of both testaments.

An alternative approach to Barr and those who would support his view can be found in the previous chapter's methodology. The canonical method utilized in this study is a biblical theology that demonstrates awareness of the canonical form and context of Scripture.

"The canonical approach, though aware of historical forces behind the text, minimizes hidden historical references omitted by the biblical author. The present form of the text and its rendered (i.e., editorial) emphases alone provide the interpretive handles for grasping textual meaning. The canonical shape is not only within a particular passage or book, but between them. This is seen most directly in the innate relationship between the OT and NT. Both testaments belong to the church and witness the gospel of Jesus Christ."⁴³⁷

As the definition above mentions the present form of the text and its rendered forms, it is significant to examine the text with authorial intent at the forefront. This is best gleaned from the present text by searching for cohesion in the form of textual or thematic cohesion.

⁴³⁶ Barr, *Concept*, 182.

⁴³⁷ Edward W. Klink III and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 137. The authors add an important clarification on the significance of historical context: "It is important to recognize that this is not a slight on historical criticism, but a concern that historical criticism has for too long been the horse pulling the cart and not a tool that belongs inside the cart. The canonical approach uses historical criticism to read the traditions and their forces visible within the text, not the traditions connected to the text only by reconstruction and hypothetical application." For a helpful chart comparing five methods of Biblical Theology, see Klink III and Lockett, *Biblical Theology*, 186-188. Additionally, Desmond T. Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2013), 113-114.

Thematic cohesion is a concept discussed in the previous chapter's methodology and is applied consistently with NT intertextuality in Revelation 1. Before giving his definition of an allusion addressed in chapter 3 of this dissertation, Beale clarifies that "some believe that an allusion must consist of a reproduction from the OT passage of a unique combination of at least three words. Though this may be a good rule of thumb, it remains possible that fewer than three words or even an idea may be an allusion."⁴³⁸ The focus on an idea rather than a verbatim quotation is more consistent with the Johannine technique observed thus far. As John writes with the OT rather than about it, the same writing style is observable in his use of the NT. This writing style that omits formal quotations does not always preserve exact quotes but provides thematic coherence. Hays asks three questions that aid in determining thematic coherence in his study of the OT's usage in Paul's writings: "How well does the alleged echo fit into the line of argument? Is its meaning effect consonant with other quotations in the same letter or corpus? Do the images and ideas of the proposed precursor text illuminate Paul's argument?"⁴³⁹ This definition contributes to the proposed definition of thematic cohesion for this chapter. As applied in this chapter, the proposed definition for thematic cohesion is the author's use of allusion or another rhetorical device to reference, either indirectly or directly, a NT passage that matches the teaching of and illuminates the Apocalyptic text.

⁴³⁸ Beale, *Handbook*, 31. As a reminder, the original definition used for "verbal cohesion" in this dissertation is "the telltale key to discerning an allusion is that of recognizing an incomparable or unique wording, syntax, concept, or cluster of motifs in the same order or structure." For additional support, see Tabb, *All Things New*, 17.

⁴³⁹ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 30. Additionally, Beale cites this definition and offers a shortened version. "The alleged OT allusion is suitable and satisfying in that its meaning in the OT not only thematically fits into the NT writer's argument but also illuminates it." Beale, *Handbook*, 33.

Verbal or textual cohesion is perhaps best supported by Beale’s “three-word rule of thumb.”⁴⁴⁰ The verbal cohesiveness of a passage is far simpler to prove as the text reveals the pattern without any theological or thematic analysis required. The task becomes more straightforward than in the previous chapter, as the use of the OT in Revelation 1 required a comparison of the Hebrew Bible with the LXX to best examine John’s use of the text in Greek. Comparing Revelation’s intertextuality with the rest of NT does not require crossing linguistic borders in any of the occurrences presented in this chapter. The proposed definition for verbal cohesion utilized in this chapter is an allusion demonstrating identical textual structure to another passage in the NT.

A study of thematic and verbal coherence between Revelation 1 and the NT will be conducted similarly to the study between Revelation 1 and the OT. The ideal methodology involves examining each occurrence on a case-by-case basis through a consistent hermeneutical lens. While Hays adds other criteria that should be considered when evaluating the plausibility of an allusion, the coherence in the text and the theology taught by the text are the most critical aspects of the study.⁴⁴¹ With the methodology established, the last half of the chapter focuses on the exegetical task of examining each occurrence on a case-by-case basis.

New Testament Intertextuality in Revelation 1

In light of the defense of both the plausibility of John’s use of the NT and the explanation of the methodology through which the discussion will occur, the latter part of this chapter applies

⁴⁴⁰ Beale, *Handbook*, 31.

⁴⁴¹ A full list of seven characteristics to look for when evaluating an allusion can be found in Hays, *Echoes of Scripture*, 32-34. Most of these are observed here, such as historical plausibility, but are not the focal point of the methodology of this dissertation as the canonical biblical theology approach proposed prioritizes the text.

the methodology through a case-by-case hermeneutical examination of the occurrences of NT intertextuality in the first chapter of Revelation. Many instances examined here continue to carry the torch of verbal or thematic cohesion from their OT predecessors towards canonical cohesion.

Epistolary Introduction (Rev 1:3-4)

The specific blessing given to the reader in Rev 1:3 is an example of John's awareness of the other books of the NT. The blessing comes in the form of a beatitude, rendered "Μακάριος ὁ ἀναγινώσκων καὶ οἱ ἀκούοντες τοὺς λόγους τῆς προφητείας καὶ τηροῦντες τὰ ἐν αὐτῇ γεγραμμένα" and translated "Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of the prophecy, and heed the things which are written in it." This beatitude shares a similar textual form with Luke 11:28, "μακάριοι οἱ ἀκούοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ φυλάσσοντες" which is translated "Blessed [rather] are those who hear the word of God and obey it." Charles argues that the author of Revelation demonstrates dependence on Luke in this instance, among others in the Apocalypse.⁴⁴² The two primary differences are John's use of "τῆς προφητείας" in contrast to Luke's record of Jesus using "τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ" as their respective objects that should be heard, read, and heeded or obeyed. The discussion of John's use of 1:3 to demonstrate his consciousness of his position as a prophet and author of Scripture is tabled in the previous chapter. To briefly revisit, Beale defines John's prophetic role, "to divine disclosure demanding an ethical response, in line with OT 'prophecy,' which primarily addresses present situations and

⁴⁴² Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxvi. Charles compares Rev 1:3 with Luke 11:28, Rev 3:5 with Luke 12:8, Rev 11:6 with Luke 4:25, and Rev 18:24 with Luke 11:50.

only secondarily foretells.”⁴⁴³ The argumentation leads to the conclusion that John consciously contributed to Scripture. In this case, he would have identified his prophecy, which is revealed to him through a communication chain that starts with God, as “τὸν λόγον τοῦ Θεοῦ.”

The second difference deserves careful exegesis and attention. The two passages share the phrase “οἱ ἀκούοντες,” and the present active participle is best translated as “those who are hearing.” Additionally, both phrases contain two different participles with similar semantic ranges. Luke’s present active participle “φυλάσσοντες” comes from the root “φυλάσσω,” which in general is defined as being on guard or being alert. However, this particular usage is defined as keeping a commandment from being broken.⁴⁴⁴ John’s present active participle “τηροῦντες” is defined as retaining custody, watching over, or guarding. In this specific instance, it is defined as persistence and obedience to keep, observe, fulfill, or pay attention to.⁴⁴⁵ These two words carry similar meanings and seem to be interchangeable. The notable difference is John’s inclusion of the present active participle ἀναγινώσκων from ἀναγινώσκω. It is defined as reading something written or inscribed with this specific instance carrying the additional requirement of being read in public. Notably, this participle is the only one of the five that have been compared that is singular. This reinforces the idea that the text would be read aloud in a corporate worship setting by one individual. Swete argues that the reader is not the individual but that the Church has inherited the Jewish practice of reading Scripture publicly in the congregation (cf. Exod 24:7, Neh 8:2, Lk 4:16, Acts 13:15, 15:21, 2 Cor 3:15) and that the author of the Apocalypse desires to

⁴⁴³ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 184-185. For further reading on John’s identity in the prophetic line, see David Cashmore, “Extending the Prophetic Horizon: Where Did John of Patmos Get All That Stuff?,” *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought and Practice* 18, no. 4 (November 2010): 2–9.

⁴⁴⁴ BDAG, s.v., φυλάσσω, 1068.

⁴⁴⁵ BDAG, s.v., τηρέω, 1002.

encourage the church to include his writing among the texts that were read.⁴⁴⁶ The first century was a crucial juncture in Church history. The Church's discernment would be tested as the authentic apostolic writings were still either being written or just beginning to circulate. At the same time, several of the apostolic epistles that are now in the canon warned against the false teachers that were attempting to infiltrate the Church during its earliest days. Thomas observes, "A crucial decision faced by many churches related to which books were to be read in their public services. The reason for this concern was the place accorded such books when read alongside the OT Scriptures. To grant such recognition was to acknowledge a book's authority as inspired Scripture."⁴⁴⁷ The public reading of the Apocalypse allowed both the reader and the hearer to partake in the μακάριος, which, as evidence indicates, was John's original intent. This blessing introduces the epistolary framework of the Apocalypse.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, textual evidence seems to suggest that John was at the least familiar with the epistolary framework of Paul's writings and, at most, that other NT authors influenced the epistolary nature of the Apocalypse. Tabb notes the incorporation of epistolary features that are similar to other NT writings and that by incorporating these elements into the Apocalypse that John "situates his book within a wider Christian tradition of authoritative letters written to instruct and edify believers. . . Revelation's epistolary form signals that 'it is not an esoteric secret work' but one that should be regularly read aloud in the context of corporate worship."⁴⁴⁸ The similarity of the epistolary features to Paul's writings is noted by

⁴⁴⁶ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3.

⁴⁴⁷ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 62.

⁴⁴⁸ Tabb, *All Things New*, 7.

one scholar who observes both John's familiarity with the OT texts and the harmony Revelation shares with the Gospels and Epistles as he gives Revelation the moniker "John's prison epistle."⁴⁴⁹

The Apocalypse carries epistolary features similar to other NT writings. While the canonical gospels, Acts, and Hebrews are formally anonymous, other NT Epistles such as Paul's or Peter's contain standard epistolary features: the name of the author, the recipient(s), and often a form of Christian greeting such as "grace and peace" (see Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2, and others). Osborne notes two features that distinguish Revelation from the other NT writings, first through the extensive prophetic introduction (1:1–3) prior to the traditional beginning and "the greeting itself goes beyond the norm: in 1:4–5a there is a trinitarian formula, and in the doxology of 1:5b–6 John goes beyond custom to build a case for the soteriological (v. 5b) and ecclesiological (v. 6) core of the book."⁴⁵⁰

It is noteworthy that John does not explicitly mention his name in any of his other canonical writings but instead opts to introduce Christ in his epistolary introduction (John & 1 John) or to use another alias, "the elder" (2&3 John). In the Apocalypse, John introduces himself by name (1:1,4). Most commentators note this as a purely epistolary feature that is the traditional form of a letter during the first century. However, there seems to be added significance to John's inclusion of his name in contrast to his other writings. The communication chain of the Apocalypse is significant to the author, and John emphasizes in the verses to follow that the Revelation ultimately comes from God the Father and Jesus Christ. This prophecy is given to the

⁴⁴⁹ Douglas D. Webster, *Follow the Lamb: A Pastoral Approach to Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2014), 3-5.

⁴⁵⁰ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 59.

angel (1:2), to John, and then to the seven churches. John's use of his name enforces his role in the chain of communication, as the text specifies the specific position John has in the touch of the apocalypse - a role unique from his other writings where he is seen as an elder or teacher. By including his name, he also establishes that his Apocalypse is written with apostolic authority and should be received as such. This was a notable departure from the Jewish apocalypses.

Swete observes the significance of such a novel inclusion,

“The Jewish apocalypses are without exception pseudepigraphic; the Christian apocalypse bears the author's name. This abandonment of a long-established tradition is significant; by it John claims for himself the position of a prophet who, conscious that he draws his inspiration from Christ or His angel and not at second hand, has no need to seek shelter under the name of a Biblical saint.”⁴⁵¹

By the proposed later date, John would be the last surviving apostle and a recognized name in the first-century Church. However, he presents himself with humility as a “partner” with his readers in their times of trial and evidently views himself on the same side of the communication chain as the churches he wrote to.⁴⁵²

Additionally, John identifies his destination audience, a feature consistent with his three epistles. The reason behind John's choice of the destination audience, the seven churches, has given rise to much debate. Koester holds a position supported by other scholars, “the fact that Revelation so often uses the number seven to imply completeness suggests that these seven congregations represent the whole church. Revelation is an open prophetic letter that is sent to seven particular congregations, yet it contains a message that applies to the whole church.”⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, xxix.

⁴⁵² Köstenberger, Kellum, and Quarles, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown*, 929-930.

⁴⁵³ Koester, *Revelation*, 53.

Osborne shares this view, arguing that the plural “churches” (Rev 2:7, 11 et al.) are indicative of all churches and that these seven churches typify all churches.⁴⁵⁴ For this discussion, the reasoning behind the inclusion of the audience is not as significant as the inclusion of the audience. The fact that John identifies his audience is not as noteworthy as his inclusion of the greeting or the presence of his name, as he names a recipient in his other epistolary writings. At the very least, John appears to have adopted the features of the Pauline Epistles circulating in Asia Minor at the time.

The third feature John employs that is indicative of the Pauline epistolary corpus is the Christian greeting, namely “grace to you and peace” or “Χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.” One of the most substantial explanations of the phrase’s history and usage within the Pauline corpus comes from Seifrid and is worth including in the context of John’s use of it.

“The formula “grace and peace” is a creation of the apostle that bore liturgical significance: his letters were intended for public reading in the worship of the congregations. As we have noted, the twofold form of the greeting is shared by Hellenistic letters. It is also approximated by early Jewish letters, which sometimes open with the wish, “mercy and peace be with you.” Paul replaces the term “mercy” with “grace,” and at the same time he plays upon the usual Hellenistic Χαῖρειν (“greeting”) with the term Χάρις (“grace”). He thus signals from the start that the letter is purely about the Gospel, as it speaks to his addressees at that moment. There is probably a further semantic motivation for Paul’s choice of the term “grace” over “mercy.” To speak of “mercy,” as Paul does almost immediately in this letter (v. 3), is to presuppose a situation of trouble or suffering. “Grace,” in contrast, usually signifies the favor and loving attention of God, particularly as it is undeserved in the face of sin and guilt. While the term “grace” certainly does not exclude the idea of deliverance from distress, it speaks first of God’s favor.”⁴⁵⁵

⁴⁵⁴ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 60.

⁴⁵⁵ Mark Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), 9.

The greeting also carries a textual connection to the Aaronic benediction in the Torah (Num 6:24-26). In this context, one commentator defines grace as an “attitude that issues in kindly action of a superior party to an inferior one in which the inferior has no claim on the superior” and peace as “completeness, unity, well-being, prosperity, health, security, and wholeness.”⁴⁵⁶

The textual evidence suggesting the influence of the Pauline greeting on John’s Apocalypse is substantial, and such evidence bolsters the claim that Revelation demonstrates canonical awareness. A noteworthy feature of Paul’s greetings is the absence of a verb in the salutation. Wallace notes that in some cases (1 Pet 1:2; 2 Pet 1:2; Jude 2; 2 Jn 3), similar greetings contain verbs such as *πληθυνθείη* or “may be multiplied” in Peter’s epistles. He continues by noting the significance of the absence of the verb, “The verb never appears in the *corpus Paulinum*, however. This may be significant, especially if the suggestion that Paul invented (or at least popularized) the ‘grace and peace’ salutation is taken seriously, for what would be a ‘signature’ item for him (and hence so understood by his churches) may have needed expansion via an explicit verb in other writers.”⁴⁵⁷ If Paul utilized this as a “signature” or at least wrote in a unique style, John appears to have imitated this in Revelation.⁴⁵⁸ In Revelation’s salutation, the first verb occurs in the grammatical abnormality discussed in the previous chapter “ὁ ὢν” and the verb identifies the source of grace and peace. Thus, the salutation itself is devoid of a verb that modifies the *χάρις* or *εἰρήνη*. John continues to describe the origin of the *χάρις* or

⁴⁵⁶ Cole, *NAC: Numbers*, 131.

⁴⁵⁷ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 51. Wallace also notes the presence of the verb in the Catholic epistles with similar salutations.

⁴⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that John utilizes the verb Ἔσται in his salutation in 2 John, demonstrating that he does not always mimic Paul’s style.

εἰρήνη, linking the words to their source through the preposition ἀπὸ, which Paul also utilizes.⁴⁵⁹ The source is common ground for both John and Paul, as both authors use this salutation to point to the Lord.

When utilized in an epistolary greeting such as John or Paul's, χάρις is best defined as divine favor,⁴⁶⁰ and εἰρήνη corresponds with the Hebrew *shalom*, carrying the message of a farewell or greeting but also used to describe an essential aspect of the Messianic kingdom described in Revelation.⁴⁶¹ According to Witherington, this greeting in particular would have carried increased significance for John in a Domitian-ruled world, "Domitian, according to Suetonius, would regularly preface his cruel sentences and punishments on the unfortunate with the phrase 'it has pleased the Lord our God in his grace. . . ' a signal that something horrible was about to come to pass. John is suggesting that his audience lives by a very different sort and source of mercy and grace."⁴⁶² Beale describes the source of peace John has in mind, "The Christian readers need grace to persevere in their faith in the midst of tribulation, especially pressures to compromise (cf. chs. 2–3). And in the midst of such external turmoil, they need the inner "peace" that only the eternal God who is sovereign over the vicissitudes of space-time history can give."⁴⁶³ It has been discussed that John's usage of "ὁ ὢν" following the preposition

⁴⁵⁹ Paul follows each occurrence of his salutation describing the source of the grace and peace, citing God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. The only instance where Paul does not do this syntactically is the salutation in Colossians, where he omits Jesus Christ. However, he introduces Christ in the preceding and following sentences and He is the focal point of the chapter.

⁴⁶⁰ BDAG, s.v., χάρις, 1079.

⁴⁶¹ BDAG, s.v., εἰρήνη, 287.

⁴⁶² Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 75. See also Allan Boesak, *Comfort and Protest: The Apocalypse from a South African Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1986), 47.

⁴⁶³ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 187.

demonstrates his affinity for the OT, but a further examination of the text reveals John's use of his own Gospel. With another syntactical abnormality, John again allows the preposition ἀπό to be followed by a nominative. Additionally, he also turns a finite verb into a substantive, which Wallace notes is seen in John's Gospel, "If the author [of Revelation] is the same as the evangelist who wrote the Gospel of John, the parallel between the ἦν in the Johannine prologue and here may be more than coincidental: Both would affirm something about the eternity of the Lord."⁴⁶⁴ This demonstrates John's canonical consciousness and intent to reveal the eternal source of the grace and peace he describes in his salutation, Jesus Christ.

The blessing and epistolary framework demonstrate intertextuality with Luke, John, and the Pauline corpus. The initial verses couple with the other books of the NT to form a canonically conscious opening to the letter that cements its status as Scripture. Additionally, the text demonstrates the eternity of Christ (Gal 4:4) and describes the source of both Paul and John's grace and peace that they extend to the believers who read their epistles.

I AM (Rev 1:4, 8, 17-18)

John's gospel is often noted for his frequent use of "I am" statements, and this is perhaps one of the most substantial pieces of evidence for the Johannine authorship of Revelation. As observed in the previous chapter, in Rev 1:4, John intentionally ignores grammatical and syntactical rules in order to preserve the divine name and draw from a text familiar to Jewish Christians (Ex 3:14). The title "I am" is significant in Johannine literature. John's insistence on

⁴⁶⁴ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 237.

intentionally preserving this divine title and attributing it to Christ is evident throughout the apostle's gospel.

The gospel of John contains eight instances of "I am" statements that resemble the construction used in the inaugural vision of the glorified Christ. The instances are noted in this footnote and begin with "I am," followed by their respective titles.⁴⁶⁵ The verbal cohesion is present in meaning, with minor differences between Revelation and the gospel of John. Though John only uses the nominative participle construction "ὁ ὢν" in Rev 1:4, the complete construction of the divine name in Ex 3:14 in the LXX is "Εγώ εἰμι ὁ ὢν." This translates to "I am who I am." Both halves of the construction indicate the subject's existence. John faithfully utilizes "Εγώ εἰμι" throughout his gospel and in the initial chapter of Revelation (Rev 1:8, 17). Each occurrence is followed by a predicate describing an attribute or characteristic of Christ. The verbal coherence is similar to John's Gospel in these instances, and a thematic examination provides a more robust understanding of John's use of "I am" statements to demonstrate the characteristics and attributes of Christ.

A detailed analysis of John's "I am" statements would command its own chapter. However, a brief survey of each of the occurrences and their testimony concerning Christ provides a foundational understanding for John's insistence on the apparent egregious grammatical error committed in Rev 1:4. While Jesus is the speaker in each of the "I am" statements, John's recording of the statements demonstrates his knowledge of the significance of the reference to the divine name in Ex 3:14. The first recorded statement concerns Christ as the

⁴⁶⁵ The occurrences are: Bread of life (Jn 6:35, 48), Light of the World (Jn 8:12), the gate (Jn 10:7), the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:11), the Resurrection (Jn 11:25), the Way, the Truth, and the Life (Jn 14:6), the True Vine (Jn 15:1), and an explicit "Εγώ εἰμι" concerning His eternal generation and deity (John 8:58).

bread of life. This metaphorical element describes the sufficiency of Christ. Carson writes, “Jesus is the bread of life, but it is the person who comes to him who does not hunger, not the person who eats him; similarly, it is the person who believes in him who does not thirst, not the person who drinks him.”⁴⁶⁶ The second, referring to Jesus as the light of the world, is similar to the first occurrence. Talbert describes, “Here, as [in the statement “I am the bread of life,” the statement is not primarily ontological (about Jesus’ nature) but soteriological (about his function in salvation)].”⁴⁶⁷

The following two combine to produce another soteriological description of Christ, explaining a metaphor where Christ is the Good Shepherd and His people are His sheep. Carson expands, “This is a proverbial way of insisting that there is only one means of receiving eternal life (the Synoptics might have preferred to speak of entering the kingdom, although entering into life is also attested there), only one source of knowledge of God, only one fount of spiritual nourishment, only one basis for spiritual security—Jesus alone.”⁴⁶⁸ Jesus’ subsequent declaration that He is the resurrection is also brimming with soteriological implications. Borchert explains, “Resurrection and life were two related dimensions of Jesus’ proclamation. Jesus clearly possesses the power of resurrection so that the one who believes in Jesus, even though he were to die, will experience that power of resurrection (“will live,” 11:25) in their dead bodies. But beyond resurrection, Jesus is also life.”⁴⁶⁹ The fact that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life

⁴⁶⁶ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 288.

⁴⁶⁷ Charles H. Talbert, *Reading John: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles*, Reading the New Testament (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys, 2005), 158.

⁴⁶⁸ Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, 385.

⁴⁶⁹ Borchert, *NAC: John 1-11*, 356.

couples with the earlier description that He is the gate or the door and no person may come to the Father except through Him. John has written concerning those who believe they have God but reject the Son elsewhere in His writings (2 Jn 9). His recording of these statements indicates his high Christology as depicted throughout his corpus.⁴⁷⁰ The final soteriological declaration is that Christ is the true vine and His disciples are the branches. Talbert writes, “For [Christ] to be the true vine is for him to function as the source of life and fruitfulness for the branches. The emphasis is on the derivative nature of the disciples’ life.”⁴⁷¹ The conclusion to draw from these “I am” statements is that John uniquely records Christ’s “I am” statements as a depiction of both His deity and a description of who He is.

Thematically, the theme of Christ’s role in salvation is evident throughout John’s gospel and in the initial chapter of Revelation. The verbal cohesion helps affirm Johannine authorship as John’s gospel uniquely contains these “I am + predicate” statements concerning Christ’s soteriological role. In John’s gospel, Christ also testifies to His own eternity and deity, declaring that before Abraham was, “Εγώ ειμι.” Reiterating a previous quote from Tabb concerning the divine title, “God simply *is*, as he declared to Moses ‘I am who I am’ (Ex 3:14; cf. Rev 1:4). Only God is absolute and self-determining. Everything else is contingent, created by God and sustained by the divine will.”⁴⁷²

Throughout his writings, John divulges vital Christological information through the verbal structure of “I am + predicate” statements that are thematically cohesive with his writings

⁴⁷⁰ The description of Christ as the only way to the Father is seen elsewhere in the canon (Mk 8:38; Lk 12:8-9; Acts 4:12; 15:11; 1 Tim 2:5; Heb 9:15).

⁴⁷¹ Talbert, *Reading John*, 220.

⁴⁷² Tabb, *All Things New*, 29.

and the canon of Scripture. The grammatical anomaly of Rev 1:4 is indicative of his effort to draw attention to his use of these statements and the canonical significance of “Εγώ εἶμι ὁ ὢν.” The other occurrences in the first chapter of Revelation demonstrate verbal and thematic cohesion with his use of these statements in his gospel, providing further evidence that the author of the gospel of John and the book of Revelation is the same. More significantly, this author writes about the same Christ, portraying a canonical portrait of the Son.

The Firstborn of the Dead (Rev 1:5)

The lone title within the threefold introduction to the doxology of Rev 1:5 for the glorified, exalted Christ to have substantial NT verbal and thematic coherence is the second, “ὁ πρωτότοκος τῶν νεκρῶν,” translated “the firstborn of the dead.”⁴⁷³ This title enjoys a nearly verbatim parallel in Col 1:18, “πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν,” translated “firstborn out of the dead.” The literary context of the title in the Christologically rich text of Colossians 1 is its inclusion in a hymn describing the glory, authority, and power of Christ. John’s use of the title shares a similar description in the Apocalypse through his doxology. The only textual difference between the two is the inclusion of the article “ὁ” in Revelation and the use of “ἐκ” in Colossians. Perhaps the use of “ἐκ” in Colossians symbolizes that Christ was once dead, as to be included as part of the dead, but is now born “out of” or “removed from” the dead as a result of

⁴⁷³ It should be mentioned here that the other two titles in the doxology, “the faithful witness” and “the ruler of the kings of earth” have considerable thematic parallels within the NT, but are not mirrored in close verbal form anywhere outside of the Apocalypse within the NT. That Christ is a faithful witness, publicly testifying about the Father in the face of persecution is the subject matter of the four gospels (John 3:32-33; 18:37). As Jipp notes, “John’s description of Jesus as ‘the faithful witness’ alludes to his faithful endurance and commitment to God and truth even in the face of persecution leading to suffering and death.” Jipp, *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament*, 288. The authority of Christ is certainly a NT theme, with all authority on heaven and earth being given to Christ (Matt 28:18). The evidence for these two titles is much stronger in the OT and within the book of Revelation, thus they are omitted from this chapter.

His resurrection. While the word “πρωτότοκος” is typically translated in a literal sense as defining the birth order of an individual within a family, the occurrence in both of these passages, as well as the others describing Christ’s status, are indicative of a unique quality associated with a firstborn, particularly “of Christ as the firstborn of a new humanity which is to be glorified” (Col 1:15; Heb 1:6; 12:23).⁴⁷⁴ Robertson adds that the title “refers to priority in the resurrection to be followed by others.”⁴⁷⁵

The verbal cohesion present between this title and that of Colossians is strong, and another occurrence within the Pauline corpus bolsters the case further. 1 Cor 15:20 describes the resurrected Christ and titles Him “ἀπαρχὴ τῶν κεκοιμημένων,” translated “firstfruit of those having fallen asleep.” “ἀπαρχὴ” translates to mean “to make a beginning, first fruits, first portion” and is frequently used to describe the earliest of a group known as the “first Christians” in the Pauline epistles.⁴⁷⁶ “κεκοιμημένων” is the perfect middle/passive participle of “κοιμάω” which means “to be asleep or dead.”⁴⁷⁷ Robertson describes the word as a “beautiful picture of death from which word (κοιμαομαι [koimaomai]) comes our κημετερυ [kemetery].”⁴⁷⁸ Perhaps the reason Robertson describes the word in such a manner is the tense of the parsing of the verb, as the perfect tense indicates a permanent state of death or “sleep.” In contrast, the middle/passive voice suggests that the subject is being acted upon. Wallace writes, “no volition-

⁴⁷⁴ BDAG, s.v., πρωτότοκος, 894.

⁴⁷⁵ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 1:5.

⁴⁷⁶ BDAG, s.v., ἀπαρχή, 98.

⁴⁷⁷ BDAG, s.v., κοιμάω, 551.

⁴⁷⁸ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, 1 Cor 15:20. The word Robertson indicates here is the modern English “cemetery.”

nor even necessarily awareness of the action- is implied on the part of the subject.”⁴⁷⁹ In the case of 1 Cor 15:20, Christ is identified as the firstborn of those in the state of death; He has conquered it, which implies He will also lead others out of death. It is significant that the emphasis is placed on the authority given to Christ. Additionally, the placement of Christ’s resurrection in history carries implications for this title. Johnson clarifies,

“In Colossians 1:15, Paul refers to Christ as the “firstborn over all creation.” This cannot mean that Christ was the first-created being but rather that he is the source, ruler, or origin of all creation. So, for Christ to be the “firstborn” of the dead signifies not merely that he was first in time to be raised from the dead but also that he was first in importance, having supreme authority over the dead (cf. v. 18).”⁴⁸⁰

The three verses, Rev 1:5, Col 1:18, and 1 Cor 15:20, all indicate an identical title through similar constructions with minor variances. The evidence for verbal cohesion in the NT is sound for this title.

The thematic cohesion is also decisive for the “firstborn of the dead.” Fanning describes the title as “a classic oxymoron referring to Jesus’ resurrection and what it means for Christians. His victory over death is prototypical because it guarantees resurrected life for those who are His followers. Such a guarantee has deep significance for John’s addressees, some of whom faced the possibility of physical death because of following Christ.”⁴⁸¹ The same could be said for Paul and his followers, as detailed in the Colossians prologue. However, a new horizon became apparent following the resurrection, “The sense of a new beginning for creation could hardly be clearer, that with Christ’s death and resurrection what had been expected as the end of all things

⁴⁷⁹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 431.

⁴⁸⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 600. See also Douglas J Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 129.

⁴⁸¹ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 81.

and renewal of creation in a new age was already operative in and through this same Christ.”⁴⁸²

The title forms an exhortation with the two surrounding it, as Mounce describes, “If faithful witnessing should result in a martyr’s death, the believer is to remember that Jesus, the ideal martyr, is the firstborn from the dead. As the risen Christ now exercises sovereign control, so also will the faithful share in his reign.”⁴⁸³ All believers, including those of Paul’s audience and those in John’s, should take solace in the fact that Christ has overcome death. He holds authority over it, a concept also seen later in the initial chapter of Revelation.

The evidence indicates that both verbal and thematic cohesion are clear and indicative of a common thread in the NT demonstrating the authority of Christ over death and the comfort that first-century believers can have amid the persecution of their era. Jipp sews together the threads of this theme,

“Jesus is currently sitting in a position of power in heaven as he reigns until all enemies are put under his feet. He is, therefore, the judge of heaven and earth and all people. As such, Christ is the ‘firstborn from the dead and the ruler of the kings of earth. As the firstborn of the dead, he is worthy to receive ‘first place in all things’ (Col. 1:18) and to receive worship from the angels (Heb 1:6).”⁴⁸⁴

A Kingdom of Priests (Rev 1:6)

The priesthood referred to in Rev 1:6 is inaugurated by the previously described blood of Christ, which releases believers from sin.⁴⁸⁵ Without the crucifixion, a central component of the

⁴⁸² James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 98.

⁴⁸³ Mounce, *Revelation*, 49.

⁴⁸⁴ Jipp, *Messianic Theology*, 334.

⁴⁸⁵ Much like the omission of the titles “faithful witness” and “ruler of the kings of earth,” a detailed description of the crucifixion is omitted in this chapter due to a lack of a distinct verbal construction in the NT that mirrors John’s description. Clearly, the theme of the love of Christ and the blood atonement are significant thematic

NT, the kingdom of priests would be without purpose and ineffective compared to the great High Priest described by the author of Hebrews (Heb 4:13-16; 7:26-27). This kingdom is described by John in Rev 1:6, “βασιλείαν ἱερεῖς τῷ Θεῷ” translated “a kingdom of priests to God.” This is the only instance of cohesion with the Petrine corpus as the construction is reminiscent of Peter’s description of the “βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα” (1 Pet 2:9) translated as “a royal priesthood.”

The textual similarities are evident as the first word in the phrase in Revelation, “βασιλείαν,” is a noun describing the act of ruling or a ruling group.⁴⁸⁶ The first word in Peter’s account is in the same semantic field, “βασιλείον,” an adjective meaning “royal.”⁴⁸⁷ The second words are also in the same semantic field, with John’s “ἱερεῖς” written as an accusative plural noun from ἱερεύς simply meaning “priests.” Peter’s “ἱεράτευμα” is a nominative singular form, a *dis legomenon* that only appears in 1 Pet (2:5, 9).⁴⁸⁸ The phrase “τῷ Θεῷ” in Rev 1:6 is a dative construction identifying the recipient of the service of the priests or the possessor of the priests themselves. This is not replicated directly by Peter, but the phrase “λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν” translates as “a people for His [God’s] possession.” This unifies the passages in demonstrating a clear connection to God as a people who are set apart in the office of priests in service to God.

The thematic coherence of the royal priesthood is strong, with both Peter and John building upon a NT theme. Aune correctly demonstrates that the royal priesthood should not be viewed merely as one privilege or office of the people of God but rather as two-fold participation

concepts, however they are covered extensively in the chapters detailing OT intertextuality and cohesion within Revelation itself.

⁴⁸⁶ BDAG, s.v., βασιλεία, 168.

⁴⁸⁷ BDAG, s.v., βασιλείος, 169.

⁴⁸⁸ BDAG, s.v., ἱεράτευμα, 469.

in both the kingdom and priesthood of God, consistent with the interpretation of Ex 19:6.⁴⁸⁹ Beale supports this interpretation, “They not only have been made part of his kingdom and his subjects, but they have also been constituted kings together with him and share his priestly office by virtue of their identification with his death and resurrection.”⁴⁹⁰ Jipp indicates that this description incorporates the NT theme into Revelation as a whole, “procuring a kingdom and a people by means of one’s bloody death is a surprising reversal of cultural expectations for royal power. The death of Jesus thereby establishes the churches of John’s Apocalypse as His own kingdom and as an alternative to the earthly rule of kings and emperors.”⁴⁹¹ It is significant to highlight the responsibility of the believer, “John sees the Christian community as the continuation of the OT people of God redeemed by Christ’s blood and made heirs of his future kingly rule on the earth (5:10; 20:6). Furthermore, all believers are called to be priests in the sense of offering spiritual sacrifices and praise to God (Heb 13:15; 1 Pe 2:5).”⁴⁹² The evidence for the canonical cohesiveness of the royal priesthood is readily apparent as Fanning observes, “In both the OT and the NT, this is intended as service ‘for God’, but also as a witness and influence for Him on the rest of humanity who see the true and living God in His people. Those who are redeemed constitute a community under God, who benefit from and respond to His rule and so represent Him to the wider world.”⁴⁹³

⁴⁸⁹ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 47.

⁴⁹⁰ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 192.

⁴⁹¹ Jipp, *Messianic Theology*, 289. See also Steven J. Friesen, *Imperial Cults and the Apocalypse of John: Reading Revelation in the Ruins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 180-182.

⁴⁹² Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 600.

⁴⁹³ Fanning, *Revelation*, 83. Additionally, see this resource for an explanation of the typological relationship between OT Israel and the NT people of God. Though this idea cannot enjoy a full treatment within the

The verbal and thematic evidence is indicative of the cohesion between the texts as the believers addressed in both 1 Pet 2:9 and Rev 1:6 are called to function as NT priests and join in the rule of the kingdom of Christ. While these offices are certainly privileges on their own, the believing reader would be wise to heed Clark’s instruction, “The chief privilege of the priest is that of access to God. . . . When we exercise our priestly functions, we join Him there in spirit (Heb 9:24; 4:14, 16; 10:19-22) As priests, we must remember that our place of priestly service is in the most holy place, where Christ is.”⁴⁹⁴ Other sections in this chapter discuss titles or descriptions of Christ, yet this describes a title and role of a believer due to the work of Christ. By His blood, believers can participate in the kingdom and priesthood. Spurgeon humbly observes, “That He should have loved us ‘and released us from our sins by his blood and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father’ (Rev 1:5–6) seems to be an honor that is far too high for us. It appears to bring us almost too near our Lord, yet it is not so.”⁴⁹⁵ This humility led John to pen the doxology at hand, which seeks to worship the glorified Christ, the faithful witness, the Living One, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

Behold! He is Coming with the Clouds (Rev 1:7)

The intertextuality of this particular reference, similar to others in this chapter, finds its roots in the OT. The OT passage is directly quoted or alluded to in the three synoptic gospels

parameters of this discussion, Fanning offers a helpful explanation of how “the community is expanded to include others without setting aside faithful ethnic Israel.”

⁴⁹⁴ Robert Clark, “The Imperial Priesthood of the Believer: (Revelation 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5,9),” *Bibliotheca sacra* 92, no. 368 (October 1935): 446-449. See this source for a detailed explanation of the role of the NT priest.

⁴⁹⁵ Charles Spurgeon, *1 Peter*, ed. Elliot Ritzema and Jessi Strong, Spurgeon Commentary Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014), 1 Pet 2:9.

(Matt 24:30, Mk 13:26, Lk 21:27). As discussed in the previous chapter, the allusion in Revelation is a combination of Dan 7:13 and Zech 12:10, 12. Matthew appears to allude to Zechariah, while the other Gospels seem to omit such a reference. The authors opted to include a description of the condition of the earth and its inhabitants and the power of the Messiah (Matthew) or the cosmic conditions of the Second Coming and the power of the Messiah (Mark and Luke). It is noteworthy that Mark's literary context identifies John the apostle, the author of Revelation, as a member of the audience for Christ's teaching on this subject (Mark 13:4). While Rev 1:7 and the surrounding context describes the power of Christ, the focus of Rev 1:7 is on the condition of earth's inhabitants and their reaction to Christ's Second Coming. For this reason, combined with Matthew's common allusion to Zechariah, it is best to compare Matthew's account of Christ's teaching on His Second Coming with John's account in Rev 1:7.

The Greek rendering of Matthew's account in Matt 24:30 is “τότε κόψονται πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ὄψονται τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ μετὰ δυνάμεως καὶ δόξης πολλῆς.” The mirroring passage in Rev 1:7 is rendered “ἔρχεται μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν, καὶ ὄψεται αὐτὸν πᾶς ὀφθαλμὸς καὶ οἵτινες αὐτὸν ἐξεκέντησαν, καὶ κόψονται ἐπ' αὐτὸν πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς.” Two particular sections of the text are significant for this study.

First, Matthew's description of Jesus' teaching on the Second Coming uses “ἐρχόμενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν” with ἐρχόμενον, translated “coming,” written as a present passive participle. On the contrary, John uses ἔρχεται, also translated as “coming,” written as a verb in the present middle/passive indicative. Robertson observes that this has a futuristic connotation and is written in a manner reminiscent of Daniel's account in Dan 7:13.⁴⁹⁶ With this observation, it is tempting

⁴⁹⁶ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 1:7. See also Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 9-10.

to discard the significance of John's use of Matthew and solely focus on his use of Daniel. However, the second noteworthy observation dispels such a notion.

The second section of text shared by the two passages is “πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς.” This is translated as “all the tribes of earth.” Charles argues that this inclusion of “πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς” indicates that John's usage of Matthew is certain as the phrase must have been derived from Matthew as it is absent from the Hebrew Bible or other versions of the OT.⁴⁹⁷ Both accounts share the future middle indicative “κόψονται,” which translates “to mourn” and usually is expressed in extreme forms of grief such as wailing, beating the breast, or mourning in sackcloth and ashes.⁴⁹⁸ Some scholars argue that Matthew's account does not immediately clarify the purpose of mourning all the tribes of the earth, whether for repentance or despair.⁴⁹⁹ However, other scholars such as Lee, Charles, and Thomas argue that Matthew's quotation of Jesus is clearly an example of mourning in despair.⁵⁰⁰ Charles' observation that John is indebted to Matthew for the inspiration to combine Daniel and Zechariah, though John is closer in textuality with the original OT texts through his independent translation.⁵⁰¹ The unification of the two OT passages is only seen in Matthew and Revelation, and the uniqueness of this phrasing between Matthew and Revelation indicates that textual coherence is certain.

⁴⁹⁷ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxvi.

⁴⁹⁸ BDAG, s.v., κόπτω, 559.

⁴⁹⁹ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (London; New York: T&T Clark, 1997), 360.

⁵⁰⁰ William Lee, *The Revelation of St. John in the Holy Bible*, ed. F.C. Cook (London: John Murray, 1881), 502. Charles, *ICC: Revelation.*, 18. Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 78.

⁵⁰¹ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 18.

Thematic coherence is also present in this passage, as both accounts present a firsthand account of Jesus' teachings on the *παρουσία*. The question becomes whether the theme is identical in Matthew as in the Apocalypse. Scholars have debated two major interpretations of the theme of the text. The first group argues that “*πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ*” is indicative of the tribes of Israel, leaving “*τῆς γῆς*” to refer to the land motif promised to Abraham and “*κόψονται*” to refer to a mourning of repentance.⁵⁰² Sweet correctly argues that this interpretation is certainly more accurate to the original context of Zech 12:10, given that the context in the OT passage demonstrates the primacy of Israel in the author's mind.⁵⁰³ A further piece of evidence is the consistent use of “*αἱ φυλαὶ*” to refer to the tribes of Israel. As Johnson observes, “the expression “peoples of the earth” (*φυλαὶ*, lit., “tribes”) is normally used throughout the LXX and NT of the tribes of Israel (Rev 7:4–9; 21:12; cf. Mt 19:28; 24:30).”⁵⁰⁴ While the evidence for this first view is solid and worthy of consideration, a second view lends itself to thematic coherence between Matthew's gospel and John's Apocalypse.

The second view argues for the thematic coherence between Matthew and Revelation. This view juxtaposes the first, taking “*πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ*” to indicate all the families of earth, “*τῆς γῆς*” to refer to the earth in the sense of the world, and “*κόψονται*” to refer to a mourning of

⁵⁰² Two of the strongest proponents for this view include Fenton J.A. Hort, *The Apocalypse of St. John, I-III*. (London: Macmillan & Co., 1908), 1:7; Joseph Augustus Seiss, *The Apocalypse: A Series of Special Lectures on the Revelation of Jesus Christ with Revised Text*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Charles C. Cook, 1909).

⁵⁰³ J. P. M. (John Philip McMurdo) Sweet, *Revelation*, Westminster Pelican Commentaries (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1979), 66-67. See also Lee, *Revelation*, 502; G. Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, Harper's New Testament Commentaries (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1966), 18. Additionally, a helpful discussion of the textual relationship between the Zechariah, Matthew, and Revelation occurrences can be found in Nolland's work: John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 984.

⁵⁰⁴ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 601.

despair from the whole sinful world at the sight of the Second Coming.⁵⁰⁵ Trench summarizes this view, “They set forth the despair of the sinful world, of all the tribes of the earth (cf. Matt 24:30), when Christ the Judge shall come to execute judgment on all that obeyed not his gospel, who pierced Him with their sins; their remorse and despair, but give no hint of their repentance.”⁵⁰⁶ In citing the overall context of Revelation, Mounce contrasts the theme of Zechariah and Revelation, “The mourning of Zech 12:10–12 was that of repentance, but the mourning of Revelation is the remorse accompanying the disclosure of divine judgment at the coming of Christ (cf. 16:9, 11, 21).”⁵⁰⁷ Thomas observes the notable addition of “ἐπ’ αὐτὸν” which translates “because of Him” or “over Him” as the object of the mourning of the tribes of earth, this is present in Revelation but not in Matthew.⁵⁰⁸ However, this addition is likely in light of the phrase’s inclusion in Zech 12:10, a nod to John’s textual favoritism for the OT passage. This does not disallow John’s use of Matthew but rather strengthens the argument that the authors had familiarity with the other and are writing with a common tradition in mind.⁵⁰⁹

This second view is favorable in light of the theme of the Apocalypse. In concluding his previously cited thought, Johnson adds, “John uses φυλαὶ in several places to refer more broadly to the peoples of all the nations (5:9; 7:9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6)—a usage that also seems natural

⁵⁰⁵ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 78. Thomas endorses this view and cites the following in support of this view: Lee, *Revelation*. & Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*.

⁵⁰⁶ Richard C. Trench, *Commentary on the Epistles to the Seven Churches in Asia* (London: Parker & Son, 1861), 32.

⁵⁰⁷ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 51.

⁵⁰⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 78.

⁵⁰⁹ Nolland, *Matthew*, 984.

here.”⁵¹⁰ Thomas asserts that the heaviest consideration in examining this passage is the worldwide scope of Revelation with significant evidence indicating a multi-ethnic group as “*πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ*” with a widespread judgment that does not bring about repentance.⁵¹¹

Witherington summarizes, “The nations will regret what they did to Christ and His people in the end.”⁵¹²

John’s Apocalypse shares much textual coherence with Matthew but ultimately favors the OT text tradition. However, the thematic coherence between Rev 1:7 and Matt 24:30 is strong. Both passages indicated the people of earth mourning at the Second Coming as regret over their actions at the sight of the righteous, cloud-riding Judge. For those truly in Christ, the Second Coming is a sight of salvation. In contrast, Thomas states, “the statement provides a grim preview of what lies ahead for the world. The return of Christ is anything but a comfort to those who continue in their rebellion against Him.”⁵¹³ As John introduces the protagonist of the Apocalypse before describing the coming judgment, he paints a clear picture of what the unrepentant reader can expect at the *παρουσία*.

Out of His Mouth Came a Sharp Two-Edged Sword (Rev 1:16)

⁵¹⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 601.

⁵¹¹ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 78-79. Scripture cited includes (3:10; 6:10; 8:13; 9:20, 21; 11:10 [twice]; 13:8, 12, 14 [twice]; 14:6; 15:4; 16:9, 11; 17:2, 8).

⁵¹² Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 77.

⁵¹³ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 79.

John’s description of the weapon that symbolizes the judgment of Christ enjoys strong coherence in the OT. Still, there is also a substantial case for a canonical understanding of the sword of judgment in the NT.

The textual description of the sword coming out of the mouth of Jesus in Rev 1:16 is formed by three Greek words that occur as *hapax legomena* outside of the Apocalypse. The construction “ῥομφαία δίστομος ὀξεῖα” translates literally as “sword two-edged sharp” but more functionally in the NASB95 as “a sharp two-edged sword.” The difficulty in arguing textual cohesion is that all three of these single occurrences are in different locations throughout the NT.

The first unique word is “ῥομφαία,” the word John chooses to depict the sword. Noted in the previous chapter, “ῥομφαία” corresponds to the Hebrew “כַּרְבַּן” and appears in the LXX over 230 times. John uses this word rather than the more common “μάχαιρα,” which appears 29 times in the NT, twice in John’s gospel. The distinction of a “ῥομφαία” in comparison to a “μάχαιρα” might indicate a difference in size, as the former is a large, broad sword,⁵¹⁴ and the latter is usually a short sword or dagger.⁵¹⁵ The only other NT occurrence of “ῥομφαία” is found in Lk 2:35 in the account of Simeon describing the pain that Mary would feel at the crucifixion of Christ, opting for an enormous sword.⁵¹⁶

However, the greater focus of the passage is the judicial nuance that is inherent to the coming of Jesus, with the sword revealing every “διαλογισμός” translated reasoning, motive, or

⁵¹⁴ BDAG, s.v., ῥομφαία, 907.

⁵¹⁵ BDAG, s.v., μάχαιρα, 622.

⁵¹⁶ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 122. Robinson opts to describe the large sword as a Thracian javelin. Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Lk 2:35.

thought.⁵¹⁷ The only other NT occurrences of “ῥομφαία” are the six instances in Revelation, five of which refer to the weapon proceeding from the mouth of Christ (Rev 1:16; 2:12, 16; 19:15, 21) with the sixth indicating the weapon of the fourth horseman of the Apocalypse used to destroy a fourth of humanity with famine and the sword (Rev 6:8). The TDNT notes that John’s usage of “ῥομφαία” should be regarded as purposeful and intentional despite it being the less common word choice, “this statement has also to be fitted into the totality of the concept of a ῥομφαία proceeding from the mouth of Christ, and this may mean that, although the severity of the judgment is emphasized in 19:15,21 as well as 2:16, what is brought out in both cases is that the only weapon used by Christ is the Word.”⁵¹⁸

Hastings notes the significance of the choice of “ῥομφαία” in relation to the Word of Christ, identifying the Thracian sword as having the distinct shape of a human tongue.⁵¹⁹ Mounce notes the thematic significance for the first century audience, “the sword in these vignettes symbolizes the irresistible power of divine judgment. The authoritative word of Christ is to be understood over the fraudulent demands of the imperial cult. It is the word of Christ that will ultimately prevail.”⁵²⁰ John’s choice of “ῥομφαία” over “μάχαιρα” or other words for sword found in the LXX could be to indicate the power associated with a more sizeable sword, such as that of the cherubim (Gen 3:24) or Goliath (1 Sam 17:45, 47, 51). However, it is inevitable given the context that John intends to identify the sword with Christ and His judgment.

⁵¹⁷ BDAG, s.v., διαλογισμός, 232. Additionally, Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Lk 2:35.

⁵¹⁸ TDNT vol. 6, s.v., ῥομφαία, 997-998.

⁵¹⁹ James Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 4, 5 vols. (Edinburgh: Scribner’s, 1911), 634.

⁵²⁰ Mounce, *Revelation*, 60.

The second unique word appearing only once outside of the Apocalypse is “δίστομος,” meaning to have two edges or double-edged.⁵²¹ The only other occurrence in the NT outside of Revelation appears in Heb 4:12, also in reference to a sword, though the author of Hebrews uses “μάχαιρα” in contrast to John’s choice of “ρόμφαία.” The sword described in Hebrews is compared to the Word of God, which is living and active. The “μάχαιρα” here pales in comparison to the Word of God, the λόγος. Swetnam observes the connection between the λόγος described in Heb 4:12 and the Johannine use of λόγος as Christological (Jn 1:1ff).⁵²² Through this connection, Swetnam links the sword descriptions of Hebrews and the Apocalypse, noting the sword in Revelation comes from Christ’s mouth, symbolizing judicial power, whereas, in Hebrews, the λόγος belongs to God rather than Christ. He continues to observe the common use of “δίστομος,” noting that in both the Apocalypse and Hebrews, the word is used to augment and emphasize the effectiveness of the sword described.⁵²³

Though Swetnam’s thesis is to debunk the popular interpretation of this passage as one with a judgment motif, Allen translates the smaller “μάχαιρα” to connect to the smaller knife used by priests to slaughter sacrificial animals.⁵²⁴ Through this translation, the connection can be made that the λόγος, or Christ, is living and active, and His judgment is more imposing than even the sharpest two-edged “δίστομος,” knife wielded by a priest. As the author of Hebrews indicated, Christ is the great High Priest (Heb 4:14-16). His judgment through His “ρόμφαία

⁵²¹ BDAG, s.v., δίστομος, 252.

⁵²² James Swetnam, “Jesus as Logos in Heb 4:12-13,” *Biblica* 62, no. 2 (1981): 218-219.

⁵²³ Swetnam, “Jesus as Logos”, 219.

⁵²⁴ David L. Allen, *Hebrews*, vol. 35, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2010), 288.

δίστομος ὀξεῖα” at His Second Coming will pierce the true thoughts and motives of men. Lane contributes, “The word of God poses a judgment that is more threatening and sharper than any double-edged sword (μάχαιρα, v 12) because it exposes the intentions of the heart and renders one defenseless before God’s scrutinizing gaze.”⁵²⁵ The cohesion with Revelation is certainly more thematic. However, the verbal cohesion gleaned from the scarcely used adjective “δίστομον” is evident, as Greek poets used the adjective to indicate a much greater sharpness than a typical sword.⁵²⁶

The final unique word is undoubtedly the least intriguing of the trio. The term “ὀξεῖα” is only used elsewhere in the NT in Paul’s letter to the Romans in a quotation of Isa 59:7 describing the wicked “their feet are swift to shed blood.” The word “ὀξεῖα” originates from “ὀξύς,” which means “sharp” in every use in the Apocalypse, with a secondary definition only seen in the NT in the instance of Rom 3:15 meaning “quick, swift.” The only meaningful connection to the NT through this word is to demonstrate that it is used in the LXX of Isa 59:7 and that the tradition seems to be shared by both Paul and John to use the adjective as a descriptor. Fanning notes the description is indicative of God’s judgment, “God’s word effects powerful judgment when He pronounces vindication for His people or swift retribution on His enemies (see Rev 19:15,21; Isa 11:4; 49:21).”⁵²⁷ There is no other noteworthy thematic connection here as Paul is writing concerning the wicked and John is describing the judgment instrument of Christ.

⁵²⁵ W. L. Lane, *Hebrews 1-8*, vol. 47A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1991), 102.

⁵²⁶ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 18.

⁵²⁷ Fanning, *Revelation*, 102.

This description is firmly rooted in the OT but enjoys cohesion with the NT theme of Christ's divine judgment. His judgment at the Second Coming will reveal man's true motives and hearts. As Paul writes, Christ will destroy the lawless one with only the breath of His mouth, or His word (2 Thess. 2:8). Christ is the only one worthy to wield this instrument of judgment, and it transcends any known to man with its sharpness and swiftness. Johnson observes, "The figure points definitely to divine judgment but not to the type of power wielded by the nations. Christ conquers the world through his death and resurrection, and the sword is his faithful witness to God's saving purposes. The weapons of his followers are loyalty, truthfulness, and righteousness (19:8, 14)."⁵²⁸ The description may seem to be a patchwork of three *hapax legomena* (prior to the Apocalypse); however, the judgment of Christ is consistent, accurate, and righteous. John has indicated adherence to the NT theme of the judgment of Christ through his description.

His Face Shone Like the Sun (Rev 1:16)

Another example of both textual and thematic coherence stemming from Matthew's Gospel can be found in Rev 1:16. The account of the Transfiguration is present in each of the three Synoptic Gospels, yet is notably absent from John's Gospel given that he was present during the event alongside James and Peter. The mystery surrounding the reason for John's omission of the Transfiguration account in his Gospel is tangent to the current discussion. However, the three other Gospel authors verified that he was present at the Transfiguration. Swete brings awareness to this fact, arguing that if the author of Revelation is John the apostle,

⁵²⁸ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 606.

the Transfiguration would have been at the forefront of his mind as He witnessed the exalted Christ once more.⁵²⁹ Once again, Matthew seems to have the most textual and thematic coherence with John's Apocalypse, with Matt 17:2 and Rev 1:16 sharing several common threads.

The verbal coherence between the two verses is not readily apparent in form but is similar in meaning. The "three-word rule" described by Beale earlier in the chapter falls short of identifying this occurrence as a definitive example of verbal coherence.⁵³⁰ Matthew's rendering of the description of the transfigured face of Christ is read as "ἔλαμψεν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος." John pens his description of the exalted Christ's face in the Apocalyptic vision as "ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει." The common thread is the word "ἥλιος," the Greek word for sun.⁵³¹ The descriptions deviate outside of this common word, using different words within the same semantic field. Matthew uses the aorist active indicative form of λάμπω, ἔλαμψεν, as his verb describing the action of Christ's face, simply meaning "to emit rays of light or shine."⁵³² Instead of mirroring Matthew's verb choice, John uses the present active indicative form of φαίνω, φαίνει, which is defined as "to shine or produce light."⁵³³ John's deviation from Matthew's text is perhaps not a deviation from the text entirely but rather a faithful adherence to the Hebrew text. Charles notes the distinctively Hebrew construction, "We have here a Hebrew construction,

⁵²⁹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3.

⁵³⁰ Beale, *Handbook*, 31.

⁵³¹ BDAG, s.v., ἥλιος, 436.

⁵³² BDAG, s.v., λάμπω, 585.

⁵³³ BDAG, s.v., φαίνω, 1046.

the same as in Deut 32:11; Job 7:2, 9:26, 11:16; Isa 61:10; Jer 23:29. Hence our text = קְשֵׁשׁ יָאִיר = בגבורתו. The clause should be rendered, ‘And his face was as the sun shining in his strength.’⁵³⁴

John’s final variation from Matthew’s textual structure concerns the face of Christ. Matthew uses the word “πρόσωπον” to signify the face of Christ, while John uses the word “ὄψις.” Both terms range from meaning simply “face,” the front part of the head, to deeper meanings such as countenance or presence.⁵³⁵ It is noteworthy that elsewhere in Revelation, John uses “πρόσωπον” in describing other figures (Rev 4:7; 7:11; 9:7; 11:16). The word “ὄψις” only appears in Johannine literature with two other occurrences in John’s Gospel (7:24; 11:44). The first of these occurrences is indicative of the outward appearance of individuals while the second refers to the face of Lazarus and the cloth which bound him. Mounce explains the word choice at what he hails as the high point of the inaugural vision, “In the context of Rev 1:13–16 its primary reference is to the face, but it should not be limited to that alone. There was a brilliance about Christ that surrounded his entire person.”⁵³⁶ The word “ὄψις” is used throughout the LXX, and this perhaps influenced John’s word choice.⁵³⁷ In conclusion, the textual cohesion between Revelation and Matthew is much weaker than that of Revelation and the OT in this particular instance.

The thematic cohesion between Revelation and Matthew regarding the appearance of Christ’s face is identical and points to a common theme between the two authors. As both authors describe the physical appearance of the glorified Christ, the descriptions in both accounts

⁵³⁴ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 31.

⁵³⁵ BDAG, s.v., πρόσωπον, 887.; s.v., ὄψις, 746.

⁵³⁶ Mounce, *Revelation*, 60.

⁵³⁷ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 31.

attest to the glory of Christ. From the perspective of Matthew, Blomberg observes that Christ's appearance suggests glory, sovereignty, and purity.⁵³⁸ Additionally, Nolland adds that the simile "like the sun" is added to enhance Matthew's own self-cohesiveness, linking the Transfiguration account to his eschatological description of the righteous (Matt 13:43).⁵³⁹ Matthew's perspective differs in the fact that the author was not present, whereas John is describing a firsthand encounter. In Revelation, Johnson observes the theme of the appearance of Christ as a simile for His divine glory, preeminence, and victory.⁵⁴⁰ Thomas also argues that the central theme of this description is the glory of Christ, describing it as "an anticipatory glimpse of the glory to be manifested in His second coming to the earth. Now the aged apostle is given the unique privilege of a second foreview of that glory. . . it is enough to bring the seer to the ground at the feet of his divine companion."⁵⁴¹ The overwhelming, divine glory of Christ is the central focus for both NT authors. Both record that those who look upon Him are in awe of His glorious appearance, following with the only proper response, honor, and worship.

While the verbal cohesion is not definitive in this instance, the thematic cohesion bolsters the overall unity of the two passages and the theme of the glory of Christ for both authors. It is blatant from the text that John, seeing the glorified Christ for the second time, is awestruck at His appearance through his description and reaction. The themes of divine glory and sovereignty continue the thematic thread described in the previous chapter regarding the appearance of

⁵³⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, vol. 22, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 1992), 262.

⁵³⁹ Nolland, *Matthew*, 700.

⁵⁴⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 606.

⁵⁴¹ Robert L. Thomas, "Glorified Christ on Patmos," *Bibliotheca sacra* 122, no. 487 (July 1965): 246.

Christ. The OT intertextuality demonstrates that Christ is described as God and the NT intertextuality shows the same, that He is worthy of the same praise and worship that He has been given throughout the canon (Josh 5:14; Ezek 1:28; Dan 8:17; 10:15; Matt 17:6; Acts 26:14). The only simile that the biblical authors could use to describe Christ is the brightest, most radiant object they knew, the sun.⁵⁴² Though John had seen and known the incarnate Christ, the glorified Christ was impossible to describe with human words. Swete observes the canonical consistency with the NT concerning Christ while recognizing that John would have struggled to explain Christ, “The Christ of the Apocalypse is the Christ of the Gospels, but a change has passed over Him which is beyond words.”⁵⁴³ This simile intentionally demonstrates the magnitude of Christ’s glory and canonical awareness concerning the history of associating the sun’s radiance with the glory of Yahweh and Christ.

I am the Living One (Rev 1:18)

The final title of Christ with NT intertextuality to be discussed in this chapter is one that revisits Luke’s gospel after the resurrection of Christ. The angels appear to the women coming to tend to the body of Jesus on the third day and ask why they seek the “ζῶντα μετὰ τῶν νεκρῶν” translated as “the Living [One]” among the dead (Lk 24:5).⁵⁴⁴ The parallel in Revelation is

⁵⁴² The sun itself has a long history of worship in Ancient Israel and other cultures. See J. Glen Taylor, *Yahweh and the Sun: Biblical and Archaeological Evidence for Sun Worship in Ancient Israel* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1993).

⁵⁴³ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, clv.

⁵⁴⁴ As the word for “one” does not appear in the Greek text for either Lk 24:5 or Rev 1:18, the word “one” is uniquely translated as implied in the NASB95 in both instances.

rendered “ὁ Ζῶν καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶν εἰμι” or “the Living [One], and I was dead, and behold I am living.”

Textually, the coherence between the two passages stems from “ζῶντα” in Luke, the present active participle in the accusative case from “ζάω” and “Ζῶν” in the Apocalypse, the present active participle in the nominative case from the same root verb. Thomas notes that the participle is used consistently to portray the title “living” as a standard description of God throughout the canon, and “in essence, it says He has life in His essential nature. This contrasts Him to the dead or inanimate gods of heathenism.”⁵⁴⁵ Scholars highlight the title’s connection with the previous content, “I am the first and last,”⁵⁴⁶ and the latter, “I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.”⁵⁴⁷ That the three titles are united in their reference to Christ is evident in the text. Montague notes that the words “πρῶτος” and “ἔσχατος” are in the nominative masculine singular, indicating that the beginning and end are not events or objects but rather a person, Jesus Christ.⁵⁴⁸ This is significant as the formula used to introduce the three descriptions present is the “I am” formula described in the previous chapter, of which Aune writes, “The ego-eimi formula occurs a total of forty-eight times in the NT, almost always attributed to Christ or God and

⁵⁴⁵ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 111. His citation includes Josh 3:10; Ps 42:2; 84:2; Hos 1:10; Matt 16:16; 26:63; Acts 14:15; Rom 9:26; 2 Cor 3:3; 6:16; 1 Thess 1:9; 1 Tim 3:15; 4:10; Heb 3:12; 9:14; 10:31; 1 Pet 1:23; cf. Deut 32:40; Isa 49:18; Jer 5:2; Dan 12:7. Mounce also notes several NT passages that use the designation. Mounce, *Revelation*, 61.

⁵⁴⁶ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 31.

⁵⁴⁷ Mounce, *Revelation*, 61.

⁵⁴⁸ George T. Montague, *The Apocalypse: Understanding the Book of Revelation and the End of the World* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publishing, 1991), 48. See also Mounce, *Revelation*, 61n36.

therefore of Christological or theological interest.”⁵⁴⁹ The textual evidence suggests NT cohesion, though there is only one Greek word to examine concerning the “Living One” title.

This title's thematic evidence for the NT and canonical cohesion is overwhelming. Robertson describes the title as “another epithet of God common in the OT (Deut 32:40; Isa 49:18, etc.) and applied purposely to Jesus, with which see Jn 5:26 for Christ’s own words about it.”⁵⁵⁰ John uses this title to introduce the contrast between the physical death Christ experienced on earth and the eternal life represented in His glorification. Charles observes, “This verse sets forth the threefold conception of Christ in John: the ever-abiding life He had independently of the world; His humiliation even unto physical death, and His rising to a life not only everlasting in itself but to universal authority over life and death.”⁵⁵¹ Johnson notes the significance of this verse in Johannine Christology, “This passage is sufficient to counter the claim that John’s view of Christ does not revolve around atonement theology. On the contrary, his whole view of Jesus and his kingdom revolves around the cross and resurrection—an interpretation that should set the tone for all the visions that follow.”⁵⁵² In light of the death experienced in His earthly ministry, Mounce highlights the significance of His eternal life in contrast, “Even though he experienced death in the course of his earthly ministry, he is alive forever.”⁵⁵³ Swete summarizes, “The risen life of Jesus Christ is henceforth conterminous with His Divine life, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων;

⁵⁴⁹ Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 100. See this source for a table demonstrating the significance of the “I am” formula for Johannine Christology.

⁵⁵⁰ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 1:17.

⁵⁵¹ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 31.

⁵⁵² Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 607.

⁵⁵³ Mounce, *Revelation*, 61.

cf. Rom. 6:9 ἐγερθεὶς ἐκ νεκρῶν οὐκέτι ἀποθνήσκει.”⁵⁵⁴ An additional parallel to the theme of “once dead, now alive” in the NT is found in 2 Cor 6:9 concerning the life of Paul and his followers, “ὡς ἀποθνήσκοντες καὶ ἰδοὺ ζῶμεν” translated “as dying and yet behold we live.” Paul also describes despair to the point of death in the prologue of this epistle (2 Cor 1:8-11). Guthrie concludes that the text of 2 Cor 6:9 demonstrates the power of Christ over death, “this seeming verdict of death occurred so that they would trust in the Lord of life, who rescued them out of this brush with death. . . Paul is constantly exposed to death, but by God’s grace, he is still alive.”⁵⁵⁵ This mirrors the meaning of the text in Rev 1:18, which Fanning observes not only details the transfer of the canonical divine attribute “the living God” to Christ but “at the same time this serves as the foundation for the further self-description in 1:18b-d (i.e., one whose essence is life and cannot be conquered by death.”⁵⁵⁶

This final set of titles in the opening chapter of the Apocalypse demonstrates the authority of Christ over death. He cannot be harmed by death and has now been attributed the title “the Living One,” which is identical to the divine title given to Yahweh throughout the canon, “the Living God.” Textual evidence is sufficient to indicate common threads in the text that demonstrate thematic cohesion pointing to Christ's power, authority, and dominion over death. His kingdom is established with His victory on the cross and His resurrection at the foundation.

⁵⁵⁴ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 20.

⁵⁵⁵ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 336-337.

⁵⁵⁶ Fanning, *Revelation*, 103-104.

Conclusion

The examination of the NT intertextual occurrences in Revelation on a case-by-case basis demonstrates both thematic and verbal cohesion, which denotes the author's intentional use of the NT text to present Christ as the culmination and fulfillment of the canon. Throughout the NT, titles that are descriptive of Yahweh in the OT are now used as descriptors of Christ which signifies Christ's deity among other divine attributes. The intertextuality in Rev 1 demonstrates strong evidence that John and the other NT writers were writing with a common text tradition and reading the OT with a consistent hermeneutic. John's utilization of the NT text comes from each of the genres of NT literature, demonstrating a robust awareness of NT texts and themes while signaling intent to present Revelation as a capstone. Swete articulates the Christological implications through a lens of NT consciousness, "[Christ] sits and reigns with His Father. All this had been taught by St Peter, St Paul, and the writer to the Hebrews; but it was left for the Apocalyptist to describe the glorified life."⁵⁵⁷

Revelation 1, in particular, contains the multitude of intertextual examples presented in this chapter as evidence for John's use of the NT. His use of Christology in Revelation 1 is a quintessential depiction of the high Christology he maintains throughout his corpus and is readily apparent in the Apocalypse. John's use of literary devices incorporates the text and themes of the NT into the text in such a manner that, similar to the OT, there is no direct citation formula, but the cohesiveness is evident. True to his self-awareness as an author at the climax of prophecy (Rev 1:3), John utilized Scripture to author the first chapter in Revelation. As the study continues, the final portion of the canon to be examined is Revelation itself. The first chapter

⁵⁵⁷ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, clv-clvi.

plays a significant role in the Apocalypse as John regularly uses the Christology of chapter 1 throughout his addresses to the seven churches and his final Apocalyptic vision. As the discussion of the first twenty-six books of the NT comes to a close, the analysis of the role the first chapter of Revelation plays in revealing John's Christology at the dawn of the Apocalypse.

Chapter 5: Unity and Cohesion in the Apocalypse

Introduction

The final exegetical task in this dissertation is the study of the Christological titles and descriptions depicted in the initial Apocalyptic vision and their role in the canonical capstone. Revelation serves as the canonical capstone in the sense that biblical-theological themes and imagery are brought to completion at the conclusion of the canon.⁵⁵⁸ The story of salvation begins in the garden of Eden and culminates in John's Apocalypse. As Revelation is the climax of Scripture, the work is naturally the culmination of the canonical depictions of Christ that have been discussed in the previous two chapters. The lone issue prior to the exegesis of the text at this juncture is a determination of the cohesiveness of Revelation. An essential presupposition already established is that Christ is the focus of Revelation. His centrality to the Apocalypse is critical to the fulfillment of prophecy and biblical themes. Tabb attests to the centrality of Christ when he says, "From the opening title 'Ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ' (1:1) to the final exclamation 'Amen. Come Lord Jesus! (22:20), the risen Christ takes [center] stage in this book of prophecy."⁵⁵⁹ As the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit all have critical roles in the Apocalypse, it is significant to heed Witherington's observation concerning the centrality of Christ, "The prophetic outlook of Revelation is exclusively monotheistic, but it is a Christologically redefined monotheism that John touts."⁵⁶⁰ As noted in previous chapters, John indicates an awareness of his position in the line of prophecy as an author of the inspired Word of God (Rev 1:3).

⁵⁵⁸ Tabb, *All Things New*, 2. See also Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem*.

⁵⁵⁹ Tabb, *All Things New*, 227.

⁵⁶⁰ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 77.

Therefore, the final component of the canonically conscious Christology that he demonstrates is to analyze his utilization of the titles and descriptions of Christ in his Apocalypse. This chapter examines John's intentional weaving of Messianic and Christological threads throughout the tapestry of Revelation, using the first chapter as his metaphorical needle to create his masterpiece.

Cohesion in Revelation

As the previous two chapters required evidence to demonstrate the plausibility and probability of John's use of the sources being reviewed (OT and NT), this chapter merits a brief word on the cohesiveness or unity of Revelation. The authorship of the Apocalypse has been discussed, and the conclusion that John the Apostle is the author has been established. Proceeding under the premise that John the Apostle is the singular author of Revelation alleviates the burden to demonstrate evidence concerning his use of source material as the entire work proceeds from his own hand, inspired by the Holy Spirit who inspired each of the other canonical authors. A similar methodology may be used to demonstrate Apocalyptic cohesion that has been used to illustrate Revelation's canonical cohesion. This methodology leads to the same conclusion that the previous chapters have reached - that John's use of canonical Messianic and Christological titles or themes in Revelation 1 is intentional and depicts a canonically rich portrait of the glorified Christ.

Charles observes two primary evidences for unity in the Apocalypse, one in thought and dramatic development (thematic cohesion) and the second in style and diction (verbal cohesion). On the Apocalypse's thematic cohesion, Charles remarks, "the unity of thought and development in the Apocalypse is immeasurably greater than in any of the great Jewish apocalypses of an

earlier or contemporary date. . . the superiority of the Apocalypse to other apocalypses in this respect is not merely relative but absolute.”⁵⁶¹ He similarly hails the verbal cohesion, noting that the style and diction are unique and visible in every part of Revelation.⁵⁶² Additionally, Bauckham acknowledges the intentionality of the literary composition, “Revelation has been composed with such meticulous attention to the detail of language and structure that scarcely a word can have been chosen without deliberate reflection on its relationship to the work as an integrated, interconnected whole.”⁵⁶³ The views presented by these scholars give a preview of the conclusion that the exegesis in this chapter demonstrates.

For centuries scholars have argued that there is no logical order in Revelation, with standard syntactical and grammatical rules being ignored.⁵⁶⁴ Dionysius scrutinized Revelation similarly, recording his surprise that this could be the same author who penned the “faultless Greek” of John’s Gospel and 1 John.⁵⁶⁵ This perceived lack of order has likely contributed to the abandonment of scholarship concerning Revelation. As has been demonstrated, many of John’s solecisms or grammatical and syntactical irregularities are intentional to preserve the allusion’s integrity. Concerning this intention, the reader may recall Moyise, who argues, “if authorial

⁵⁶¹ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxxxvii.

⁵⁶² Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxxxvii. He notes the exception of the unique Greek form of Rev 11, but even there he recognizes the uniqueness and consistency of the author’s hand.

⁵⁶³ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, x.

⁵⁶⁴ See Beckwith, *The Apocalypse of John*, 242.

⁵⁶⁵ Eusebius, *EH*, 7.25.25 – 7.25.26.

intention is so vital for interpretation, then I would suggest that we are in a perilous state, particularly for the book of Revelation.”⁵⁶⁶

This chapter aims to demonstrate cohesion within the book of Revelation and the canon itself. In his dissertation, Whiteley argues concerning the use of allusion in Revelation, “the interpreter has the responsibility to import information from the antecedent works, leading to cohesion.”⁵⁶⁷ Thus far, evidence supporting cohesion with the canon has demonstrated John’s intentional use of Messianic and Christological themes to portray Christ as the protagonist of the Apocalyptic vision. The evidence for John’s deliberate literary composition and word choice has been demonstrated throughout the dissertation, and this chapter concerning the unity of the Apocalypse is no different. Through the exegetical method now familiar to the reader, this chapter will focus on tracing the Messianic and Christological threads from the canon of Scripture through their climax in Revelation and demonstrating that these threads are intentionally woven into a beautiful tapestry of a powerful depiction of Christ in the Apocalypse.

“Inner Textuality” in Revelation

With the unity of Revelation evaluated, the chapter now moves to the analysis of the coherence between the Christological titles and descriptions of Revelation 1 and the rest of the Apocalypse. The methodology will follow that which was used in the previous two chapters in which the OT and NT were evaluated. The similarities will be examined based on verbal and

⁵⁶⁶ Steve Moyise, “Authorial Intention and the Book of Revelation,” 35–36.

⁵⁶⁷ Iwan Whiteley, “A Search for Cohesion in the Book of Revelation, with Specific Reference to Chapter One,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 57, no. 2 (2006): 310.

thematic cohesion in an effort to demonstrate Apocalyptic unity - the final component in this dissertation concerning John's canonical depiction of Christ.

At this juncture, it is vital to make a distinction. Up to this point, the discussion has been focused on intertextuality, which indicates the use of two separate texts.⁵⁶⁸ As unity in Revelation has been discussed, the use of the term "intertextuality" must cease for this chapter as the occurrences are contained within a singular work. Fishbane utilizes an "inner biblical" hermeneutic in his methodology, which regards quotes between biblical books as "inner biblical."⁵⁶⁹ The term proposed for the foray into Apocalyptic cohesion through the Christological descriptors in Revelation 1 is "inner textuality." This term properly reflects the need to regard the Apocalypse as its own literary unit and to study the connection between the opening chapter and the remainder of the text. With the parameters defined, the study moves to the case-by-case thematic and verbal cohesive analysis.

The Things Which Must Soon Take Place (1:1, 19)

The description of the events in Revelation, "the things which must soon take place," has a significant OT background as described in the third chapter of this dissertation. The LXX reading of Dan 2:28 describes "ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι," the things which must take place, as occurring in the last days, "ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν." These events that were far off for Daniel are evidently close for John, as he departs from the OT text, replacing "the last days" with "ἐν τάχει," meaning

⁵⁶⁸ For a history of the definition, see Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New Testament: Essays in Honour of J. L. North* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 2000), 14-16. Additionally, Buchanan's work is integral to the history of intertextual studies, George Wesley Buchanan, *Introduction to Intertextuality* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1994).

⁵⁶⁹ Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1985), vii-viii.

“quickly.” Additionally, a second occurrence in the initial chapter adds the description, “μετὰ ταῦτα,” meaning “after these.” In this occurrence, Christ commands through the use of the imperative “Γράψον” to record past, present, and future events. All three tenses are present in Revelation. At this point, the initial Apocalyptic vision is in John’s rearview and represents the “things” that John has already seen. The present state of the seven churches occupies Rev 2-3. In the addresses to the seven churches, a unique form of “ὅδε” which is written, “Τάδε λέγει” (translated “He says these things”) appears in the introductory verse to each of the seven churches. The force of the phrase in the addresses to the seven churches is “proleptic or anticipatory. . . the pronoun is used to add solemnity to the prophetic utterance that follows.”⁵⁷⁰ Additionally, Smyth observes that this phrase was used in classical literature to introduce a new character in a scene or play.⁵⁷¹ In a similar manner, John introduces the glorified Christ to each of the seven churches through a declaration that He is declaring “these things.” Accompanying each occurrence of this phrase is a title or description of Christ given in the opening chapter of Revelation. The remaining chapters (Rev 4-22) describe what is yet to occur. The events Christ alludes to find their canonical culmination within the Apocalypse, with “the things which must take place” described throughout John’s account (Rev 4:1; 22:6).

The verbal cohesion between these occurrences is readily apparent. As previously mentioned, the complete textual form of the first use of this description of the events of Revelation appears in Greek, “ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι ἐν τάχει,” the things which must soon take place. This description is matched verbatim near the conclusion of the Apocalypse (Rev 22:6). In this

⁵⁷⁰ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 328. The phrase is derived from the OT in which it was used to express a prophetic utterance. BDAG, s.v., ὅδε, 690.

⁵⁷¹ Herbert W. Smyth, *Greek Grammar* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1956), 307.

sense, the title forms a bookend, or *inclusio*, around the described events.⁵⁷² A case can be made for the significance of the occurrence of this phrase in Rev 4:1. At this point, the text mirrors Rev 1:19 closely, including the words “μετὰ ταῦτα.” That the text in Rev 4:1 refers to future events from John’s perspective is evident through this phrase. John’s vision from 4:1 to the remainder of the book depicts events occurring after the address to the seven churches. At this point, “the message is that in Christ’s ministry the eschaton has begun, the kingdom has arrived.”⁵⁷³ The timing of events in Revelation has led to much debate, with various viewpoints arguing the veracity of the conclusions provided here. However, the focus of this dissertation has been on the “who” rather than the “when” of Revelation. John’s focus on the “who” is also evident, as the event immediately following this occurrence is the throne room vision which includes worship of the Lamb. Perhaps the key word comes before this occurrence, the verb describing the door, “ἠνεῳγμένη.” This is a perfect tense verb from “ἀνοίγω,” suggesting a permanently open state. The implication is that the Church has permanently unimpeded access to heaven and Christ.⁵⁷⁴

The events described by John are significant for the Christology of the initial Apocalyptic vision due to the implications the titles of Christ have within the scenes of the Apocalypse. These events and Christ’s role in them provide the thematic coherence for this phrase in Revelation. As this discussion progresses, evidence of Christ’s role in “these things” that are taking place will be made clear. Fanning provides an exhortation for the reader to focus on the events rather than factors such as timing - “God wants us to know about what is coming, not to satisfy our curiosity

⁵⁷² Defined as “a literary device that repeats words or themes at the beginning and end of a section. The repetition brackets the section.” LGT, s.v., *inclusio*.

⁵⁷³ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 223.

⁵⁷⁴ See Paul Barnett, *Apocalypse Now and Then: Reading Revelation Today* (Sydney, Australia: Aquila Press, 1989), 67.

or puzzle us about specific timing but so that we would obey him and be transformed by that knowledge.”⁵⁷⁵ God desires for John and his readers to understand that the “who,” Jesus Christ, is central to the message of the Apocalypse and is the main protagonist of all the things which must soon take place.

The One Who Is, and Who Was, and Who Is to Come (1:4, 8)

The deep canonical roots and the grammatical anomaly that comprise the foundation of “the One who is, and who was, and who is to come” have been discussed at length in previous chapters. There is substantial evidence that this title describes God the Father. The title “Παντοκράτωρ,” a label reserved for God the Father specifically, is used to identify the Father in several instances in the Apocalypse (Rev 1:8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:7).⁵⁷⁶ There is also the title “Κύριος ὁ Θεός,” a designation which Bullinger observes has been used to describe God the Father since the beginning of the canon, though he curiously classifies the name as a moniker of Christ.⁵⁷⁷ The plethora of views concerning the titles John uses to describe the Father and Son in Revelation can be attributed to the high Christology of its author. Concerning the debate concerning whom the title is describing in the opening chapter, Thomas concludes, “it is clear that a close affinity exists between the Father and Son in this book. Undoubtedly this results from Christ’s being all the fullness of the Godhead (Col 2:9) and sharing in all the attributes,

⁵⁷⁵ See Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 89.

⁵⁷⁶ BDAG, s.v., παντοκράτωρ, 755. See also, “Ὁ παντοκράτωρ, which in other books of the N.T. is found but once and then in a quotation (2 Cor. 6:18), occurs again in Apoc. 4:8, 11:17, 15:3, 16:7, 16:14, 19:6, 19:15, 21:22.” Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 11.

⁵⁷⁷ E.W. Bullinger, *The Apocalypse or “The Day of the Lord,”* 2nd ed. (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1909), 26. See also Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 33.

deity, and totality of the Father (Heb 1:3).⁵⁷⁸ This close affinity in the Apocalypse reveals crucial Christological information, as Christ is depicted as the culmination of history in the Apocalypse through this description of God the Father.

Textual and thematic cohesion reveal that this Apocalyptic title of the Father also describes Christ. “ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος” appears verbatim three times in the Apocalypse (Rev 1:4, 8; 4:8). In two other uses, the title loses its final descriptor, “καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος” and is written “ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν,” translated “The One who is and who was” (Rev 11:17; 16:7). The reason for this is evident in the literary context of Revelation. At the point that the abbreviated epithet appears in Revelation, the culmination of history has already begun. His coming, or “ἔρχεται,” is no longer a future event but a present reality included in the title of “ὁ ὢν.” The exclusion of this third descriptor is significant to John’s use of the title in the opening chapter of the Apocalypse. John describes the Son as “ἔρχεται” with the clouds (Rev 1:7). Canonically speaking, this coming is identical to the παρουσία of the NT that was prophesied about in the OT. Bauckham observes,

“John has taken advantage of this usage to depict the future of God not as his mere future existence but as his coming to the world in salvation and judgment. He no doubt has in mind those many Old Testament prophetic passages which announce that God will ‘come’ to save and judge (e.g., Ps. 96:13; 98:9; Isa. 40:10; 66:15; Zech. 14:5) and which early Christians understood to refer to his eschatological coming to fulfill his final purpose for the world, a coming they identified with the Parousia of Jesus Christ.”⁵⁷⁹

In this sense, the “coming” described by the action in the verb, “ἐρχόμενος,” is synonymous with the παρουσία of Christ. The omission of this verb from the later occurrences of this title in Revelation demonstrates the significant role Christ plays in inaugurating the reign of

⁵⁷⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 80.

⁵⁷⁹ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 29.

God (Rev 19:6). As previously mentioned, the speaker in Rev 1:8 is likely God the Father, and the title is doubtlessly attributed to Him in 1:4. However, as with other monikers that attribute the eternality of God to Christ, they are often used interchangeably. It is doubtless that both the Father and Son can be described as “the God who transcends time guides the entire course of history because he stands as sovereign over its beginning and its end.”⁵⁸⁰ The canonical thread regarding the coming of the Lord is summarized through this title and its subsequent uses in the Apocalypse. “John has characteristically developed that early Israelite faith in God's historical being for his people into the later, eschatological faith in God's final coming to bring all things to fulfillment in his eternal future.”⁵⁸¹

The eternality of Christ is demonstrated even in a title used explicitly of God the Father (See “I Am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and Last, Beginning and End” later in this chapter). Additionally, the deity of Christ is demonstrated through the extension of titles previously attributed only to Yahweh. An example of this can be found in “ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος” is the unmistakable grammatical anomaly referencing the divine name, “I am,” and the use of “ἐρχόμενος” to describe the *παρουσία* of Christ within the same title. As with many of the other Apocalyptic titles of Christ in this section, the attributes that are descriptive of Christ overlap, further demonstrating a high Christology in the opening chapter of Revelation.

⁵⁸⁰ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 199. See also Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 11.

⁵⁸¹ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 30.

The Faithful Witness (Rev 1:5)

The intertextuality of “the faithful witness” or “ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός” has also been discussed in previous chapters. The title enjoys both verbal and thematic cohesion with Ps 89 of the OT and thematic cohesion with the NT gospels, namely John’s gospel (Jn 3:11, 32; 18:37). The depiction of Christ in the gospels is summarized in the passion narrative in each of the four gospels, “John’s description of Jesus as ‘the faithful witness’ alludes to his faithful endurance and commitment to God and truth even in the face of persecution leading to suffering and death.”⁵⁸² Additionally, Dixon observes that “the designation ‘faithful witness’ goes further and includes the reliable testimony of the risen, reigning and returning Lord to His servant John (Rev 1:2; 22:20).”⁵⁸³ In the immediate literary context of its first occurrence (Rev 1:5), the title appears as part of a threefold doxology of Christological descriptions. Throughout the apocalypse, the title is used to describe the public testifying about Christ. Ultimately, He is portrayed as the quintessential faithful witness in the opening chapter as He testifies about Himself. Witherington observes, “the close association of His faithful witness and His resurrection implies that the witness entailed His death.”⁵⁸⁴ The opening line of the Apocalypse begins “the Revelation of Jesus Christ.” In the opening chapter of this dissertation, it was discussed that the majority of scholars believe the genitive in this sentence is objective, stating that the book of Revelation is

⁵⁸² Jipp, *Messianic Theology*, 228.

⁵⁸³ Sarah S. U. Dixon, *The Testimony of the Exalted Jesus in the Book of Revelation*, Library of New Testament Studies (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 137.

⁵⁸⁴ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 76.

properly titled “the Revelation *from* Jesus Christ.”⁵⁸⁵ If this is the case, the entire Apocalypse serves as a witness to Jesus that comes from Him, and the theme of Christ permeates every word of its content. Tabb observes, “the Apocalypse prominently features the interrelated themes of ‘witness’ and ‘testimony.’ In the prologue, John states that he *testified* to the Word of God and the *testimony of Jesus Christ*, and returns to this emphasis in the book’s closing.”⁵⁸⁶

Turning to verbal cohesion, “ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός” is repeated verbatim once in the Apocalypse in the opening of the address to Laodicea (Rev 3:14). However, in this occurrence, the phrase receives a supplementing adjective, “ἀληθινός,” which translates “true.” This gives the title that opens the address to Laodicea the complete phrase “ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός καὶ ὁ ἀληθινός” which is translated “the faithful and true witness.” The supplementary adjective, “ἀληθινός,” is also used as a standalone adjective to describe Christ in the opening of the address to Philadelphia. In this instance, the adjective appears only with a definite article and shares the exact definition as the adjective in 3:14. Both instances demonstrate verbal cohesion with the initial title in Rev 1:5, “ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός.”

“Although Christ’s self-description in v 7 is not as much a verbatim development of something in Ch. 1 as the previous ones have been, it is nevertheless just as much tied in. . . it probably is a paraphrastic development of ‘faithful witness’ in 1:5a, especially since ἀληθινός in the self-description in 3:14 clearly develops the same clause from 1:5a. Jesus, the holy and true witness, will empower those faithful to him to be like witnesses.”⁵⁸⁷

Identical occurrences of the adjectives are written to endorse the veracity of the testimony of Jesus Christ in the closing chapters of the Apocalypse. Chapter nineteen contains two

⁵⁸⁵ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 121.

⁵⁸⁶ Tabb, *All Things New*, 54.

⁵⁸⁷ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 283.

instances of similar verbal structure. First, Christ affirms the accuracy of His words through the adjective “ἀληθινοὶ” (Rev 19:9). Second, as an epithet for Christ, the rider of the white horse, as “Πιστὸς καὶ Ἀληθινός” (Rev 19:11) which translates “faithful and true.” Again, the trustworthiness of the testimony or words of Christ given in the Apocalypse are attested to, as Christ describes them as, “πιστοὶ καὶ ἀληθινοί” translated “faithful and true” (Rev 21:5; 22:6). As previously mentioned, the Apocalypse is the Revelation that comes from Christ and in these instances, John records His proclamation that He is faithful and true as is His testimony. There have been seven occurrences of this title discussed in this section. Bauckham regards this as intentional, noting the connection of the testimony of Christ with the number of completion, indicating a trustworthy, accurate testimony given by and attesting to the authentic savior, Jesus Christ.⁵⁸⁸ While the veracity of Christ has been demonstrated as a critical theme in Revelation in this chapter, the preceding chapters have shown that the faithfulness of Christ’s witness is not only an Apocalyptic theme but a canonical one.

Thematically, each of these occurrences describing the faithful and true witness of Christ attests to self-evident conclusions given the nature of the description. In the context of the immediate audience, the seven churches of Asia, Osborne’s observation is helpful: “Christ is both the ‘real’ Messiah and the ‘faithful’ one. In the context of these persecuted Christians, it means that Christ can be counted on to vindicate them in their trials and to reward them for their suffering.”⁵⁸⁹ Beale also notes the significance of this title being used prior to the message to the seven churches, “the unique mention of Christ as “the faithful witness” suits the particular

⁵⁸⁸ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 34-36.

⁵⁸⁹ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 187.

situation of these Asian churches. . . They were tempted to compromise their witness because of threatening persecution (even to death). They needed further “grace and peace” to overcome this temptation by modeling their lives on that of Christ.”⁵⁹⁰ The references to the title in the closing of Revelation are indicative of veracity and cohesion for “the entire Book, and not only the noble words with which the last of its visions has just ended.”⁵⁹¹ While the seven churches required a faithful Savior, the multitude of the Apocalypse’s readers in the centuries to follow would also be in need of the Faithful Witness.

The ideal interpretation of this title is to understand it as canonically cohesive, demonstrating Christ’s reliability to be a faithful and true witness in every part of divine revelation rather than to relegate the term to only one sense.⁵⁹² This is preferable to limiting the title to the dichotomy of choosing between the faithfulness of the testimony of Christ in the NT or the testimony of the exalted Christ in Revelation.⁵⁹³ An example of this would be to bind the title to its immediate context for the church at Laodicea. Certainly, the Laodiceans, like the other six churches, have specific needs that mirror the title(s) of Christ written in the opening of the address to the churches. The lukewarm witness of the Laodicean church could certainly be polarized by the faithful and true witness of Jesus Christ.⁵⁹⁴ The lack of faithful remnants in the

⁵⁹⁰ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 190.

⁵⁹¹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 298.

⁵⁹² Charles surveys the use of the terms in other canonical contexts before concluding, “We may affirm of the ἀληθής, that He fulfils the promise of His lips, but the ἀληθινός, the wider promise of His name. Whatever that name imports, taken in its highest, deepest, widest sense, whatever according to that He ought to be, that He is to the full.” Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 85.

⁵⁹³ Aune describes this dichotomy and the possibilities for both views. Aune, *WBC: Revelation 1-5*, 255.

⁵⁹⁴ Paige Patterson, *Revelation*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012), 140-141.

Laodicean church indicates that the church had forgotten the true God as the pantheon of idols surrounded them.⁵⁹⁵ As noted earlier in Bauckham's assessment, the numerology demonstrated in the sevenfold repetition of the faithful and true witness of Christ carries a connotation of fullness or completeness to His witness. The complete picture of Christ's witness spans from the prophecy concerning Him (Ps 89:37), the truthfulness of His earthly witness (Jn 5:31; 8:14; 19:35; 21:24), and the affirmation of His veracity in the Apocalypse. This view allows for cohesion between the Apocalypse and the rest of the canon. Thomas supports a comprehensive position,

“[A comprehensive definition of the title] is broad enough to provide for an allusion to the OT source of the total expression (Ps. 89:37 [38]; cf. Rev. 1:5) as well as agreeing with the focus of the book as a whole and the need expressed in the message to Laodicea. Christ is the epitome of veracity. . . The picture of Christ is not merely that of His truthfulness, but goes beyond to portray the exemplification of the perfect ideal of a witness in whom all the highest conditions of a witness are met, one whose testimony never falls short of the truth.”⁵⁹⁶

This canonical portrait of the pre-incarnate Christ of the OT, Christ incarnate of the Gospels, and the glorified Christ of Revelation depicts the steadfast validity of His testimony. The adjective “true” is used almost exclusively to describe Yahweh in the OT, and its use here attests to the deity of Christ.⁵⁹⁷ Another critical implication is that the testimony concerning the work and person of Christ is accurate; He is the faithful witness to the Father.

⁵⁹⁵ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 302.

⁵⁹⁶ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 302.

⁵⁹⁷ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 283.

The Ruler of the Kings of Earth (1:5)

Christ's position of authority over all earthly kings is evident from the third title in the threefold doxology of Rev 1:5. As evidenced in the previous sections, Scripture testifies to the authority and sovereignty of Christ over all the earth. Street maps out the path this title takes throughout Revelation, beginning with the first occurrence,

“Because of the chain of authority described in the Prologue, everything in Revelation has the authority of God. However, John's audience is well aware of another authority: the Roman Empire. For John, this authority is opposed to the authority of Christ, but Christ will triumph. John will go to great pains in Revelation to demonstrate that the imperial power of Rome is not a legitimate authority.”⁵⁹⁸

The Apocalypse continues the canonical attestation to Christ's divine power and His eschatological reign over the earth. The events depicted in Revelation portray the fulfillment of royal, Messianic prophecy that points to Christ as the Davidic king - the King of kings.

Verbal coherence concerning this title proves the identity of the kings of the earth rather than that of their true Ruler. The phrase “βασιλέων τῆς γῆς” appears in several other locations in Revelation (Rev 6:15; 16:14; 17:2; 18:3, 9; 19:19). However, in each of these instances, the enemies of Christ are described. In Rev 6:15, the kings of the earth, “οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς,” are described as hiding among other influential figures of the world in the face of the terror inaugurated by the sixth seal. Rev 16:14 refers to the kings of the “οἰκουμένης,” which is defined as the entirety of the inhabited world or the world as an administrative unit (elsewhere in Rev 12:9).⁵⁹⁹ These rulers are groomed for war by the spirits of demons as they are astonished by

⁵⁹⁸ Matthew Streett, *Here Comes the Judge: Violent Pacifism in the Book of Revelation*, Library of New Testament Studies (London, UK: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2012), 40.

⁵⁹⁹ BDAG, s.v., οἰκουμένη, 699.

their evil signs and actions. Three references describe the earth's kings as immoral (Rev 17:2; 18:3, 9). They have a passion for their sin and have willingly consummated their relationship with the whore of Babylon. Finally, the kings of the earth are described as those who oppose Christ in the final events of the Apocalypse (Rev 19:19). In each scenario, the kings of the earth are viewed on the side of the beast, the antagonist of Christ. Beale reveals those included in the description, "This includes not only the kingdoms and peoples represented by the kingdoms but also the satanic forces behind these kingdoms."⁶⁰⁰

In addition to shedding light on the identity of the kings of the earth throughout the Apocalypse, the Ruler Himself is titled the ruler of the kings of the earth elsewhere in the Apocalypse. The verbal cohesion is not verbatim, as the identifying nominative, "ἄρχων" appears only in Rev 1:5 in the Apocalypse. However, John's mirroring depiction of the glorified Christ near the conclusion of Revelation (Rev 19:16; see also Rev 17:14) contains a description of a similar title written upon the robe and thigh of Christ, "ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ," which translates "King of kings." Two Greek words form this title with a common lexical form, but the parsing of the nouns shapes the intent of the title. First is a nominative masculine singular noun indicating that there is only one king of this type. Second is a genitive masculine plural noun that denotes multiple kings of the second type. Wallace explains this as a genitive of subordination in which "the genitive indicates the class of which the head noun is the supreme member."⁶⁰¹ Wallace also contends that this title describes Christ as the king *par excellence*. Mounce

⁶⁰⁰ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 191.

⁶⁰¹ Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 103. Wallace defines a genitive of subordination as "a lexico-semantic category. That is, it is related only to certain kinds of head substantives-nouns (or participles) that lexically imply some kind of rule or authority."

concludes from the phrase's etymology, "This name emphasizes the universal sovereignty of the warrior Christ in his eschatological triumph over all the enemies of God."⁶⁰² Though the original title from the initial chapter does not appear again verbatim in the Apocalypse, a similar textual structure elsewhere reveals John's intent to weave together a unified description of the authority of Christ in contrast to the pale, withering power of the pompous kings of the earth.

Thematically, the evidence for cohesion is readily available. As with many other titles in this chapter, this title demonstrates inner textuality with the addresses to the seven churches. At the conclusion of the address to Thyatira, Christ assures that the one who overcomes and keeps His deeds will be given authority over the nations and rule with a rod of iron. This exact phrase and theme is also used in the closing vision of the glorified Christ (Rev 19:14-16). In the address to Thyatira, the verb "ποιμανεῖ" appears in the future tense, anticipating the coming rule of Christ.⁶⁰³ The allusion to the "ῥάβδῳ σιδηρᾷ" mirrors the LXX rendering of "a rod of iron," the instrument which represents the Messianic king's absolute control over His enemies (Ps 2:9).⁶⁰⁴ Christ then allows His followers to participate in the kingdom He has established, a kingdom of priests inaugurated by His blood. Though the title in this discussion is typically used to demonstrate Christ's power over His opposers, in this context, it is an exhortation to His followers. Osborne observes, "The basis of our participation in the messianic victory is our

⁶⁰² Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 356.

⁶⁰³ Mussies suggests that this future tense verb appears in the midst of present tense verbs due to the influence of the LXX of Ps 2:9, the origination of this allusion. Gerard Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek, as Used in the Apocalypse of St. John; a Study in Bilingualism*, vol. 27, *Novum Testamentum Supplements* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 335.

⁶⁰⁴ Tabb argues that Ps 2 is the favorite or most quoted Psalm in the Apocalypse. Tabb, *All Things New*, 59.

participation in His messianic power.”⁶⁰⁵ His conquering power over His enemies allows believers to participate in the eschatological, Davidic kingdom.

Concerning the kingship of Christ over His enemies, Fanning observes that the title is “referring to Jesus’ status as the ultimate Davidic king, whose reign over all the world’s kingdoms is soon to be accomplished in full (Rev 1:1). . . The world’s rulers will resist His reign, but His triumph is sure.”⁶⁰⁶ The resistance of the earthly kings is visible throughout Revelation and Christ’s overcoming their futile protest is the topic of much of the latter half of John’s Apocalypse. Rev 11:15 begins with the sounding of the seventh trumpet and the voices of heaven proclaiming that the once worldly kingdom has become the kingdom of God and of Christ, and His reign will be eternal. Swete concludes, “The words suggest the vision of a world-empire, once dominated by a[n] usurping power, which has now at length passed into the hands of its true Owner and Imperator.”⁶⁰⁷ The world empire’s resistance continues to be discussed in Rev 17 alongside the title “King of kings” or “ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΝ.” Here, the kings of the earth have gathered to wage war against the Lamb (17:14). However, the familiar promise of the previous examples of thematic cohesion is reiterated once again as the Lamb will overcome, “νικήσει,” the kings of the earth. Robertson illustrates the phrase, “This is the glorious outcome, victory by the Lamb over the coalition of kings as against the beast before.”⁶⁰⁸ It is because

⁶⁰⁵ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 167.

⁶⁰⁶ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 82.

⁶⁰⁷ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 139. Additionally, Swete points to the canonical consistency of the transfer of power described here, indicating multiple Scriptures as cross-references (Ps 2; Dan 7:13; Matt 4:8, 9; John 14:30; Acts 4:26; Eph 2:2; 6:12). He also points to the recurring theme in the Apocalypse (Rev 12:10; 19:6, 16).

⁶⁰⁸ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 17:14.

(“ὄτι”) He is the King of kings and Lord of lords that He triumphs over the ten kings of earth depicted in this scene.

In the closing chapter of Revelation, the vision of the glorified Christ upon the white horse reinforces John’s intentional depiction of the authority of Christ and the inauguration of His rule. Once again, the rod of iron (“ῥάβδος σιδηρεῖ”) signals His rightful reign over the rulers of the earth after striking down the nations with the sword of His mouth. Chapter 19, like chapter 1, is filled with canonical imagery depicting the victorious, glorified Christ as the divine warrior treads upon the nations in the fierce wrath of the Father. His victory is so complete that an angel invites the birds of the sky to assemble for a feast consisting of the flesh of earthly kings, commanders, and mighty men that serve the beast. Following this is the inauguration of the priestly kingdom, where believers serve as priests of God and Christ (Rev 20:6). They will reign forever and ever (Rev 22:5).

The inner textual evidence within the Apocalypse attests to the veracity and fulfillment of the OT and NT prophecies concerning the eschatological rule of the Messiah. John’s description of the Messianic kingdom neatly weaves together the canonical threads in an elaborate, robust Christology that details Christ’s authority and deity. Christ’s authority and deity are shown through the declaration that Christ is the Ruler of the kings of the earth, He is the King of kings. He will wear a golden crown, symbolic of His victory and His royalty (Rev 14:14). Tabb summarizes, “Jesus, the ‘King of kings,’ shares Yahweh’s title, wears His robes, and executes His righteous judgment.”⁶⁰⁹ That Christ shares a title of Yahweh and fulfills roles previously ascribed to Him illustrates His equality with the Father and attests to His deity. He holds the

⁶⁰⁹ Tabb, *All Things New*, 59.

power to dispatch the kingdoms of earth and inaugurate His Messianic kingdom, a kingdom of priests which includes all of His followers.

He Made Us a Kingdom of Priests (1:6)

The linguistic puzzle surrounding the inauguration of the priestly kingdom has been discussed in the previous two sections. Perhaps finds its most compelling evidence for a canonical depiction of Christ is found in the inner textual cohesion the priestly kingdom shares with other passages in Revelation. The idea that believers are to be involved in the kingdom of Christ is evident throughout the Apocalypse. Bauckham observes that each of the addresses to the seven churches encourages the readers to “conquer,” indicating the active role of the seven churches to persevere in addition to exhorting the all generations of believers to perseverance.⁶¹⁰ One of the roles featured throughout the Apocalypse includes priests to God in the kingdom, as suggested by the text “βασιλείαν, ἱερεῖς,” which translates “a kingdom, priests.” This initially seems to indicate separation. However, Robertson sheds light on the syntax here, “In apposition with βασιλείαν. . . each member of this true kingdom is a priest unto God, with direct access to him at all times.”⁶¹¹ Beale offers an explanation connecting this section with the previous one (“The Ruler of the Kings of Earth”), “[Believers] not only have been made part of his kingdom and his subjects, but they have also been constituted kings together with him and share his priestly office by virtue of their identification with his death and resurrection.”⁶¹² The role Christ allows believers to participate in as priests is explained further in the Apocalypse.

⁶¹⁰ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 213.

⁶¹¹ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 1:6.

⁶¹² Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 192.

Textual cohesion between the action of Christ's establishing the kingdom of priests in Rev 1:6 and the rest of the Apocalypse is evident in two particular instances. Rev 5:10 contains a line in a song immediately following a proclamation of the worthiness of the Lamb and the declaration and acknowledgment of His salvific, atoning work as He purchased men from every tribe, tongue, and nation with His blood. In Rev 5:10, the song culminates by detailing the results of His atoning work for the believer. Here, the Lamb has also made believers a kingdom ("βασιλείαν"). However, in contrast to the description in Rev 1:6, here the two words are joined with a "καί," resulting in the construction, "βασιλείαν καὶ ἱερεῖς," which translates "a kingdom and priests." The difference between the two does not alter the meaning of the text but instead expounds on the idea of the two roles that Christ allows believers to participate in as a result of His atoning work. Osborne clarifies, "Christ's sacrifice has made it possible for all God's people drawn from the nations of the earth to be royalty and priests in the new kingdom of God. The saints are corporately a 'kingdom' and individually 'priests.' As priests, they serve Him in worship and witness."⁶¹³ The cohesion continues in the closing chapters of the Apocalypse (Rev 20:5-6), as those having a part in the resurrection of Christ and who are released from the power of the second death are promised to be "ἱερεῖς τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ," translated "priests of God and of Christ." The inclusion of the name of Christ alongside God the Father is noteworthy. In contrast to Rev 1:6, here becomes apparent that Christ is also included as a recipient of the service of the priesthood of believers. This inclusion demonstrates that Christ not only inaugurated the priesthood through His blood, but He also sustains it as the recipient of praise "αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων," translated "forever and ever." In relation to the declaration of Rev 1:6, the

⁶¹³ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 261.

priests of God are promised that they “βασιλεύσουσιν μετ αὐτοῦ τὰ χίλια ἔτη” translated “will reign with Him a thousand years.” The kingdom reign of the priests indicates both roles that are made possible only by the blood of Christ. In each of the occurrences, a description of the atoning work of Christ and its results are in close proximity to the mention of the priestly kingdom (Rev 5:9; 20:5-6) which demonstrates the priests’ dependence on the work of Christ.

The canonical concept of the believer serving in the kingdom of God as priests continues throughout the Apocalypse. Beale views Revelation as a prescription for the believer to fulfill the mandates of the royal priesthood amid persecution.

“Precisely how the church is to exercise these functions is not yet explicit, but it will not be surprising to find that the answer lies in understanding how Christ himself functioned in these two offices. He revealed God’s truth by mediating as a priest through his sacrificial death and uncompromising “faithful witness” to the world (1:5a), and he reigned as king ironically by conquering death and sin through the defeat at the cross and subsequent resurrection (1:5). Believers spiritually fulfill the same offices in this age by following his model, especially by being faithful witnesses by mediating Christ’s priestly and royal authority to the world. . . The remainder of the book will explain exactly how they do this in the midst of suffering brought on by life in a pagan society.”⁶¹⁴

The believers on earth have a temporal responsibility, “As priests they serve him in worship and witness. This makes more explicit the mission theme mentioned in 1:6.” There is certainly a sense of present fulfillment as well as eschatological fulfillment. “In one sense, Christians already share Christ’s rule in heaven, but the full exercise of His rule awaits its establishment also on earth in the final days when all things are subjected to Him. (1 Cor 15:20-28; Heb 2:5-9).”⁶¹⁵

⁶¹⁴ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 192.

⁶¹⁵ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 503.

While these scholars correctly assert that Revelation offers a formula for readers to continue serving Christ during earthly persecution that is certain to come in the last days, there are also eschatological portraits demonstrating the permanence of this priestly kingdom. The final occurrence in the Apocalypse shows a futuristic aspect of the royal priesthood. Additionally, the theme of a future earthly reign is founded in the OT (Dan 7). The exact tasks of the priest during the thousand-year reign in contrast to those of the OT priesthood are not immediately apparent. As noted thus far, the kingdom of priests has been inaugurated by the blood of Christ and is sustained by the blood of Christ. There is no need for future blood sacrifices. The certainty for the priesthood during this time is “the privilege of unlimited access to and intimate fellowship with God. The relationship will continue after the final departure of Satan to the lake of fire (Rev 20:10).”⁶¹⁶ It is clear from the text that the believers enjoy the benefit of avoiding the second death in addition to an earthly reign with Christ for a thousand years. The discussion of the millennium has occupied extensive literature in eschatological textbooks and sections of theological texts. Swete offers an optimistic caution to those who might read beyond what is present in the text,

“That the age of the Martyrs, however long it might last, would be followed by a far longer period of Christian supremacy during which the faith for which the martyrs died would live and reign, is the essential teaching of the present vision. When, under what circumstances, or by what means this happy result should be attained, St John does not see, and has not attempted to explain. It might have been well if students of his book had always followed the example of this wise reserve.”⁶¹⁷

This is not to say that forays into these Apocalyptic fields are wayward. The caution emphasized here is to avoid missing out on the positive teaching of the theme of priesthood in

⁶¹⁶ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 422.

⁶¹⁷ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 263.

Revelation. The aforementioned privilege of unlimited, unimpeded access to Christ is a stimulating exhortation for believers to recall when facing persecution. Ultimately, the scene in Rev 5:9-10 depicts the heavenly worship of the Lamb. The eternal requirement and privilege of the priesthood is to worship the Lamb who was slain (Rev 13:8). The blood of the Lamb is the payment through which the priesthood is forged and may endure. The only proper response is to exalt the Lamb.

While the theme of the priesthood has implications for the past justification of believers, their present responsibility through sanctification, and their future glorification eschatologically, John delivers a unified message to his audience. The follower of Christ can persevere through persecution as the blood of Christ invokes hope, and the Apocalyptic vision demonstrates a future reign which He allows His kingdom of priests to be a part. Through verbal and thematic cohesion, John has articulated that Apocalypse demonstrates the eternal worship of God and Christ as the *telos* of the priesthood.

I Am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and Last, Beginning and End (Rev 1:8, 17)

The title “Alpha and Omega” is used as a description of God the Father and of Jesus Christ in the book of Revelation. The meaning is straightforward as Alpha represents the first letter of the Greek alphabet, “α” or “A.” Omega represents the twenty-fourth and final letter of the Greek alphabet, “ω” or “Ω.” The character “A” is used in conjunction with “Ω” to symbolize “an entity that is in control from the beginning to the end.”⁶¹⁸ Heil describes this title as a

⁶¹⁸ BDAG, s.v., Ω, 1101.

“rhetorical merism that expresses totality.”⁶¹⁹ This divine description appears three times in Revelation (Rev 1:8; 21:6; 22:13). Bauckham suggests that John gives preference to this title due to the Greek transliteration, “That John gives priority to the phrase ‘the Alpha and the Omega’ over both of its two equivalents may be because he connects the former with the divine name. The biblical name of God YHWH was sometimes vocalized ‘Yahoh’ and so transliterated into Greek (which has no consonant ‘h’) as IAΩ (Iota, Alpha, Omega).”⁶²⁰ However, there is a greater breadth of terms with identical implications of this title – “the beginning and end” (Rev 22:13) and one which has been examined in this dissertation, “the first and last” (Rev 1:17; 22:13).⁶²¹ Together these titles form a double *inclusio* that acts as a pair of bookends to the Apocalypse. Through this literary device, John emphasizes that attributes implied by this title – most notably eternity, sovereignty, and deity - are characteristic of both the Father and the Son.⁶²²

The verbal cohesion of this title in the double *inclusio* of Revelation is indisputable as the textual form is identical with Rev 22:13, combining all the titles into a single “I am” statement with Christ as the subject, “ἐγὼ τὸ Ἄλφα καὶ τὸ Ὠ, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος, ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος.” That the titles concerning the eternity of the Father and Son all begin as “I am”

⁶¹⁹ J. P. Heil, *Book of Revelation: Worship for Life in the Spirit of Prophecy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2014), 35. Also Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 199.

⁶²⁰ Additionally, Bauckham observes, “In the context of Jewish theological speculation about the divine name, the occurrence of the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet in this Greek form of the name could have suggested that the name itself contains the implication that God is the first and the last.” Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27-28.

⁶²¹ For supporting argumentation concerning the equivalence of the titles, see Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 55.

⁶²² Harwood compares “Alpha and Omega” among other actions or titles of both God and Jesus in Revelation. He concludes from the evidence that this is an example of the deity of Christ. See table, Adam Harwood, *Christian Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Systematic* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Academic, 2022), 406.

statements in the four *inclusio* occurrences is evidence of John's high Christology.⁶²³ The significance of the "I am" statements for the deity of Christ has already been discussed in previous sections. An additional indicator of these titles' meaning is that the three titles listed here are used over the four verses appearing seven times. Bauckham observes that other Christological titles in Revelation occur seven times, with the number seven indicating completeness. He explains, "the sevenfold occurrence of a significant divine title indicates the fullness of the divine being to which that title points. Theological meaning is thus written into the detail of John's meticulous literary composition."⁶²⁴ The verbal structure of the accompanying statements, such as "ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος" also retain their form in the other use of the title, the introduction to the church at Smyrna where Christ refers to Himself in the third person.

Each use of the title emphasizes the eternity, sovereignty, and deity of Christ, providing a rich thematic coherence in addition to verbal coherence. Beginning with the third person⁶²⁵ use of "ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος" in the introduction to the Church at Smyrna, the meaning of the title does not deviate from that of the rest of the Apocalypse indicating the sovereignty of Christ over time and His eternity. As with the other titles describing Christ before His message for the seven churches of Asia Minor, the description of Christ here is particularly significant for Smyrna. Osborne provides illumination on the context of the situation at Smyrna,

"The title is drawn from Isa. 44:6 and 48:12, noteworthy in light of the fact that the letter to Smyrna contains fewer OT allusions than any of the seven, perhaps due to the Jewish

⁶²³ See Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 87.

⁶²⁴ Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 27.

⁶²⁵ The grammatical structure indicates that this is a third-person designation of Christ, even though Christ is the speaker at this point in the text. This differentiates this occurrence from the self-designations.

antagonism in Smyrna. While Smyrna proudly called itself “first” among the cities of Asia, it is Jesus alone who can validly be called “first,” and that in a cosmic sense. This message was especially relevant to a church undergoing terrible opposition; they needed to hear that Jesus was still preeminent and watching over them.”⁶²⁶

Through this explanation, the reader can observe the biblical-theological thread that links this title to the divine attributes of Christ.

The first-person self-declarations are strong indicators of divine attributes. The only two times that the One who sits on the throne, God the Father, speaks in Revelation are in these divine declarations that He is the Alpha and the Omega (Rev 1:8; 21:6). The second occurrence includes a similar description, “the Beginning and the End.”⁶²⁷ The structure of these self-declarations of the Father and the Son form a chiasmic pattern that frames the Apocalypse, “making clear to the audience the inclusion of Christ in the godhead.”⁶²⁸ Similarly, the other four uses of related descriptions are attributed to Christ the Son, with two uses of “the first and last” (1:17; 22:13) and one use of each of the epithets, “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the beginning and the end.”⁶²⁹ The context of those occurring in the first chapter includes an introduction of God the Father and Jesus Christ. The occurrences later in the Apocalypse provide context for the nature of these descriptors in the eschatological understanding of their significance. As the events of Revelation between the *inclusio* describe the end times, it is significant that John places the titles at the beginning and the end of his Apocalypse in order to bolster the significance of the

⁶²⁶ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 128.

⁶²⁷ In the first description (1:8), God also identifies Himself as (1) the Lord God, (2) Who is and who was and who is to come, and (3) the Almighty. For a comparison of the occurrences, see Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 25.

⁶²⁸ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 78.

⁶²⁹ Christ also describes Himself as “the Beginning” (Rev 3:14).

divine title. Beale notes the context of the occurrences of “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the First and Last” in Rev 21:6,

“The point of the title is that the God who transcends time guides the entire course of history because he stands as sovereign over its beginning and end. Therefore, the two titles in 21:6 refer to God’s absolute sovereignty over all events in history. On this basis, the readers are assured that just as God brought the first creation into being, so he will certainly bring it to conclusion.”⁶³⁰

This set of occurrences, identical to the final descriptions (22:13), appear as John is witnessing a vision of the end of history. Thomas observes the literary context of the last set of occurrences demonstrating the deity of Christ and His qualification in disseminating the respective rewards to each person the reward for their deeds (22:12).⁶³¹ The final set (22:13) uniquely applies all three divine titles to Christ as the subject simultaneously. That Christ is the recipient of the titles is evident from the text. Bauckham bolsters this observation,

“The two titles, 'the Alpha and the Omega', 'the beginning and the end', used of God, designate God as eternal in relation to the world. He precedes and originates all things, as their Creator, and he will bring all things to their eschatological fulfilment. The titles cannot mean anything else when they are used of Christ in 22:13. Although it might initially seem that God and Christ are in some way distinguished by the two different self-declarations in 1:8 and 1:17, in 22:13 the placing of the title which is used only of Christ ('the first and the last') between those which have hitherto been used only of God seems deliberately to align all three as equivalent.”⁶³²

The Alpha and the Omega, the First and Last, and the Beginning and End are names or titles that bear testimony to the deity, eternity, and sovereignty of Christ. The interchangeable use of the titles for both the Father and the Son attests to the divinity of the Son. Christ is described as the beginning of time, as He is the agent of creation (Jn 1:3; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16;

⁶³⁰ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 1055.

⁶³¹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 505.

⁶³² Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation*, 55.

Heb 1:2), and the *παρουσία* will bring about the culmination of history. Tabb highlights the sovereignty of Christ in this description, “The God who controls the beginning and the end is by implication supreme over all things. He is before all rival sovereigns – including the dragon and the beast – and will outlast them all. He alone is the divine Creator who rules over His created realm and He will bring it to its appointed *telos*, when He announces ‘it is done’ and makes all things new (21:5-6).”⁶³³ The description of God as “the First and the Last” in the OT (Isa 44:6; 48:12) reaches its canonical culmination in its application to Christ in Revelation. When combined with “the Alpha and the Omega” and “the Beginning and the End,” this robust set of titles provide a profound bookend to the Apocalypse that testifies to the primary subject of the work and in doing so demonstrates a high, canonically conscious Christology.

One Like a Son of Man: A Canonical Description (1:13-16)

While the visual descriptions of the Son of Man are indeed founded in OT imagery, John’s illustration of the appearance and attire of the glorified Christ carry significant Apocalyptic implications. He is depicted as the promised Messiah, and the veracity of the testimony of Scripture is affirmed in these verses and their inner textuality in Revelation. This section will be approached differently than the others in this chapter due to the vast number of descriptive elements in the verses. Rather than focusing on the overall verbal cohesion prior to shifting to the thematic cohesion, this section will address the descriptors sequentially according to the order of occurrence in Rev 1:13-15.

⁶³³ Brian J. Tabb, *All Things New*, 35.

In the middle of the seven golden lampstands, John sees “ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου,” translated as “one like a son of man.” This “One like a Son of Man” is Christ, and in this context, He is fulfilling both priestly and kingly roles. Charles supports this conclusion based on the anarthrous construction of the phrase, “The fact that the articles are absent (i.e., τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) is so far from being a matter of difficulty that in this context they could not be present. The Being whom the Seer sees is not ‘like the Son of Man,’ but is ‘the Son of Man.’”⁶³⁴ Beale describes the role of the lampstands in representing Christ’s priestly duties to the churches of Revelation,

“Part of Christ’s priestly role is to tend the lampstands. The OT priest would trim the lamps, remove the wick and old oil, refill the lamps with fresh oil, and relight those that had gone out. Likewise, Christ tends the ecclesial lampstands by commending, correcting, exhorting, and warning (Rev 2–3) in order to secure the churches’ fitness for service as lightbearers in a dark world. . . Jesus’ constant presence with the churches means that he always knows their spiritual condition, which results either in blessing or judgment.”⁶³⁵

While Christ’s attire indicates this priestly role in the subsequent verses, it is also characterized by the title “son of man” and its connection to Daniel 7 and 10, detailed in chapter three of this dissertation. In its Apocalyptic context, the title “one like a son of man” occurs in one other location. In Rev 14:14, “one like a son of man,” or “ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου,” sits upon a cloud with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand. The cloud imagery and the designation “the Son of Man” provides strong evidence that Christ is the one pictured in this

⁶³⁴ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, 27. Also, Beale observes that this is a solecism as the accusative “υἱὸν” takes the place that is usually reserved for the dative in following “ὅμοιον.” Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 210.

⁶³⁵ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 208-209. Mounce adds, “The purpose of the church is to bear the light of the divine presence in a darkened world (Matt 5:14–16). Failing this, its reason for existence has disappeared (cf. Rev 2:5)” Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 57.

scene as He is the one portrayed in the initial chapter of the Apocalypse.⁶³⁶ In this instance, Christ exercises His authority and sovereignty by swinging His sickle over the world to reap the earth that is ripe for the harvest. Mounce attests that the event depicted here is the harvest of the condemned (Rev 19:11-21) and concludes that this passage indicates Christ exercising judgment upon the wicked.⁶³⁷ Thomas' definition of the title connects it to three themes, the final of which is congruent with the scene in Rev 14:14, "'Son of Man' is a title for Christ used often in the gospels in connection with Jesus' suffering, the glory of His Second Advent, and His right to judge the world (Matt 24:30; 26:64; John 5:27)"⁶³⁸ All three of these characteristics of Christ are integral to the Apocalyptic message and are essential to the description of the one like a Son of Man.

John's description of Christ's garments observes two particular items - a robe reaching to His feet and a golden sash girded across His chest. The adjective used to describe the robe is a *hapax legomenon* in the Greek NT, with Rev 1:13 containing the only occurrence. The word "ποδήρη" means "reaching to the feet."⁶³⁹ Mounce notes that in the seven occurrences of the word in the LXX, all but one instance refers to the attire of the high priest.⁶⁴⁰ Josephus also

⁶³⁶ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 185. Charles adds, "There can be no question as to the identity of the divine figure seated on the cloud. He is described as 'One like a Son of Man.' The phrase ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου is a solecism so far as regards form and is found only in our author here and in 1:13." Charles, *ICC: Revelation vol. 2*, 19.

⁶³⁷ Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 278. He cites OT evidence indicating that the harvest was often a symbol of divine judgment (Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11).

⁶³⁸ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 218.

⁶³⁹ BDAG, s.v., ποδήρης, 838.

⁶⁴⁰ Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 57.

describes the high priest's garments as lengthy and interwoven with gold, as in John's description.⁶⁴¹ Winkle concludes,

“There is clear evidence that John's description of the ‘ὅμοιον υἱὸν ἀνθρώπου’ specifically wearing a ‘ποδήρη’ in 1:13 indicates that John intended to portray Jesus wearing the high priest's woolen, hyacinth-dyed, foot-length robe, thus communicating his high priestly identity. The dress term ‘ποδήρη’ almost always has reference to the dress of the high priest not only in the LXX but also in numerous texts in extrabiblical Second Temple literature.”⁶⁴²

Given the uniqueness of the verbal structure of the description, there is no textual mirror of this garment in the Apocalypse. However, the length of the robe of Christ is suggested through the wine press imagery appearing later in the Apocalypse (Rev 14:18-20; 19:13). The wine press imagery finds its roots in the OT, Isa 63:1-6 indicates that God's apparel is stained red as He has trodden through the wine (a metaphor for the blood of the wicked) and trampled the wicked in His wrath and anger. He has stained His robe with the blood of the wicked. In Revelation, Christ's robe is described similarly. Witherington argues that the combination of warrior imagery presented in these passages and the other supporting imagery (such as the Word imagery in Rev 19:13) indicates that the blood is undoubtedly that of Christ's opponents rather than His own.⁶⁴³ The length of the “ποδήρη” combined with the wine press imagery would certainly indicate the blood that was sprinkled upon the garment (Rev 19:13), as a trodden wine press producing wine for a distance of two hundred miles (Rev 14:20) would have certainly soiled the robe. While the textual cohesion is difficult considering the *hapax legomena* “ποδήρη,” thematically, the robe of

⁶⁴¹ Josephus, *Ant.*, 3.7.4.

⁶⁴² Winkle, “Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man,” 304–305. Winkle compares seven different views on the “ποδήρη” and offers this conclusion as a result. See p. 281-304 in his work for further study.

⁶⁴³ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 243. For an opposing view, see Caird, *A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John the Divine*, 242-243.

the “One like a Son of Man” is consistently visible in John’s other depictions of Him and represents His status as high priest. The blood symbolizes the justice which He exercises in the eschatological judgment.⁶⁴⁴

Concerning the golden sash, translated from “ζώνην χρυσᾶν,” one instance of textual cohesion is present in the Apocalypse. Rev 15:6 describes the scene in heaven in which the seven angels are given the seven bowls of the wrath of God. Each of the seven angels is described as being girded around their chest with a “ζώνην χρυσᾶν.”⁶⁴⁵ According to Josephus, a girding around the chest was an indication of high dignity representative of the high priest.⁶⁴⁶ In contrast to laborers of the first century, who wore their belts or sashes at a waist level to provide practicality for their daily tasks, one of high rank would wear their belt or sash higher on their torso to indicate their position in society.⁶⁴⁷ Osborne explains the cohesion as an indication that the angels are emissaries of Christ, “A golden sash symbolized royalty or elevated status and with 1:13 may indicate that these angels are emissaries of Christ, pouring out his judicial penalty on the evildoers.”⁶⁴⁸ The mark of the golden sash was indicative of an individual on a punitive task or mission ready to carry out judgment.⁶⁴⁹ The cohesion between these two passages demonstrates a unified task of judgment. As the keys of death and Hades are delegated to angels

⁶⁴⁴ Martin Kiddle, *The Revelation of St. John* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1990), 384-385.

⁶⁴⁵ The occurrence in 15:6 is in the accusative feminine plural in contrast to the occurrence in 1:13 which appears in the accusative feminine singular. Due to the plurality of angels, the Greek here is correctly written “ζώνας χρυσᾶς.”

⁶⁴⁶ Josephus, *Ant.*, 3.7.2.

⁶⁴⁷ Winkle, “Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man,” 321. See also Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 89.

⁶⁴⁸ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 570.

⁶⁴⁹ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 242. See also Kiddle, *Revelation*, 387.

in roles of judgment (see “I Have the Keys of Death and Hades” in this chapter), the “ζώνας χρυσαῖς” are indicative of the commissioning and approval of Christ bestowed on the angels to carry out the judgment of God through the seven bowls of wrath they begin to pour out (Rev 15:7-16:1).

In the subsequent verse (Rev 1:14), John shifts his attention to the physical feature of the Son of Man. His description of the hair like white wool or snow appears only here in the Apocalypse. The imagery used to describe his hair is indicative of His purity, with “χιών” (snow) representing perfect, pure whiteness or purity, used elsewhere to express Christ’s radiance (Matt 28:3; Mk 9:3).⁶⁵⁰

The eyes of Christ, like a flame of fire, translated from “φλῶξ πυρός” are seen twice more in the Apocalypse (Rev 2:18; Rev 19:12). In Rev 19:12, the verbal cohesion reveals an identical phrase used to describe Christ, His eyes are like a flame of fire, “ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὡς φλῶξ πυρός.” This appears among other descriptions that mirror John’s initial Apocalyptic vision at Christ’s coming. The description appeals to the judgment and perception of Christ concerning the hearts of man. Nothing is hidden from Christ’s gaze, penetrating all hearts, and all will be judged. Charles illustrates this attribute of Christ as he prefers the translation of “φλῶξ πυρός” to be “burning lamp.”⁶⁵¹ In opting for this translation, His eyes are described as a lamp that illuminates all He sees. Thomas summarizes, “the flame-of-fire analogy indicates that nothing

⁶⁵⁰ BDAG, s.v., χιών, 1085.

⁶⁵¹ Charles, *ICC: Revelation* R. H. Charles, 28.

escapes the notice of this warrior. He is incapable of judgment by deception or fraud. His decisions accord perfectly with reality.”⁶⁵²

The description of Christ’s eyes in 2:18 has been deferred to this point because it joins with a characteristic from the following verse of the visual depiction of Christ. Christ’s feet are described in Rev 1:15 as like fine (or burnished) bronze having been refined in a furnace, “ὅμοιοι χαλκολιβάνῳ ὡς ἐν καμίνῳ πεπυρωμένης.” In the address to the church of Thyatira, Christ declares that He is the Son of God before describing His eyes and feet once more.⁶⁵³ In this occurrence, the furnace imagery is omitted, with the only fire in the description coming from the eyes of Christ. The brazen description of Christ’s feet especially appealed to those in Thyatira. Keener highlights the significant pagan cult of Apollo, the son of Zeus, and the deity associated with the sun and the bronze workers’ guild in Thyatira.⁶⁵⁴ In contrast to Apollo, the son of Zeus, Christ, the son of God, is depicted as the true judge and the true source for the Thyatirans. He alone is the source of their economic welfare and prosperity, though many of the metalworkers in Thyatira were falling into pagan worship. The omission of the furnace from this description demonstrates that He (through His eyes in this depiction) provides all that is needed to meet the Thyatiran needs. Mere simulations of worship to Christ were inadequate to the piercing, fiery eyes of Christ. Not only is He their provider, but He is their judge, as He is for all humanity. As the worship of Jezebel spread, nothing was hidden from the piercing gaze of Christ who will

⁶⁵² Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 385.

⁶⁵³ This is the lone occurrence of the title “Son of God” in Revelation, however the relationship is naturally suggested in Rev 1:6 among other passages. Friesen observes that this would be in direct conflict with the imperial cult as the title *divi filius* which translates “son of a god” was a title conferred upon Roman emperors for centuries. Friesen, *Imperial Cults*, 31-32, 75-76.

⁶⁵⁴ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 734.

soon judge the hearts of all people. Beale expounds on this theme as seen in the description of Christ's feet, "Christ's feet are described as 'like bronze as having been fired in a furnace,' which suggests his moral purity and will become the basis for his demand that those among whom he walks must reflect this purity in the midst of moral turpitude (cf. 3:18, where "fired" is used in this manner)."⁶⁵⁵ The fact that John can describe the feet of Christ indicates that there is not a plating or shoe over His feet, but instead, His feet are bare, and this is their natural appearance.⁶⁵⁶ Winkle likens the barefoot imagery of Christ to others in Scripture who walked upon holy or sacred ground and thus removed their sandals (Ex 3:5; Josh 5:15; Acts 7:33).⁶⁵⁷ He concludes that the bare, brazen feet of Christ couples with His robe and sash to complete the high priestly image of Christ in Rev 1:13-15.⁶⁵⁸ Additionally, the Thyatiran church would have recognized the barefoot description as an appeal to the divinity of Christ as many first century pagan deities were portrayed with bare feet.⁶⁵⁹ The visual descriptions of Christ, including His hair, eyes, and feet, indicate His perfect nature, sinlessness, purity, judgment, perception of man's hearts, holiness, and role as high priest consistently throughout Revelation.

The penultimate description of Christ in this section focuses on the sound of His voice. His voice is like the sound of many waters, "ἡ φωνὴ αὐτοῦ ὡς φωνὴ ὑδάτων πολλῶν." The

⁶⁵⁵ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 209-210.

⁶⁵⁶ Aune, *WBC: Revelation 1-5*, 95.

⁶⁵⁷ Winkle, "Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man," 327. Some scholars would argue that bare feet is indicative of a depreciated social status that causes one to be looked down upon. Jacob Chinitz, "The Role of the Shoe in the Bible," *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35 (2007): 45-46.

⁶⁵⁸ Winkle, "Clothes Make the (One Like a Son of) Man," 356-361.

⁶⁵⁹ Craig S. Keener, *Revelation*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 133.

designation appears twice more in the Apocalypse (Rev 14:2; 19:6). In both instances, the voice like the sound of many waters is also likened to the “sound of thunder,” translated from “φωνὴν βροντῆς.” In both instances, a great multitude is responsible for the sound. In Rev 14:2, it is more than the 144,000 that sing, but a large host.⁶⁶⁰ Regardless of the identity of the multitude, the rejoicing of the saints singing the new song (14:2) and those commemorating Christ’s victory over the beast (19:6) sing with a powerful voice. That John uses the same description to attest to the deafening roar of a great multitude as He does for the voice of Christ is indicative of the overwhelming power of Christ represented in His voice.

The final description of Christ depicts the radiance of His face. John writes that “His face was like the sun shining in all its strength,” translated from “ἡ ὄψις αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος φαίνει ἐν τῇ δυνάμει αὐτοῦ.” This is undoubtedly a description used in theophanies throughout the canon and indicates the presence of God.⁶⁶¹ This description appears one other time in the Apocalypse, but it describes an angel rather than Christ.⁶⁶² The construction depicting the angel is significantly less verbose than the description dedicated to Christ. Rev 10:1 Describes an angel descending from heaven, and his “face was like the sun,” translated from “τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ὡς ὁ ἥλιος.” Robertson argues that this is an identical, or at least similar, description to the Son

⁶⁶⁰ The identity of this host is debated. Beale argues that this is the full number of the redeemed of all the ages. Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 736. Thomas and Johnson opt to identify the crowd as an angelic chorus due to the similarities in the description of the voice to that of Christ. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 192.

⁶⁶¹ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 557.

⁶⁶² Peter R. Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels: Angelology and the Christology of the Apocalypse of John*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 95 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 171. Additionally, Osborne concludes, “In short, this angel is not Christ but is the special herald of Christ and shares in his glory and his mission.” Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 394. Thomas also concludes, “The best identification is to see this angel as similar to but distinct from the angel in 5:2” Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 60. These views contrast with Beale, “He is given attributes that are given only to God in the OT or to God or Christ in Revelation. Therefore, this heavenly being is either the divine Christ himself or the divine angel of Yahweh.” Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 522.

of Man in Rev 1:16.⁶⁶³ Beale claims that this “exactly reproduces the phrase describing Christ’s transfigured appearance in Matt 17:2.”⁶⁶⁴ However, Beale and Robertson seem to be mistaken in their conclusions, as both the occurrence in the initial Apocalyptic vision and the Transfiguration account in Matthew contains verbs (φαίνει and ἔλαμψεν respectively) while the description in 10:1 is without a verb. The proposed conclusion from this observation is that the angel described in 10:1 does not produce the same radiance as the sun but perhaps is a reflection of the glorious radiance of Christ. Like other Christological imagery used to describe angels, the imagery is intended to recall Christ but does not identify the angel as Him.⁶⁶⁵ This angel lacks the “δυνάμει” of the “ἥλιος φαίνει,” as he is merely a reflection of the glorified Christ. This inner textuality demonstrates the deity of Christ, for He is superior to the angels and is adorned with unique glory.

The multitude of descriptions of Christ in John’s inaugural Apocalyptic vision contain a rich inner textual relationship with the rest of the book. Through verbal and thematic cohesion, John’s canonical portrait of Christ is displayed as an essential theme for his Apocalypse. That Christ shares attributes previously ascribed elsewhere in the canon to Yahweh and is described in those exact terms throughout the Apocalypse demonstrates His deity. Christ is living and active among His church. He is the high priest for believers. He is worthy of praise and carries an elevated, glorified status. He is pure and sinless. He perceives the hearts of man, and He is just in His judgment of humankind. He is the provider and the source for believers. He is omnipotent.

⁶⁶³ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 10:1

⁶⁶⁴ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 524.

⁶⁶⁵ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 123.

John utilizes the canonical titles of Christ to remind his readers who is in control during the eschatological events depicted in the Apocalypse. This is a comfort to believers and a terror to the beast's followers.

In His Right Hand He Held Seven Stars (Rev 1:16)

Through another description unique to the Apocalypse, John continues his description of Christ, focusing on the objects He holds in His right hand. Throughout the canon, stars are used as a testimony to their Creator (Gen 1:16; Job 9:7; Ps 147:4; Am 5:8), as part of creation that worships Him (Job 38:7; Ps 148:3); and as a symbol of His authority (Ps 8:3; 136:9). Stars can also be used to indicate a vast multitude (Gen 22:17; Deut 1:10; 10:22; 28:62; 1 Chr 27:23; Neh 9:23; Job 22:12; Nah 3:16). Additionally, Paul uses stars in a metaphor for the comparison of the perishable natural body and imperishable glorified body (1 Cor 15:41). However, the use of stars, “ἀστέρας,” in the opening chapter of Revelation is explained in close proximity to its initial occurrence.

The textual structure of the description is simple, “ἔχων ἐν τῇ δεξιᾷ χειρὶ αὐτοῦ ἀστέρας ἑπτὰ,” translated “He is holding in His right hand seven stars.” This is followed by Christ explaining the mystery (“μυστήριον”) of the seven stars (“ἀστέρας ἑπτὰ”) seen in the right hand (“δεξιᾷ χειρὶ” or “δεξιᾶς”) of Christ (Rev 1:20). Christ’s explanation also has a basic textual structure, as He declares that the seven stars are “ἄγγελοι τῶν ἑπτὰ ἐκκλησιῶν,” translated “the angels of the seven churches.” As each address to the seven churches begins⁶⁶⁶ with a reference to a Christological title or trait from the first chapter of Revelation, it is no anomaly that the

⁶⁶⁶ For a list of the full eight-fold structure of each address to the seven churches, see Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 91.

connection this description has with the churches appears twice in the addresses to the seven churches (Ephesus in 2:1 and Sardis 3:1). However, it is noteworthy that the address to each church is given to the respective angel, represented by the star, of the church being discussed (Rev 2:1, 8, 12, 18; 3:1, 7, 14). As the textual structure is identical between these four occurrences, the evidence indicates that each refers to the same seven stars, providing textual and thematic cohesion between the descriptions.

Despite Christ's unveiling of the mystery surrounding the seven stars, a mystery remains surrounding the identity of the angels of the seven churches. While the initial prognosis indicates that the identity of the angels is not directly correlated to the description of Christ, a word on what the objects in Christ's hand are representing aids in understanding the metaphor. "ἄγγελοι" appears as a nominative masculine plural noun indicating that there are multiple angels rather than a singular angel for numerous churches. Koester observes, "This unique mode of addressing the angels seems to assume that each congregation has a heavenly representative."⁶⁶⁷ Aune offers three categories for identifying the angels: supernatural beings, human beings, or heavenly bodies.⁶⁶⁸ Some scholars support the idea of a human being, arguing that a human is a more natural recipient of a message to the church.⁶⁶⁹ It is significant to separate the identity of the angels from the churches themselves. The glorified Christ is clear that the stars represent the angels and the lampstands ("λυχνίαι") represent the churches themselves. However, the message is evidently connected, "even though each proclamation is addressed to the angel of that

⁶⁶⁷ Craig K. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2018), 61.

⁶⁶⁸ Aune, *WBC: Revelation 1-5*, 110. This source contains an entire excursus on the identity of the angels which is helpful for additional study.

⁶⁶⁹ For support of this position, see Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 117-119. and Patterson, *Revelation*, 71-72.

congregation, it is clearly addressed to each church, so that the angels must be understood as surrogates for the churches.”⁶⁷⁰ Beale demonstrates the likelihood of this interpretation through Apocalyptic cohesion, “angelic beings are corporately identified with Christians as their heavenly counterparts elsewhere in the book: the angel in 19:10 and 22:9 says, “I am a fellow servant of you and your brothers. . . Consequently, the “angels” in 1:20b refer to heavenly beings who also represent the church.”⁶⁷¹ The interpretation of the “ἄγγελοι” as angels, the messengers of God, is the most likely interpretation with Apocalyptic cohesion in mind.⁶⁷²

The implications of the title, regardless of interpretation concerning the “ἄγγελοι,” is that Christ has control over the churches and their messengers. Given the interpretation taken by this author, Scripture is clear concerning the superiority of Christ to angels and the authority He has over them (Heb 1:1-9). That Christ holds these messengers to the churches in His right hand is a noteworthy distinction. It is this same right hand that comforts the fear-stricken John before reminding John that He is in control over all the events that are about to take place. Perhaps placing this explanation prior to the messages to the seven churches is a comfort. This thesis argues that one reason for John’s intentionality in placing the description of Christ at the forefront of Revelation is to remind the reader “who” is in control in the last days. The same may be said of this particular description - Christ has authority over the angels and all the events that are to be described in the Apocalypse. It is in this truth that the believing reader may find comfort. Additionally, Christ stands in the middle of the lampstands, amongst the churches (Rev

⁶⁷⁰ Aune, *WBC: Revelation 1-5*, 112.

⁶⁷¹ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 217.

⁶⁷² See Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 107; Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 98-99; and Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 217-219. for additional support. All indicate that “angel” consistently means “supernatural being” in Revelation.

1:13). Christ's proximity to the churches is significant, as his location in the middle indicates that He stands ready to deliver a message.⁶⁷³ Fanning observes,

“Christ standing ‘in the middle of’ the lampstands, that is, the churches, is a significant image of his close concern and relationship with these congregations and of their role as witnesses to God’s truth (cf. Matt 5:14-16; Jn 5:33-35). He is not distant even in His glorified present condition; He knows their triumphs and their failures as they try to represent God in the world, because He is vitally connected to them, right in their midst (see also 2:1 ‘he walks among them’). The fact that He holds the seven stars, that is, ‘the angels of the churches’ in His right hand (v. 16, 20) denotes His authority and control over them.”⁶⁷⁴

The Christology demonstrated through this description is that Christ is authoritative, sovereign, and immanent. In these traits, the believer can take comfort regardless of the events depicted throughout the remainder of Revelation. John intentionally focuses on these attributes of Christ through his explanation of this title, and the reader of Revelation should also prioritize Christ as the focal point.

Out of His Mouth Came a Sharp Two-Edged Sword (Rev 1:16)

The sword protruding from the mouth of Christ in the initial Apocalyptic vision has strong canonical roots which come to a conclusion in Revelation. The sword, “*ῥομφαία*,” is symbolic of Christ’s swift and decisive judgment that also is described as true, consistent, and righteous. While the sword, as it pertains to judgment, has been symbolic or metaphorical in much of its canonical usage, this does not detract from its power as it protrudes from the mouth of Christ in Revelation. The sword of Christ’s mouth is depicted as a weapon of judgment in the

⁶⁷³ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 119.

⁶⁷⁴ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 107.

Apocalypse, used as an instrument of war against the unrepentant (Rev 2:16), the nations (Rev 19:15), and the worshippers of the beast and his prophet (Rev 19:21).

Textual coherence concerning the sword's description in Rev 1:16 is more readily apparent inner textually within the Apocalypse itself than in the intertextuality with the rest of the canon. The reason for this is articulated in the previous chapter concerning NT intertextuality. The three-word phrase used to describe the sword, “ρόμφαία δίστομος ὀξεῖα,” is composed of words that only appear once in the NT outside of Revelation. However, within Revelation, the terms are often used to describe the sword of Christ’s mouth. The first occurrence of any of the three Greek words after Rev 1:16, and the lone occurrence of the three words together after their initial appearance, is found in the title of Christ used in the introduction to the Church in Pergamum (Rev 2:12). In this instance, the construction morphs from the nominative case to the accusative case. It is written “τὴν ρομφαίαν τὴν δίστομον τὴν ὀξεῖαν.” This same sword is referenced at the end of the address to Pergamum (Rev 2:16), exhorting those in Pergamum to avoid the judgment of the sword (written as “sword of My mouth” or “ρόμφαία τοῦ στόματός μου”)⁶⁷⁵ by avoiding the teachings of the false teachers in Pergamum. Fanning illustrates the significance of the reference for Pergamum, “In Pergamum this reference may resonate in contrast to the power of Roman official to wield the *ius gladii*, the power of the sword, to execute those who threatened its authority (Rev 2:13).”⁶⁷⁶ The next

⁶⁷⁵ Though the textual coherence describing the sword is not identical to the previous constructions, the evidence that this is the same sword is readily apparent as the sword is described as coming out of the mouth of Christ in the occurrence in Rev 1:16.

⁶⁷⁶ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 135.

occurrence pertaining to this particular sword does not come until Rev 19:15.⁶⁷⁷ The scene has shifted from the opening chapter as Christ is depicted as proceeding forth from heaven mounted on a white horse among several descriptions that are reminiscent of the opening chapter of the Apocalypse.⁶⁷⁸ Among these descriptions and titles of Christ, “ρόμφαία” and “ὄξεια” appear simultaneously to once again describe the judgment proceeding from the “στόματος” (mouth) of Christ.⁶⁷⁹ The last occurrence of this “ρόμφαία” depicts the same sword coming from the mouth of Christ as the weapon which killed, “ἀπεκτάνθησαν,” the remainder of the armies following the beast and his false prophet. The word used for death here stems from “ἀποκτείνω,” which can mean “to deprive of life or kill” as well as figuratively to abolish or “to do away with or eliminate.”⁶⁸⁰ The use of the word here to describe the action of the sword is likely a condemnation to death, namely the second death described in the closing chapters of Revelation (Rev 20:6, 14; 21:8). Beale supports this conclusion, “The sword, then, represents a decree of death. Perhaps actual death by the sword at the end of history stands itself as a decree of condemnation for which the armies subsequently will receive eternal punishment.”⁶⁸¹ This

⁶⁷⁷ The word “ρόμφαία” appears once more in Rev 6:8. However, here it is not describing the sword of Christ’s mouth, but rather is a part of the formula for the ravaging to be done by Death and Hades. The words λιμῶ (famine), θανάτῳ (pestilence/plague/death), and θηρίων (beasts) appear as a fourfold prescription for the judgments that will be unleashed. This list is consistent with OT eschatology (Ezek 14:21) with the first three items (sword, famine, pestilence) appearing multiple times together (1 Chr 21:12; Jer 14:12; Ezek 5:12; 6:11). Thomas writes, “the sword is a symbol of death by violent means, perhaps warfare.” Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 439. This is doubtlessly a different “ρόμφαία” than the one seen in Rev 1:16.

⁶⁷⁸ Though Christ is not explicitly named, it is evident from the context that Christ is the rider on the white horse rather than the rider of the white horse in Rev 6.2. (See “One Like a Son of Man: A Canonical Description” earlier in this chapter for supporting argumentation).

⁶⁷⁹ Here, Christ is also named “the Word of God,” reminiscent of Jn 1:1. This name attests to the weight given to the Word of Christ. Mounce suggests, “it refers to God’s decisive oral judgment of the nations” whereas in Jn 1 it is “the revelation of God’s being or creative will.” Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 354.

⁶⁸⁰ BDAG, s.v., ἀποκτείνω, 114.

⁶⁸¹ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 970.

interpretation is consistent with the sword representing the verbal judgment of Christ upon the world. Through the textual occurrences describing the sword of Christ's mouth, there is definitive cohesion indicative of a singular theme of emphasis concerning its function.

Thematically, the sword is consistently used as a symbol of Christ's oral judgment throughout Revelation. Some scholars argue that the change in the description of the sword argues that the sword has multiple meanings.⁶⁸² The preference is to treat the actions of the sword, representative of a metaphor for the spoken Word of Christ, congruently throughout the Apocalypse with a difference only in the scope of the recipient. The scope of the address to Pergamum (Rev 2:16) is specific to those in the church at Pergamum. However, the inclusion of the description in the opening of the address (Rev 2:12) and its cohesion with the sword in the opening chapter (Rev 1:16) does not indicate a consistent limiting of the sword to only include the judgment of Pergamum. Revelation moves to a broader scope, including the judgment of the nations and the beast, the prophet of the beast, and their armies. It is evident that the sword symbolizes judgment. However, there is a lingering question concerning the purpose of the sword imagery, especially in light of the "killing" of the armies in Rev 19:21. Concerning this, the symbolic nature of the sword is a necessary affirmation. However, this does not mean that the death experienced by the armies of the earth that have pledged fealty to the beast and his prophet will be without significance. Swete errs in arguing that the Word is victorious in this instance not through judgment but by subduing the armies into an obedience of faith.⁶⁸³ This instance is not final judgment (depicted in Rev 20:7-21:8) but that the armies following the beast are sentenced

⁶⁸² Joshua Berman, "The 'Sword of Mouths' (Jud. III. 16; Ps. CXLIX 6; Prov. V 4): A Metaphor and Its Ancient Near Eastern Context," *Vetus Testamentum* 52, no. 3 (2002): 296.; Aune, *WBC: Revelation 1-5*, 98.

⁶⁸³ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 255.

to the second death is the most cohesive reading of Revelation. Fanning calls the event “the penultimate or perhaps antepenultimate stage of God’s redemption.”⁶⁸⁴ Beale argues, “to say that the “killing” of the Antichrist’s followers ‘by the sword proceeding from his [Christ’s] mouth’ (19:21) refers to their conversion is to reverse the meaning of 19:11–19, of the punitive OT allusions therein, and especially of the Ps. 2:9 and Isa. 11:4 pictures, both in their original contexts and, above all, in their prior use in Rev. 1:16 and 2:12, 16 (cf. also Isa. 49:2).”⁶⁸⁵

Christ’s judgment is true, swift, and impartial. Witherington observes, “the rhetoric is clearly judicial in character, and what we see is a symbolic depiction of the judicial process. Christ merely speaks the judgment against these opponents. The word “ὄξεῖα,” used to describe the sword proceeding from the mouth of Christ, comes from “ὄξύς” and testifies to the swiftness of the sword or judgment of Christ as it contains “being rapid in motion, quick, swift” in its semantic range.⁶⁸⁶ There is no real struggle here perhaps because the victory won through the death and resurrection of Jesus, and perhaps also because John is emphasizing the power and sovereignty of Christ.”⁶⁸⁷ These characteristics of Christ will all be evident on the day of the Lord described in Rev 19. Christ, the divine warrior, ends the battle before it begins; there is no mention of struggle or contest.⁶⁸⁸ Only Christ has the power to render judgment upon the nations;

⁶⁸⁴ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 492.

⁶⁸⁵ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 971.

⁶⁸⁶ BDAG, s.v., ὄξύς, 715.

⁶⁸⁷ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 245.

⁶⁸⁸ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 689.

therefore, there is no need for other swords from His army.⁶⁸⁹ Additionally, Christ's atoning death on the cross and resurrection has completed the victory over death, "because of John's Christological reinterpretation, no great eschatological military battle, such as that envisaged in the Qumran War Scroll, will actually be fought. The decisive battle has already been won at the Cross."⁶⁹⁰

The Apocalyptic cohesion is congruent with the canonical concept of Christ's eschatological, righteous judgment. The description of the sword in Revelation reveals multiple attributes of Christ. He is omnipotent, demonstrating swift, effortless, powerful judgment over the beast's armies as the Divine Warrior.⁶⁹¹ He is just; His judgment is true and righteous. He is authoritative, as it is His judgment, that the sword describes. While this description should bring the reader prostrate (Rev 1:17), the believer can be edified, for those whose names are found in the book of life (Rev 20:15) do not share the same fate as the beast and his prophet, being thrown into the lake of fire.

I am the Living One (Rev 1:18)

Christ's self-declaration that He is "the Living One" ("ὁ Ζῶν") has been discussed in each of the previous chapters as the title has deep canonical roots. The title's appeal is evident; Christ is alive; He has conquered death. In its canonical context, this declaration is a statement of

⁶⁸⁹ Streett's argument for pacifism on the believer's part in Revelation demonstrates that Christ's sword is the only moral sword mentioned in Revelation. "For John, there is no moral equivalence in regards to violence. His justification for violence is based on the legitimacy of one's authority. God's authority as ruler and judge is absolute, but God also delegates judging authority to others under certain conditions (i.e., Christ). . . To John, if God holds the sword, the violence is moral since he possesses legitimate authority, while if a pagan holds the sword, the violence is immoral." Streett, *Here Comes the Judge*, 221.

⁶⁹⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 576.

⁶⁹¹ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 233.

Christ's deity, as this is another example of a description previously reserved for God the Father being attributed to Christ. Including Christ's subsequent designation in Rev 1:18 concerning His eternity is significant. He is "ὁ ζῶν εἰμι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων" which translates "I am living into the ages of the ages." More functionally, the NASB95 translates the phrase "I am alive forevermore."

The verbal repetition of this title is evident throughout Revelation. There are five occurrences of this title throughout the Apocalypse outside the initial chapter. Bauckham argues that repetition is significant, "it designates God the eternal Creator who is sovereign over His creation."⁶⁹² The first two occurrences come in consecutive verses in the heavenly scene depicting the worship of God as He is seated on the throne. Both the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders are worshipping the One who "τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων," the one living into the ages of the ages. The designation is used verbatim in the subsequent verse in a similar context to the preceding verse. The speaker's perspective is the only variation between the initial declaration in Rev 1:18 and these two occurrences in the throne scene. Rev 1:18 is a first-person self-declaration by Christ, whereas the depiction in 4:9 and 4:10 is from John's third-person perspective.⁶⁹³ Additionally, the shift from "ζῶν" to "ζῶντι" is representative of a change from the nominative case to the dative case respectively. However, the meaning of the title does not change. In chapter 1, it is descriptive of Christ the Son, and in chapter 4, the same title describes the Father. The title is used interchangeably between the two.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹² Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, 31-32.

⁶⁹³ The omission of "εἰμι" in the latter set of occurrences makes this evident.

⁶⁹⁴ "Here it is evidently a title of the Father (ὁ καθήμενος ἐπὶ τοῦ θρόνου), though not to the exclusion of the Son, who is the Father's σύνθρονος." Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 72.

An additional example of textual cohesion occurs during the oath of the angel that there would be no further delay. There is convincing evidence that the angel speaking here is possibly Christ.⁶⁹⁵ However, it is essential to note that Christ is called an angel neither here nor in any other part of the Apocalypse.⁶⁹⁶ The ambiguous nature of the passage leads to the conclusion that the angel speaking is simply a “strong angel.” There is an expansive description of the Father and the Son during this oath. The angel has been permitted to deliver this message and makes the oath by the One who gave Him this authority. Among other descriptors of Christ and the Father, the angel swears by “τῷ ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων,” an exact replication of the twofold occurrence in Rev 4. Here the title is also used to describe God the Father. In its immediate context, the oath is sworn on the One who lives forevermore and the Creator. Thomas defends the angel’s use of the title, “The expression ‘ζῶντι εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων’ is common in Revelation to specify the eternal existence of God (cf. 1:18; 4:9, 10; 15:7). The OT frequently calls Him “the living God” as does the NT. His eternity of being strengthens and, as it were, makes more binding the climactic oath of this angel.”⁶⁹⁷ Regardless of the angel’s identity, the

⁶⁹⁵ This mirrors other passages in Scripture where the Angel of the Lord or God makes an oath using the Father as His basis. (Deut 32:40; Dan 12:7; Heb 6:13). Beale asserts, “The angel is the divine Angel of the Lord, as in the OT, who is to be identified with Christ himself. Enhancing this identification is the observation that Christ is compared to a lion in 5:5, as is this angel in 10:3.” Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 525. Thomas adds “A number of favorable elements support saying this angel is Christ. Both descend in a cloud (cf. 1:7). The description here is similar to that of Christ in 1:12–16, particularly the face and feet. The rainbow suggests a theophany (cf. 4:3; Ez 1:28). The comparison of the angel’s voice to a lion’s roar (10:3) looks back to the voice of God in the OT (e.g., Hos. 11:10; Amos 1:2; 3:4, 8). It was God who held the seven-sealed scroll until Christ took it in chapter 5. The angel held the little scroll until he gave it to John.” Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 60.

⁶⁹⁶ Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 171. See also Thomas, “Christ is never called an angel in Revelation, particularly ‘another of the same kind’ and not unique. When referring to the unique Son of God, the text is never ambiguous.” Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 60.

⁶⁹⁷ Thomas, *Revelation 8-22*, 67

significant conclusion from the angel's use of this title is that the title used of Christ in Rev 1:18 is repeated in 10:6 as a title of the Father.

The final example of verbal cohesion is found in Rev 15:7. The context of this occurrence is a description of a heavenly scene in which John describes seeing various eschatologically significant imagery. In the scene depicted, John testifies that one of the four living creatures gives seven bowls to the seven angels. These bowls contain the wrath of God, and here John once again adds the familiar refrain, “τοῦ ζῶντος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων.” Here the title serves as a doxology, much like in Rev 4:9 in which specific attributes of God are listed alongside “a formula describing the unending extent of time during which the one praised will possess these attributes.”⁶⁹⁸ In this instance, the title is used to augment the force of the wrath described. Mounce writes, “It is the wrath of a God whose existence has neither beginning nor end. He is a living God, fully able to execute punishment upon all his adversaries.”⁶⁹⁹ As in the previous examples that demonstrate textual cohesion with Rev 1:18, the subject described as “the Living One” or “τοῦ ζῶντος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων” is undeniably God the Father. This conclusion is a significant indicator of the deity of Christ in light of His self-declaration in the opening chapter of the Apocalypse. The thematic cohesion of the title sheds further light on the implications of the Son's use of the title.

While much of the verbal congruency focuses on the Father and His role as “the Living One,” John provides thematic consistency that demonstrates Christ as “the Living One.” Though John does not use this title of Christ verbatim outside of the initial occurrence, his descriptions of

⁶⁹⁸ Aune, *Revelation 6-16*, 879.; Aune, *Revelation 1-5*, 307.

⁶⁹⁹ Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 184.

Christ capture the essence of the attributes the title confers. The primary events or attributes that can be drawn from the title “τοῦ ζῶντος εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων” are Christ’s resurrection, His eternality, and His deity. That Christ’s resurrection is essential to this title is demonstrated in Rev 2:8. Here, another church address begins with a description of Christ that originated in the initial chapter of the Apocalypse as the message to Smyrna describes Him as “ὃς ἐγένετο νεκρὸς καὶ ἔζησεν,” which translates “who became dead and came to life.” Osborne argues that this title of Christ precisely mirrored the situation of Smyrna, as the city died in 600 B.C. and was reborn in a bolstered state in 290 B.C.⁷⁰⁰ Regardless of this interpretation, he continues to assert the critical realization for the original audience, “Jesus guarantees one’s future life. A suffering church like Smyrna needed the assurance that their ultimate future was already secure, even though their present lives were distressing.”⁷⁰¹ It is through His resurrection that Christ is called the Living One, who assures the security of the eschatological future of believers.

Christ’s deity, eternality, and authority over death are seen throughout the Apocalypse, namely in the occurrences detailed in the following section (“I Have the Keys of Death and Hades”). In Rev 20:4-6, Christ raises the dead martyrs who had not worshipped the beast. He is able to do so due to the dominion He has over death. He receives praise in this context because He is entirely God. He establishes a kingdom of priests because He is eternal. He is the Living One; He experienced an actual death and lives forevermore. Swete concludes, “The risen life of

⁷⁰⁰ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 128. Keener refutes this conclusion, arguing that the city’s revival was not commonly understood as a depiction of resurrection and the original audience would not have grasped the purported allusion. Keener, *New Testament*, 732. The interpretation of the original audience is indeterminable from the literary context. However, the illustration demonstrates a portrait of a truth. Christ died and has risen as the glorified Christ.

⁷⁰¹ Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 128.

Jesus Christ is henceforth conterminous with His Divine life.”⁷⁰² Christ’s conquering power of death, His deity, and His eternity are continuously demonstrated throughout the Apocalypse as these attributes have been in the canon. The self-proclamation of a divine title belonging elsewhere to the Father reflects the veracity of this conclusion. He is alive forevermore, to the ages of the ages. He conquered death to give life to believers and provides the blessing of reigning with Him.

I Have the Keys of Death and Hades (1:18)

As discussed in the OT intertextuality section concerning this self-proclamation from Christ, the keys (“κλεῖς”) depicted in this statement are symbolic of the authority of Christ over death and Hades. The term “κλεῖς” is frequently used metaphorically to indicate dominion over a given area or power.⁷⁰³ In Revelation, the same meaning is conveyed as Christ’s authority over death and Hades is consistently attested to through the book. Prior to proceeding, it is worth clarifying that the author takes these two nouns (death and Hades) as representations of the destination for the opponents of Christ. Fanning concludes, “John for his part seems to treat [death and Hades] as coextensive, as two different ways to refer to the same evil realm or power, to which the unredeemed are clearly subject.”⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 20.

⁷⁰³ “Keys grant the holder access to interiors and their contents, and in ancient times the wearing of large keys was a mark of status in the community (cf. Rev 3:7; 9:1, 20:1, 21:25).” Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 428. “As we have seen from Jewish and Greco-Roman literature, to have the keys to Death and Hades means to have power, authority, and dominion over all they claim.” Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 110.

⁷⁰⁴ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 105.

The textual evidence for the cohesion of the “key” motif is readily evident as “κλεῖς” appears four times in the Apocalypse, each describing the same authority over death and Hades. Interestingly, the first occurrence of “κλεῖς” comes in the address to the seven churches. As with many other sections in this chapter, Christ begins His addresses to the churches with a title, description, or attribute of Himself from Rev 1. Here (Rev 3:7), Christ addresses the Philadelphian church, declaring that He has the “κλεῖν Δαυίδ,” translated “the key of David.” Aune observes the grammatical structure of the phrase, “The indeclinable Δαυίδ is an objective genitive, and the phrase refers to the key to the Davidic or messianic kingdom, i.e., to the true Israel.”⁷⁰⁵ In this sense, the key Christ holds contrasts with the key described in Rev 1:18. Robertson expands, “Christ as the Messiah (Rev. 5:5; 22:16) has exclusive power in heaven, on earth, and in Hades (Matt. 16:19; 28:18; Rom. 14:9; Phil. 2:9f.; Rev. 1:18). Christ has [the] power to admit and exclude of His own will (Matt. 25:10f.; Eph. 1:22; Rev. 3:21; 19:11–16; 20:4; 22:16).”⁷⁰⁶ The passage continues with Christ’s declaration that He The glorified Christ holds the authority over life as well as death and Hades. He is the promised Messiah of the Davidic Covenant, and He alone has this authority.

The next occurrence of “κλεῖς” concerns the key of death and Hades, represented by the terms “underworld” or “abyss.” In Rev 9:1, the fifth angel sounds the trumpet, a star falls from heaven, and to him is given “ἡ κλεῖς τοῦ φρέατος τῆς ἀβύσσου,” translated, “the keys of the pit of the abyss.”⁷⁰⁷ In this instance, the key to the pit of the abyss is given, “ἐδόθη,” to the fallen

⁷⁰⁵ Aune, *WBC: Revelation 1-5*, 112.

⁷⁰⁶ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Rev 3:7

⁷⁰⁷ Wallace clarifies that this is not a possessive genitive, but rather an adjectival genitive. He inserts his translation, “the key which opens the shaft of the abyss.” Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 81.

star. This implies that the key has a previous owner who is the holder of the key in the opening chapter of the Apocalypse, Jesus Christ. The identity of the star has led to much speculation. The critical interpretative factor in the identity of the one the star represents is perhaps the verb, “πεπτωκότα” from “πίπτω.” The lexical form means “to fall,” with the perfect active participle form indicating that John did not witness the star falling, but the star had already fallen.⁷⁰⁸ This verb is congruent to “βάλλω” in its description of the action being taken on evil, fallen angels in Revelation.⁷⁰⁹ In this sense, the possible recipient of the key from its holder can only be Satan or one of his agents.⁷¹⁰ Perhaps the recipient is the angel of the abyss described later in the chapter (Rev 9:11), Abaddon (Hebrew), or Apollyon (Greek).⁷¹¹ Perhaps the recipient is Satan himself. Regardless of the holder’s identity, the significant factor remains that the recipient is only given the key by the one who truly owns it, Jesus Christ. Even in this woeful passage, the sovereignty and authority of Christ is evident. The one represented by the fallen star has no dominion over the abyss or death unless it is given to him by Christ. Beale concludes, “Christ is ultimately the one who bestows this key, since he has overcome Satan and now ‘possesses the keys of death and Hades’ (1:18). Neither Satan nor his evil servants can any longer unleash the forces of hell on earth unless they are given the power to do so by the resurrected Christ.”⁷¹²

⁷⁰⁸ BDAG, s.v., πίπτω, 815.

⁷⁰⁹ “‘Descending’ could be used of the judgment of evil heavenly beings (1 En. 86:3), but this does not mean that the falling star metaphor must be seen as interchangeably applicable to good angels. The picture of the falling star corresponds to the language of being “cast down,” which also refers only to the judgment of evil angels in Revelation and elsewhere (e.g., 1 En. 86:3; 88:3; Rev. 12:4, 9–10, 13).” Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 492.

⁷¹⁰ For a contrasting view, see Mounce who equates this angel with the angel of Rev 20:1. Mounce, *NICNT: Revelation*, 184. See also Osborne, *BECNT: Revelation*, 700.

⁷¹¹ Abaddon/Apollyon is described as authoritative over the pit and the armies within (Rev 9:1-11). See also 2 En. 42:1.

⁷¹² Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 492.

In the context of the last occurrence of “κλεῖς” in Rev 20:1, an angel descends out of heaven following the judgment of the beast, his prophet, and followers. The angel holds “τὴν κλεῖν τῆς ἀβύσσου,” translated “the keys of the abyss.” Beale correctly identifies this key with the other occurrences of “κλεῖς” in the Apocalypse,

“‘The key of the abyss’ is probably the same as ‘the key of death and of Hades,’ which Christ holds in ch. 1 because he has overcome death through his resurrection (1:18). There, the ‘keys’ figuratively connote Christ’s sovereignty over the realm of the dead. The same ‘keys’ are referred to in ch. 3 to show that Christ has authority not only to raise the dead at the end of the age but also to impart spiritual life in the present age.”⁷¹³

It is noteworthy that this angel descends (“καταβαίνοντα,” the present active participle form of καταβαίνω, which means to move downward, come down, or go down)⁷¹⁴ as opposed to the angel in 9:1 who is cast down. This implies that the angel depicted in this scene was sent from heaven rather than being thrown down. The angel described in 20:1 seizes (“ἐκράτησεν”) and binds (“ἔδησεν”) Satan for a thousand years as opposed to the angel of 9:1 who unleashes the abyss.⁷¹⁵ While the angel depicted in 20:1 seems to be the antithesis of the evil one in 9:1, it is critical to avoid equating the angel with Christ simply because the angel holds the keys.

Referring back to the initial chapter of the Apocalypse to present his case, Carrell asserts,

“It would appear correct, therefore, to conclude that the risen, angelomorphic Jesus is not actually an angel in the context of Apocalypse 1. This conclusion is consistent with the fact that nowhere in Apocalypse 1 (or in the rest of the Apocalypse) is Jesus ever designated or entitled ‘ἄγγελος’. . . We have no reason to believe that Jesus was perceived to be an angel. At most, He was an angelomorphic being according to His presentation in Apocalypse 1.13-16.”⁷¹⁶

⁷¹³ Beale, *NIGTC: Revelation*, 984.

⁷¹⁴ BDAG, s.v., καταβαίνω, 513.

⁷¹⁵ The thousand-year reign is a topic that has enjoyed arguably the most scholarship of any Apocalyptic issue. The interpretation of the millennium is outside of the scope of the current dissertation.

⁷¹⁶ Carrell, *Jesus and the Angels*, 171.

The optimal path forward is to understand that the angel depicted in Rev 20:1 is a heavenly messenger that has been granted the authority of the key from its holder, Jesus Christ. The key here is the same key that has been described throughout the Apocalypse as the one that Christ holds in the initial Apocalyptic vision.

This identification provides thematic unity that attests to the authority of Christ over death and Hades. Compounding these attributes with the previously mentioned role as judge and ruler presents a glorified, divine, and sovereign portrait of the eschatological Christ. Christ has released believers from their sin (Rev 1:5) just as he frees His followers from the despairing reality of hell described in the latter chapters of Revelation. Witherington summarizes the existence of the lake of fire into which death, Hades, and their followers are cast, “Hell is viewed as a place of torment, not of comfort for the lost. It is a place where one experiences the absence of the presence of God forever, with no remedy. No literal lake of fire could approximate that horror. It appears that John views hell as a place of eternal punishment, not annihilation.”⁷¹⁷ This eternal punishment is averted for believers as Christ has taken this punishment on through His work on the cross.⁷¹⁸ Christ has conquered death and Hades.⁷¹⁹ As the lone conqueror of death, He determines who enters death and Hades and who is released from their power. Christ’s triumph and authority over death give hope and optimism to the believer in the face of the fear of death. As John’s description of the new Jerusalem details in Rev 21:4, “He will wipe away every

⁷¹⁷ Witherington III, *NCBC: Revelation*, 245.

⁷¹⁸ “It was through Jesus’ suffering, death, and resurrection that he won the right to have the “keys of death and Hades.” Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 428.

⁷¹⁹ Ragnar Leivestad, *Christ, the Conqueror; Ideas of Conflict and Victory in the New Testament* (London, UK: S.P.C.K., 1954), 219-223. See also Bass, *The Battle for the Keys*, 111-112. Here Bass describes Christ’s victory as a literal overcoming or conquering but with several metaphorical symbols such as the keys, the gates of hell, and he also does not affirm that death and Hades are literal beings.

tear from their eyes, and there will no longer be any death.” Johnson states, “for the Christian, death can only be seen as the servant of Christ.”⁷²⁰ Christ has rendered death and Satan, the previous holder of death’s power, powerless (Heb 2:14).

Christ has been portrayed as the master over death, given all authority and sovereignty over death and Hades, throughout the canon. The depiction of this power is seen in the keys He holds in the initial chapter of the Apocalypse (Rev 1:18). Any other figure holding the keys in Revelation is granted the authority to use them by Christ, whether they are releasing evil (9:1) or binding it (20:1). He alone holds the key to the Messianic kingdom (Rev 3:7). He has freed those who are a part of His kingdom from the power of death and Hades through His blood (Rev 1:5).

Conclusion

An examination of Revelation 1’s inner textuality has established a strong case for Apocalyptic cohesion. The biblical-theological agreement within the capstone of Scripture completes the canonical scope of the Christology of the initial chapter of Revelation. Examining each inner textual occurrence on a case-by-case basis demonstrates that John intentionally utilizes each of these Christological titles and descriptions to present Christ as the culmination of Scripture in Revelation 1. That the same phrases describing Christ are used throughout the Apocalypse is a strong indicator of His role as the fulfillment of the canon. As John has been a faithful reader of the OT and NT, he demonstrates faithfulness to his own initial chapter through intentional verbal and thematic cohesion. John’s canonical awareness brings the canon to a close

⁷²⁰ Johnson, *Hebrews-Revelation*, 429.

in a way that portrays His perspective of Christ as the central figure of both His Apocalypse and the canon.

As this dissertation has examined the use of John's Christological descriptors from Revelation 1 and their relationship to the canon, the evidence has been presented to the jury, and a verdict must be reached. The study now shifts to a final presentation of the thesis, supporting conclusions from the dissertation that attest to the argument's validity, and an exhortation to the reader.

Chapter 6: Implications and Conclusions

Synopsis

As the study draws to a close, it is essential to examine the results and implications of the research through the lens of methodology, theology, and practical application. Revelation 1 and the intertextuality that John's Apocalyptic vision of Christ shares with the rest of the canon has been emphasized throughout the dissertation. The first chapter of this dissertation introduced and framed the conversation's initial issues, including the significance of Johannine authorship and the hermeneutical method used to analyze Revelation 1. Additionally, the first chapter presents the thesis of the dissertation. In Revelation 1, John intentionally utilizes literary devices to provide verbal and/or thematic cohesion in reference to Christological and Messianic passages from the entirety of Scripture to depict a canonical, cumulative Christological presentation that thoroughly examines the person and works of Christ. The second chapter expounded on an idea presented in the first chapter, that there has been a significant disregard for Revelation in the approximately nineteen hundred and thirty years since its authorship. This oversight, unintentional or deliberate, has created a substantial lacuna in the study of the theology of Revelation, one that the limited number of authors discussed in the second chapter have sought to bridge. The authors examined in the chapter span from the apostolic era to the present. Subsequent chapters also highlighted pertinent authors relevant to the discussion in the respective chapter.

The following three chapters provided a nuanced, comprehensive, case-by-case examination of intertextual (and inner textual in the fifth chapter) occurrences between the Christological descriptions and titles in Revelation 1 and the rest of the biblical canon. The third

chapter focused on the allusions, metaphors, and other rhetorical devices indicative of John's deliberate use of the OT to demonstrate a canonical portrait of Christ. John's use of the OT in the Apocalypse has enjoyed robust discussion in the past half century, with several key contributors to this discussion examined within the chapter. The presence of the OT in John's Apocalypse is readily evident. John uses all three divisions of the Hebrew Bible with particular attention given to Psalms, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel due to their abundance of apocalyptic elements.⁷²¹ In Revelation, John uses the OT more than any other NT author despite the notable absence of the formal citation formulae used by other NT authors.⁷²² John the apostle would have been well aware of the OT, and he demonstrates awareness of both Hebrew and LXX versions through his references. The fourth chapter discussed the plausibility of John's use of the NT in the days of its infancy. Critical issues for this chapter include the movement of the circular epistles in the early Church and, more significantly, the date of the Apocalypse. The argument concludes that based upon the supposition of John's authorship (and, thus, his apostolic authority) in the first-century church, the circulation of the canonical epistles, and the dating of the composition of the Apocalypse to the last days of Domitian (approx. 95 AD) yields substantial evidence to the plausibility of John's use of the NT. A case-by-case analysis of the text determined that this evidence is supported by John's apparent use of the NT in Revelation 1. The study concluded that John uses the NT similarly to his use of the OT. This is characterized by a lack of formal citation that results in a style that suggests he is "writing with rather than writing about" the

⁷²¹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, cxlviii.

⁷²² Thomas notes, "of the 404 verses in the Apocalypse, 278 allude to the OT Scriptures. No other NT writer uses the OT more than this." Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 40.

NT.⁷²³ The fifth chapter completes the canonical scope of the discussion by describing the function of Revelation 1 within the broader context of the Apocalypse. The chapter delves into the cohesion of the book of Revelation, with the first chapter as the focal point. The term “inner textuality” is used to evaluate the allusions, metaphors, or even direct citations of Revelation 1, as the term indicates that the use of any given Christological title or description is within the same work.

The concluding chapter seeks to demonstrate the significance of the exegetical task undertaken in this project. The previous chapters have laid the foundation, framed, and built the structure upon which the conclusions presented in this chapter may apply the finishing touches. In addition to articulating the findings, each of the three sections offers implications and opportunities for the posterity of expositors and theologians that follow.

Hermeneutical Implications and Conclusions

The hermeneutical methodology applied in this study is greatly indebted to the theological giants upon whose shoulders this author stands to present his dissertation. These authors have been discussed and cited throughout the dissertation, and the following conclusions have been made with contributions from scholars whose influence cannot be understated. Two major hermeneutical conclusions may be made from this study, both drawn from the language of the thesis statement.

The first conclusion is that John has demonstrated authorial intent to portray a canonically conscious depiction of Christ. The interpreter’s goal is to unearth the text’s authorial

⁷²³ For a discussion on John “writing with” Scripture, See Leithart, *Revelation 1-22*, 5. For a discussion on the similarity between John’s use of the OT and the NT, see Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 41.

intent through exegesis rather than miss the mark by asserting presuppositions through eisegesis or other inadequate hermeneutical methods. This topic has received thorough attention throughout the dissertation, as the thrust of the thesis has been to demonstrate John's intentional use of the canon to depict the Christ of Scripture. Beale offers five essential presuppositions for studying the use of the OT in the NT, and the fifth summarizes the view taken in this study,

“The latter parts of biblical history function as the broader context for interpreting earlier parts because they all have the same, ultimate divine author who inspires the various human authors. One deduction from this premise is that Christ is the goal toward which the OT is pointed and is the end-time center of redemptive history, which is the key to interpreting the earlier portions of the OT and its promises.”⁷²⁴

The idea of authorial intent is essential to the thesis as John's use of allusions and other rhetorical devices to write using the OT in his text has been determined to be deliberate. Without intentionality, John's use of the OT could be viewed as a fluke. If the reader takes this view, there are dangerous implications for the stability of the Johannine Christology on display in Revelation. It is significant to recall a definition from the opening chapter,

“Inspiration is the supernatural operation of the Holy Spirit, who through the different personalities and literary styles of the chosen human authors invested the very words of the original books of Holy Scripture, alone and in their entirety, as the very Word of God without error in all that they teach or imply (including history and science), and the Bible is thereby the infallible rule and final authority for faith and practice of all believers.”⁷²⁵

A noteworthy absence in the provided definition is the reader's role in inspiration or deriving meaning. The interpreter's goal should always be to uncover the authorial intent, for the Holy Spirit worked through the chosen human authors to provide an intentional message. If the interpreter imposes improper context or unbiblical presuppositions on the text, the reader risks

⁷²⁴ Beale, *Handbook on the NT Use of the OT*, 97.

⁷²⁵ Geisler, *Systematic Theology*, 178.

detrimental hermeneutical fallacies seeping into the interpretation. The safest road to a faithful interpretation of Scripture is to strive toward discovering the authorial intent through careful exegesis. Through such exposition, this dissertation has demonstrated that John intended to depict a canonical portrait of the promised, glorified Christ.

The second hermeneutical conclusion is that a canonically conscious reading of Scripture is necessary for a robust biblical theology that heeds the authorial intent of the first conclusion. Cautioning against post-Enlightenment thinking, which would relegate the divine authorial intent or even divine inspiration, Barrett issues a warning, “A failure to read the Scripture as a single narrative with canonical unity, it turns out, was a hermeneutic that spelled the death of divine inspiration and Christian interpretation.”⁷²⁶

Modern scholars such as Schnelle refute the idea of biblical theology as he asserts, “a ‘biblical theology’ is not possible, because (1) the Old Testament is silent about Jesus Christ.”⁷²⁷ In contrast to Schnelle’s conclusion stands the third chapter of this dissertation. The OT boldly proclaims a canonical depiction of Christ consistent with the NT description of the incarnate Christ and the glorified Christ seen in Revelation 1. This argumentation extends throughout this dissertation's fourth and fifth chapters concerning the NT and Revelation itself, respectively. Hays also directly offers a rebuttal to Schnelle, noting that his observations contradict the NT authors' testimony, “[the NT authors] emphatically do not think the OT is silent about Jesus

⁷²⁶ Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 16.

⁷²⁷ Schnelle provides two additional supporting points to his argument, which are supplemental yet tangent to the discussion of the present dissertation, “(2) the resurrection from the dead of one who was crucified cannot be integrated into any ancient system of meaning-formation (cf. 1 Cor 1:23), and (3) while the Old Testament can well be thought of as the most important cultural and theological context for understanding the New Testament, it is by no means the only one.” Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M. Eugene Boring (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 52.

Christ.”⁷²⁸ John’s Gospel depicts Christ Himself declaring that the Scriptures are “μαρτυροῦσαι,” translated “bearing witness” concerning Him. In his commentary on this verse, Robertson writes, “The true value of the Scriptures is in their witness to Christ (of me, *περι ἐμου*). Luke (24:27, 45) gives this same claim of Jesus, and yet some critics fail to find the Messiah in the Old Testament. But Jesus did.”⁷²⁹ Stuhlmacher argues that there is a metaphorical clamp, the “Christological clamp,” that prevents a biblical scholar from unhinging the OT from the NT without detaching Christ from the Scripture which speaks of Him.⁷³⁰ The Christology of Revelation 1 possesses a robust flavor due to the canonically conscious depiction of Christ recorded by John. A necessary tenet of this dissertation is to affirm a Christ-centered biblical theology.

Following a Christ-centered biblical theology leads the student towards an understanding of Scripture that is faithful to its authorial intent. Scripture’s compositional structure demonstrates a Messianic “thrust,” which Sailhamer concludes is the purpose for which the OT was written.⁷³¹ In other words, the intent of the OT is Messianic. This reading of Scripture highlights that the OT and NT are not merely historical documents with no impact on modern readers; it is the inspired Word of God and carries the same message today as it did at the time of its authorship.⁷³² Additionally, the message of Scripture is consistent across all the canon.

⁷²⁸ Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 3.

⁷²⁹ Robertson, *Word Pictures*, Jn 5:39.

⁷³⁰ Peter Stuhlmacher, *How to Do Biblical Theology*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 38 (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1995), 8-11.

⁷³¹ Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” 22-23. For an articulation of the compositional/canonical approach held by those in Sailhamer’s camp, see also Rydelnik and Blum, *MHMP*, 88-89.

⁷³² Klink III and Lockett, *Biblical Theology*, 130.

Goldsworthy highlights the significance of the centrality of Christ and canonical unity when he says, “if we allow that such Christ-centeredness is indeed a key attribute of the entire biblical canon, the unity of the canon must also be asserted. . . We must allow the person of Jesus to establish the basis of unity in Scripture.”⁷³³ After condemning the absence of Christ in another scholar’s proposed biblical theology, Barrett highlights the significance of Christ as the central figure and message of the canon, “As much as the books of the Bible may have many different human authors, the gospel of Jesus Christ leads one to conclude that in the final analysis, the Bible is one book with one divine author.”⁷³⁴ John views himself in the line of prophetic authors who have testified concerning Christ (Rev 1:3).

Ultimately, a solid hermeneutical method respects both conclusions offered here. The aim has been a faithful exposition of Revelation 1. Liefeld asserts that accurate exposition faithfully reproduces the text (hermeneutical integrity), observes the goal or purpose of the given passage (authorial intent), and has a cohesive sense of the whole (biblical theology).⁷³⁵ The faithful reproduction of the text and aim to determine the purpose of the passage is the foundation for the first conclusion, with a consciousness of the cohesiveness of the canon providing the basis for the second. Both conclusions have been demonstrated through a thorough exegesis of John’s Apocalyptic vision of the glorified Christ. A case-by-case analysis of the titles and roles of Christ described in the opening chapter has provided a meticulous reproduction of the text. Through

⁷³³ Graeme Goldsworthy, *Christ-Centered Biblical Theology: Hermeneutical Foundations and Principles* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 45.

⁷³⁴ Barrett, *Canon, Covenant and Christology*, 18.

⁷³⁵ Liefeld also calls for another component that has been integral to this dissertation, application. This is the aim of the present chapter. Walter L. Liefeld, *New Testament Exposition: From Text to Sermon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 6-7. See also Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral*, 30.

this exegesis, it has been determined that John's aim and purpose is to depict a canonically conscious, robust picture of Christ as the protagonist of Revelation.

Given the conclusions presented, it is crucial to survey these suppositions' implications on the horizon of hermeneutical and intertextual studies. The field of intertextual studies has been explored in this dissertation, and the field is brimming with opportunities for future studies. The potential danger of stepping outside the confines of the canon and cross-examining Scripture with secular sources is documented by Sandmel, who does not discourage intertextual forays but rather against what he calls "extravagances."⁷³⁶ The "extravagances" Sandmel warns against are perhaps best classified in the category of "echoes" that have been refuted throughout the methodology of this work. An allusion must be deemed intentional when examining Scripture through the lens of authorial intent. This is especially true in the case of an OT scholar and NT author such as John the apostle. A significant limitation placed on this study by the nature of its endeavor to detail a strictly canonical portrait of Christ has been to intentionally exclude Apocryphal, Pseudepigraphal, and other extrabiblical sources from the scope of the discussion.⁷³⁷ Opportunities for future studies could include John's use of extrabiblical sources, as there are certainly some similarities between Revelation and noncanonical sources, especially other Apocalyptic literature. Perhaps a worthy endeavor would be a comparison demonstrating the uniqueness of John's Apocalypse, as scholars such as Charles have already noted the cohesion within the book as a differentiator and a notable departure from other Apocalyptic literature of its

⁷³⁶ Samuel Sandmel, "Paralleomania," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 81, no. 1 (1962): 1–13.

⁷³⁷ For a list of apocalyptic writings commonly grouped with Revelation, see Koester, *Revelation*, 28.

era.⁷³⁸ However, there is plenty of ground to be covered in the study of intertextuality between the books of Scripture. Even in the areas that have enjoyed much study, there are instances of cohesion that remain widely unanalyzed. Describing their shared discovery, two scholars describe the field of intertextuality,

“Intertextuality is a field white with harvest. . . The field is so large that we are not likely to run out of material. As soon as many people begin working in intertextuality, however, they are certain to duplicate insights, because the facts are very obvious. There should be no effort made to keep people out of the project so that a few can have the glory of the insights. As many as want should begin.”⁷³⁹

This author desires to encourage readers to pursue similar studies in the field of intertextual studies and biblical theology, observing how the Holy Spirit inspired the human authors to weave together the divine revelation of God. The scholar should be careful to heed the methodology utilized in this dissertation, focusing on the authorial intent and overall canonical shape of the text. It follows that the biblical authors, namely John in this study, were aware of the Messianic purpose of Scripture and authored their respective works with Christ at the forefront.

Theological Implications and Conclusions

The established premise that the canon testifies to the person and work of Christ leaves the reader with a tall theological task. The exegesis throughout this dissertation has been hermeneutically focused while providing theological and Christological insights gleaned from the text. As a solid hermeneutical approach brings the reader into an encounter with the text’s theology, any separation of the two categories is futile. Admittedly, the depth of the Christology

⁷³⁸ Charles, *ICC: Revelation*, lxxxvii.

⁷³⁹ Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders, *The Function of Scripture in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition* (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing Place, 1998), 105.

in Revelation prevents an exhaustive study of its implications alongside this hermeneutically driven research. In Revelation 1, John describes Christ with titles and characteristics that appeal to His deity, His role in salvation, His eternity, His sovereignty, and several other attributes that comprise an extensive list. Thomas summarizes the rich content of Revelation 1,

“This first vision of John, then, included an indication of Jesus’ Messianic office with its associated functions: judgment of the unrighteous and comfort of the suffering righteous, His high rank that fits Him as an agent of imposing divine wrath, His activity in imposing that wrath, His preexistence along with God the Father, His penetrating intelligence that enables Him to perform righteous judgment, His movement among the churches to enforce standards of moral purity, His identification with the Father in the power of His utterance, His authority over the seven messengers and the churches they represent, His power to overcome His enemies and pronounce judgment upon them, and His return to earth to implement judgment upon mankind.”⁷⁴⁰

While the task of studying this complex Christology is daunting, there is no more worthwhile pursuit than studying the central figure of God’s divine revelation. Understanding the Christology of the Apocalypse is essential to understanding the message of Revelation itself; as Swete articulates, “The doctrine of God maintained in the Apocalypse cannot be rightly understood apart from its Christology. Our author’s revelation of the Father is supplemented by his revelation of the Son.”⁷⁴¹

The study of the initial Apocalyptic vision reveals a robust Christology detailing the work and person of Christ. The work of Christ is seen clearly in Revelation 1. The Messianic office, Christ’s unique office as prophet, high priest, and king, is articulated in the initial Apocalyptic vision (Rev 1:4-6). Grudem, despite omitting Revelation 1 from his cited Scripture, summarizes the content of the doxology John provides in the first verses,

⁷⁴⁰ Thomas, *Revelation 1-7*, 105.

⁷⁴¹ Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, clv.

“When Christ came, we saw for the first time the fulfillment of these three roles, since he was the perfect prophet, who most fully declared God’s words to us, the perfect high priest, who offered the supreme sacrifice for sins and who brought his people near to God, and the true and rightful king of the universe, who will reign forever with a scepter of righteousness over the new heavens and new earth.”⁷⁴²

These roles highlight His atoning work – His crucifixion and resurrection – through which believers can participate and reign in His kingdom and serve as priests to the Father (Rev 1:6). This is made possible by the authority that He has as the living One who has all power over death and Hades (Rev 1:18).

The eternity of Christ is essential to John’s description of Christ in the initial Apocalyptic vision. Throughout the initial chapter, John provides a depiction of Christ that diffuses Christological heresies such as Arianism which would assume Christ is a creature or created being.⁷⁴³ John describes Christ as the first and last (Rev 1:17) and attributes the title of “Alpha and Omega” to Christ later in Revelation (Rev 22:13). This is significant as the eternal generation of Christ is a necessity for the unity of the Trinity. He is the agent of creation and wields the sword of judgment in the last days (Rev 1:16). He is the first and last; He is eternal.

The deity of Christ is central to the depiction of the glorified Christ. John’s intentional grammatical error to preserve the reference to the divine title in Rev 1:4 demonstrates His intent to bring the reader’s focus to the deity of the Lord. In his description of Christ, John equates Christ to the Ancient of Days, attesting to the divinity of Christ. Other intertextual references, such as “the first and last,” demonstrate the eternity of Christ. Christ is not a created being; He was never less than divine. He is the one who is, who was, and who is coming. The presence of

⁷⁴² Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 631.

⁷⁴³ For a list of evidence used in Arian thought, see Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 636.

descriptions previously reserved for God being attributed to Christ is a testimony to the deity of Christ. The one that John knew as the incarnate Christ is portrayed in a way so glorious that the apostle falls on his face in the presence of the one who was his friend during His earthly ministry (Rev 1:17). The evidence for the deity of Christ refutes heresies that would relegate Christ to a subordinate of the Father, reject either His divinity or humanity or assume that Christ only ascended to deity at a certain point in history.

While this section provides only a survey of the exegetical conclusions presented in the dissertation, it is vital to highlight the thorough nature of the Christology of the initial Apocalyptic vision. While much can be read describing the hypostatic union of Jesus Christ, the atonement, or other Christological dogma, only a minute sources cite the text of Revelation 1 as a source of Christology. An exhaustive analysis of the implications of each Christological truth escapes even the detailed exegesis of the preceding chapters of this dissertation, which leads to the exegetical task that lies ahead for future scholars.

As in the previous section on hermeneutical implications, it is significant to highlight future opportunities for the generations of scholars that follow. Two considerable opportunities arise in the wake of this dissertation. The first is the clearing observed in the second chapter of this study. Revelation has largely been avoided for a significant portion of Christian history. The rich Christology of the book of Revelation has been neglected in favor of its eschatology or due to fear of the vagueness of the symbolism in the text itself. Pursuits of the theology within Revelation are undoubtedly worthwhile. Bauckham observes, “the Apocalypse of John is a work

of immense learning, astonishingly meticulous literary artistry, remarkable creative imagination, radical political critique, and profound theology.”⁷⁴⁴

The second is the pursuit of Christology in the canon. There exists a breadth of topics with respective stances to foray into within the realm of Christology. While Johannine Christology in Revelation and the Messianic Christology of the OT have been the focal point in this study, much existing scholarship is already present concerning Pauline Christology, the Christology of the Gospels, or the history of Christology, among others. The divine attributes of Christ guarantee that there will always be room for contributions in the field of Christology. As Grudem writes, “The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become man and join himself to a human nature forever, so that infinite God became one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.”⁷⁴⁵

The author desires that the focus of any biblical endeavor be grounded in the person and work of Christ. He is the central figure of the canon, and all biblical studies – hermeneutical, canonical, or theological – should lead the scholar and the reader in pursuit of a deeper understanding of Christ.

Practical Application

Ultimately, this research endeavor aims not merely to inform but also to transform the lives of the readers who have dedicated time to digesting this study. The academic aim of this

⁷⁴⁴ Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy*, ix.

⁷⁴⁵ Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, 563.

dissertation has been twofold – to argue for a canonically conscious approach to Revelation 1 by examining John’s own authorial intent to draw from all parts of the canon and to analyze John’s description of Christ in his inaugural Apocalyptic vision, which has been described as a Christological culmination throughout this work. The objective for personal application is to utilize biblical theology and the description of Christ in Revelation 1 to inform the reader as they delve into the text of Revelation or other potential studies listed above.

This dissertation has sought to heighten the reader’s overall Christological awareness with specific attention given to Revelation. As lamented in the opening chapter, a multitude of readers with various views on Scripture have flocked to Revelation seeking answers to questions concerning the final days depicted in Revelation, inquiries such as “When? How? Where? Why?” The answers to many of these questions remain ambiguous, and the uncertainty has caused many scholars, such as Calvin, to avoid writing or teaching on the Apocalypse and for Luther to have an aversion to its contents. However, Revelation clearly teaches a canonical depiction of the glorified Christ. Contrary to the opinion that the book does not distinctly teach Christ or His works, this dissertation has determined that the initial chapter of Revelation demonstrates Christ and His works in a robust, canonically conscious manner. Any reader who has reservations about delving into the theologically rich mine of Revelation should not feel isolated, as the gap in scholarship in the study of Revelation indicates that many of the theological giants of the past two millennia have held similar skepticism or hesitancy. However, the reader should take heart and be encouraged to continue to study the “who” of Revelation, Jesus Christ.

The placement of this initial vision of Christ at the forefront of the Apocalypse is intentional. It can be read as a comfort for those who may fear the mystery of the remaining text

of Revelation. It should not be missed that the author of Revelation, John the apostle, who knew the incarnate Christ and even laid his head on the chest of Christ (Jn 13:23), was also full of fear. The text details John falling prostrate as though dead, a theme common in Scripture (Rev 1:17).⁷⁴⁶ The terror John feels is immediately recognized by the glorified Christ as He places His mighty right hand, the same hand described just a verse earlier as holding the seven stars, on the fearful apostle and offers the comforting imperative, “Μὴ φοβοῦ” or “do not be afraid.”⁷⁴⁷ The reasoning Christ supplies for the dismissal of John’s fear comes in the form of some of the Christological descriptions and titles that have been studied throughout this dissertation. He immediately refers to His deity and eternality (“I am the First and Last”) as well as His authority (“I Have the Keys of Death and Hades”). Through these descriptions, the role of Christ at the climax of history is evident. He has formed and moved God’s creation toward its divinely intended purpose.⁷⁴⁸ The fact that Christ’s immediate appeal to His eternal authority is used to comfort the fear-stricken apostle encapsulates the intent of the opening chapter of the Apocalypse. Before the divulgence of the events of the Apocalypse, new information for John and his readers, Christ comforts both John and his audience with the assurance of his presence. His presence is consistent with all Scripture in Revelation 1, He is, He was, and He is to come. A follower of Christ, like John, can take comfort in knowing who Christ is and what He has done and will do.

⁷⁴⁶ “Vision accounts in the Bible often record such reactions of falling prostrate, at times in sheer terror and at times in reverent awe, before a heavenly being (Gen 17:3; Josh 5:14; Ezek 1:28; Dan 8:17; Luke 24:5; Acts 9:4). Sometimes the accounts mention a sudden loss of strength, even to the point of being ‘like a dead person’ (Matt 28:4; Dan 10:8-9).” Fanning, *Revelation*, 103.

⁷⁴⁷ A similar construction is used in other places in the NT and LXX (Dan 10:12; Matt 17:7; Luke 1:13, 30).

⁷⁴⁸ Fanning, *ZECNT: Revelation*, 103.

In conclusion, the practical application gleaned from this study is to regard Revelation 1 as a biblically conscious, Christological description intended to comfort the believer with the knowledge of Christ's authority and sovereignty over the unknown. Prior to revealing anything new or unfamiliar to his audience, John describes Christ with canonical consistency that demonstrates that the Christ who conquered death is the Christ who appears throughout the Apocalypse and at the culmination of history. The modern reader can read Revelation 1 and feel the same comfort that the apostle John felt through the right hand of Christ, reassuring the reader that the most indisputable fact concerning the events of Revelation is that Christ is present. He is precisely who Scripture has taught that He is. There is no need to fear the unknown when the presence of Christ is assured. Just as John encourages the seven churches as they lived in a world of imperial cult worship, persecution, and uncertainty, He edifies believers of future generations with a canonical portrait of the glorified Christ, in whom the hope of the Christ follower is found.

Summary

The concluding chapter of this dissertation has provided a culmination of the main points of the argument, in addition to fostering ideas for future discussions. The debate concerning the thesis has been successfully articulated and defended through a comprehensive analysis of John's use of Scripture in his description of the inaugural Apocalyptic vision. John's use of intertextual sources from both the OT and NT in Revelation 1 has been thoroughly discussed, with both verbal and thematic coherence examined in each allusion, metaphor, or other rhetorical devices. The result has been a robust depiction of Christ, providing the foundation upon which the Apocalypse begins. The opening of Revelation is a comfort to the seven churches and

reassurance to the subsequent generations that endeavor to understand the numerous mysteries within the text of Revelation. This exhortation is founded in the person and work of Christ as depicted throughout the canon of Scripture. John masterfully weaves the Messianic and Christological threads of the canon together in a tapestry that testifies to the deity, authority, and eternity of Christ while describing His role as high priest and judge. He highlights Christ's sovereignty in eschatological roles such as the one holding the key of David and the key of death and Hades. In addition, John highlights what Christ has done for believers, as He describes substitutionary atonement on the cross and His establishment of a royal priesthood that Christians partake in. Tabb concludes,

“The disclosure of Jesus’ divine identity and activity in Revelation brings together seemingly divergent and contradictory categories. Christ is the Son of Man, yet shares the attributes and authority of the Ancient of Days. He is the faithful witness and the righteous Judge, the strong Lion and the slaughtered Lamb, the Shepherd-Lamb, the eternally existing Alpha and Omega, who died and lives forevermore. This revelation of Jesus Christ bursts the wineskins as he brings a panoply of biblical prophecies and patterns to their appointed apogee.”⁷⁴⁹

As John understood his role as a prophetic author, his persistent use of Scripture was intentional, according to this author’s study. As a result, all aspects of the proposed thesis have been addressed, argued, and defended. In Revelation 1, John intentionally utilizes literary devices to provide verbal and/or thematic cohesion in reference to Christological and Messianic passages from the entirety of Scripture to depict a canonical, cumulative Christological presentation that thoroughly examines the person and works of Christ.

⁷⁴⁹ Tabb, *All Things New*, 64.

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