

Elusive Allusions: The Problematic Use of the Old Testament in Revelation

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Abstract

An examination of ten major works related to Revelation demonstrates the failure of most commentators to develop and implement objective criteria for determining when and where the Revelator is alluding to previous literature. With the aid of literary critical tools, the author develops such criteria and demonstrates their value for the study of Revelation.

I. Scholarly Citation of OT Allusions in Rev.

One of the most vexing problems in the study of apocalyptic literature concerns the frequent use of allusive references to previous literature such as the OT. My interest in this problem arose while studying a highly bizarre and apocalyptic passage: the seven trumpets of Rev (8:7-9:21; 11:15-18). I discovered that although commentaries and critical margins cite numerous allusions to the OT in the seven trumpets there is little evidence of systematic, comprehensive method in the selection of allusions. In order to get an accurate picture of the scholarly situation, I compared ten major works representing the two great periods of Rev research.¹

A careful collation of the evidence in the ten major works yielded proposed allusions to 288 different OT passages. This bountiful harvest was immediately called into question when these works were compared with one another. For example, J. Massyngberde Ford, who offers more allusions to the OT in the seven trumpets than any of the others, cites only 109 OT passages out of the total of 288. This is a mere 37.8% of the total in spite of the fact that 65 of Ford's 109 are not cited by any of the others. Meanwhile, W. Dittmar cites only 25, less than 10% of the total. Even more amazing, all ten works agree on only one allusion!² This raises the ques-

tion whether any of the ten selected works offers the product of systematic examination of all the possible allusions to the OT in the seven trumpets.

The problem is well illustrated by further comparison of Ford and Dittmar. Dittmar cites less than a quarter as many allusions as does Ford. One would, therefore, assume that he operated on more rigid criteria than she. In the first four trumpets (Rev 8:7-13), however, where she has nearly half of her citations (52), Dittmar has none at all. Yet in the seventh trumpet (Rev 11:15-18) Ford cited only six allusions to the OT while Dittmar has 14, more than half of his citations for the trumpets as a whole! ³ For Rev 9:20,21, where the rest of the selected commentators average eight citations each (E. Hühn has no less than 15!), Dittmar has two and Ford has none at all! And in spite of the fact that Dittmar has far fewer citations than anyone else, two of the 288 potential allusions are cited by him alone.

The above evidence points to the need for systematic method in the evaluation of allusions to the Old Testament in Rev. ⁴ Many, of course, will not be persuaded that the establishment of "scientific criteria" is an asset to the task of assessing allusions. There is certainly a subjective element involved in evaluating allusions that resists logic and systematization. Nevertheless, the endeavor to establish such criteria is a valid task for two reasons. (1) The evident chaos that is discovered when lists of allusions are compared indicates that there is a need for more control over the subjective element. Objective criteria can help insure that all scholars are looking at the same evidence. (2) Students are particularly benefited by a clear statement of the criteria upon which literary-critical research operates.

II. Developing a Method for Determining Allusions

There are a number of problems involved in identifying allusions. ⁵ Not only does the Revelator never cite the OT in the technical sense, ⁶ he appears, on many occasions, to have quoted loosely from memory, ⁷ or adapted the OT language to fit his need. ⁸ To further complicate matters, the OT is written in a different language than the New, which means that all OT expressions are found in "translation Greek." ⁹ It is quite possible that John himself did the translating, ¹⁰ and utilized text traditions with which we are relatively unfamiliar. ¹¹ Thus the search for allusions is complex ¹² and requires careful controls if a list of OT parallels to Rev is to be worth anything. ¹³

New Testament scholarship is not alone in its frustration with regard to the problems created by the presence of allusions in literary works. In a study of allusion in Milton and more recent literature, J. Hollander notes that allusive references to previous literature are "maddeningly elusive." ¹⁴

It is difficult enough, for example, to determine when a literary parallel exists. But the mere existence of a parallel is no guarantee that one author made use of another.¹⁵ It may only indicate that both had access to a common source.¹⁶

It would be tempting, in light of the above, to give up the attempt to specify the origins of the language of Rev. But it is only by identifying the antecedent of an allusion that we are enabled to say what it meant to the author, and what he intended it to his readers and hearers.¹⁷ Therefore, in the following sections an attempt is made to apply the insights of literary criticism to the realities of the text of Rev.

III. Types of Literary Influence

The sources that influence the way an author writes are potentially as varied as that author's whole experience of life.¹⁸ In addition to specific literary works, an author may draw on the general climate, cultural traditions, and social structures of any place he/she has lived. An author may also be affected by major events, both present and past, and can be influenced by literature read and by the ideas, theories, hopes, and dreams of contemporaries communicated to him in various forms.¹⁹ Obviously, a researcher must be open to a variety of approaches, both literary and non-literary, to an understanding of the influences which shaped a given author. In practice, however, the study of influence concentrates on literary origins—on ideas and language that can be traced to works that the author has previously read.²⁰

M. C. Tenney has offered excellent definitions of the terms "citation," "quotation," and "allusion."²¹ Citations occur when an author reproduces the words of an original text and identifies the source from which he drew those words. Quotations involve the selection of significant amounts of wording from a previous passage, sufficient to make it certain that the author had the previous work in mind.²² Allusions are limited to a word, and idea, or a brief phrase that can be traced to a known body of text.²³ In Rev, the author has largely limited himself to an allusive use of previous literature.

Literary-critical theory suggests, however, that Tenney's outline must be expanded. Just as direct references to previous literature can be divided into citations and quotations, so also allusions should be divided into two basic types, which Hollander calls "allusions" and "echoes."²⁴ An "outright allusion" assumes the author's intention to point the reader to a previous work as a means of expanding the reader's horizons. The portion of the text alluded to can only be fully understood in the light of its context within the original work. In the words of Hollander:

...the text alluded to is not totally absent, but is part of the portable library shared by the author and his ideal audience. Intention to allude recognizably is essential to the concept.²⁵

In contrast to these intended references are what Hollander calls "echoes," which do not depend on the author's conscious intention.²⁶ C. Baker calls echoes a "flash in the brainpan."²⁷ An echo indicates that the author picked up an idea that can be found in previous literature, but was probably unaware of the original source. The idea was "in the air" of the environment in which the author lived.²⁸ It was part of "the freely circulated legal tender of a period's mind," it was in the "common domain."²⁹

To summarize, allusive references to previous literature can enter a work in two ways. The author may use a source directly and consciously with its original context in mind. Such an allusion is "willed into being."³⁰ The author is fully conscious of the source as well as of its relevance to his composition. He/she is assuming the reader's knowledge of the source and of his/her intention to refer to that source.³¹ On the other hand, an author may "echo" ideas, the origin of which he/she is unaware. In an echo, the author does not point the reader to a particular background source, but merely utilizes a "live symbol" that would be generally understood in his original situation.

The distinction between allusions and echoes is very significant for the study of Rev. In failing to make this distinction, commentators have often interpreted echoes as though the author intended his reader to incorporate a source context into his understanding of Rev.³² This can lead to serious misunderstandings of the Revelators's intention. The distinction between allusions and echoes actually calls for two different approaches to interpretation, depending on the nature of the author's relationship to a particular source in a given passage.³³ The following sections of this study explore these implications for interpretation.

Since Biblical scholarship has produced considerable confusion in the area of allusions to previous literature in Rev, it would be helpful to incorporate literary-critical procedures and terminology wherever possible. Previous commentators, however, have generally used the term "allusion" to refer to John's overall approach to his sources, and since such general usage is acceptable in literary criticism we retain that meaning in this study. All the parallels to previous literature in Rev may be called "allusions," whether or not the author was conscious of the parallel. A commentator should make clear, however, that he is using the term "allusion" in a more general sense, not in the particular sense of a conscious reference to previous literature. Where the author was consciously referring to previous literature,

we call the parallel a "direct allusion."³⁴ Where he is merely using language that was "in the air," or a "stock apocalyptic concept," we retain the term "echo."

IV. Direct Allusions in Rev

The presence of a direct allusion requires the interpreter to trace the material to its source in order to understand the later writing.³⁵ The author assumes that the source literature is familiar to the reader and that the reader can import from the context of the source insights which enhance his appreciation of the work he is reading. But in order to handle direct allusions properly, it is necessary to identify their sources. As we have seen above, this is an extremely complex task. The following method is an attempt to place the identification of direct allusions in Rev on a more objective and scientific basis.

The determination of when and where an author intentionally alludes to previous literature is based on the weight of evidence, both external and internal.³⁶ External evidence involves that we can know about an author's relationship to his literary roots as drawn from historical, biographical, demographic, and other sources outside a given text. In evaluating an author's use of previous literature it is important to know the extent of his contact with that literature.³⁷ Did he read the book from which a parallel comes? Was it in his library? Are there annotations in his own hand? Does he allude in other works to books he has read?³⁸ Was his supposed source something that was typically read in the schools of the time? If there is no direct evidence of the above, one can ask if the book was generally available at the time an author wrote.³⁹

Internal evidence, on the other hand, examines the phenomena of the text itself to determine the probability that the author had a previous work in mind when he wrote a given passage. The words, ideas, and structures are all examined in relation to potential sources. The more parallels one finds to a particular source, the more likely it is that the author had that source in mind as he wrote. As an aid to the task of accumulating internal evidence, we suggest three basic criteria: verbal parallels, thematic parallels, and structural parallels.

Verbal parallels. The term "quotation," as we have seen, can only rarely, if ever, be applied to the Revelator's use of the OT. Nevertheless, it is abundantly clear that Rev is dependent on OT wording in hundreds of places. Thus, verbal parallels must be understood in a broader sense than quotations.

A verbal parallel can be defined as occurring whenever at least two words of more than minor significance are parallel between a passage in Rev and a passage in the Septuagint or other first-century Greek ver-

sion.⁴⁰ These two major words may be coupled together in a phrase or may even be separated, provided they are in clear relationship to each other in both passages of the suggested parallel. Such verbal parallels are discovered by placing the text of Rev side-by-side with the potential source text.⁴¹ Wording that is exact or similar is underscored, and the potential relationship between the passages is assessed on a preliminary basis.⁴²

A good example of a verbal parallel is found in Rev 9:2: "and the smoke of the pit went up like the smoke of a great furnace." This bears a striking resemblance to the wording of Exod 19:18 in the Septuagint (Rev 9:2: **kai anebe kapnos ek tou phreatos os kapnos kaminou megalas**; Exod 19:18 in the LXX: **kai anebainen ho kapnos, osei kapnos kaminou**).

An example of a verbal parallel where two key words are not similarly connected grammatically can be seen by comparing Rev 9:2 with Gen 1:2. The key connections are the terms "darkness" and "abyss" (Rev 9:2: **kai enoixen to phrear tes abussou . . . kai eskotothe ho helios kai ho aer**; cf. Gen 1:2 in the LXX: **kai skotos, epano tes abussou**).

It is certainly possible, as Gundry points out, that parallel phraseology could at times be due to fortuitously similar circumstances.⁴³ But the criterion does force the interpreter to take the text seriously and not let the imagination run wild. A direct allusion is not to be assumed with every verbal parallel; the observation of common wording is only part of the process of accumulating evidence for a direct allusion.

Thematic parallels. May times the Revelator may have had an OT passage in mind, but used different Greek words than the LXX, or used only a single word to make the connection. This should not be surprising. By their very nature, allusions are not bound to reproduce the precise wording of the original.⁴⁴ Allusions to the OT may be characterized by similarity of thought and theme as well as wording. Such single-word parallels are to be distinguished from "stock apocalyptic" in that they have "direct contextual moorings in particular texts" of previous literature.⁴⁵ The "contextual moorings" of a thematic parallel between Rev and antecedent literature may express itself through deliberate contrast as well as similarity of theme.⁴⁶ Such thematic parallels can be found not only in the LXX, but also by comparing the intent of the Greek of Rev with the Hebrew and Aramaic OT.

A thematic parallel can be found by comparing Rev 9:4 and Ezek 9:4. In both cases a mark is placed on the forehead for the purpose of protection against the judgments of God. Although a different Greek word for "mark" is used (**sphragida** in Rev 9:4; **semeion** in Ezek 9:4 LXX), the mark appears in Rev 9:4 in a context that is clearly parallel to that of Ezek 9:4. Again, it is not to be automatically assumed from this thematic parallel alone that the Revelator was pointing to Ezek 9:4, but the observation of

this thematic parallel is part of the process of accumulating evidence for such an intention of the part of the author.

Another example of a thematic parallel is given by Tenney.⁴⁷ He notes that while the term "almighty" occurs many times in the OT, only in Amos 4:13 is it used in a context that is parallel to Rev 1:8.

Structural parallels. Many times the Seer of Rev uses the OT by building on the literary or theological structure of whole sections without necessarily following the exact wording.⁴⁸ By the very feature of multiple correspondences these "structural parallels" are the most easily proven to have been in the mind of the writer when he wrote down his visions.

A structural parallel can occur where the author models a given passage on an antecedent text in the OT by utilizing its language and themes in roughly the same order. A good example of such a structural parallel can be seen by comparing Rev. 9:1-11 with Joel 2:1-11. Notice that both Joel 2:1-11 and Rev 9:1-11 begin with a trumpet call, then proceed to the mention of darkness, a locust army, a description of that army and finally a reference to the leader of that army. Other parallels between the two passages include the anxiety of those affected by the locust army, the darkening of the sun, and the noise of chariots. Further examples of parallels in literary structure are seen by comparing Rev 1:12-18 with Dan 7:9-13 and Dan 10; Rev 13 with Dan 3 and 7; Rev 18 with Ezek 26-28; and Rev 19:11-16 with Isa 63:1-6. Some would even go so far as to suggest that the entire book of Rev is structured to parallel the book of Ezekiel.⁴⁹

Structural parallels should not be limited to parallel passages but can occur in relation to larger historical or theological structures that go beyond specific OT passages. For example, the seven trumpets of Revelation are unquestionably parallel to the plagues of the Exodus which are described in Exodus 7-12 but are also mentioned explicitly in the Psalms (78, 105, 135, 136) and implicitly in a multitude of other references to the Exodus, particularly in the prophets. The OT accounts of creation, the fall of Babylon and the conquest of Jericho may also underlie the material in the seven trumpets.

The above may sound similar to thematic parallels, but there is a subtle and important difference. A thematic parallel is limited to a particular idea in Rev which has a potential antecedent in a specific OT passage. Along with verbal parallels, thematic parallels make up the basic building blocks by which judgments concerning influence can be made. By distinction, structural parallels are where a whole section of Revelation is based either on a literary predecessor (such as Joel 2:1-11 for Rev 9:1-11) or on a large theological structure in antecedent literature (such as the Exodus theme which underlies the trumpets as a whole). Such structural parallels normally comprise a number of verbal and/or thematic parallels.

Summary of criteria. The internal evidence of Rev, then, is assessed in terms of the above criteria. Of the three, verbal parallels are often the weakest criterion.⁵⁰ Their value as evidence increases, however, as the number of parallel words increases and to the extent that the parallel words are ordered in the same or in a similar way as the potential source passage. Since structural parallels consist of a number of interlocking verbal and thematic parallels, they normally constitute the strongest evidence for a direct allusion. The more criteria a particular proposed allusion fits, the more certain it is that the author consciously molded his passage with that particular literary context in mind.⁵¹

A further consideration is that certainty is also affected by the number of passages in previous literature where particular words, concepts, and structures are found. Where a given parallel is unique in prior literature, the likelihood that John is directing our attention to that particular passage is correspondingly increased.⁵²

External Evidence The external evidence for the Revelator's use of sources, unfortunately, is meager indeed. Whatever one's view of the authorship of Rev, we know little about the author that helps us to evaluate his allusive use of sources. We do not know the content of his library or his reading habits. We have no autobiography. We have no contemporary source which tells us any details about his life that would be useful to this endeavor. We are limited to our general knowledge of the times in which he lived and the phenomena of his book.

We can reasonably suppose that John, a Palestinian Jew,⁵³ was familiar with roughly the same canon of the OT that can be found in today's critical Hebrew text, and that he would have held these works in particularly high esteem.⁵⁴ The evidence of Rev supports the thesis that he had read the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and most of the wisdom and historical books of the OT.⁵⁵ Thus, wherever we find verbal, thematic, and structural parallels to the OT there is no barrier in the external evidence to the possibility that such a parallel constitutes a valid direct allusion to that OT book.

Less certain than John's relationship to the OT is the assumption that John was familiar with much of the Jewish apocalyptic literature of his day. The phenomena of Rev make it reasonable to suggest, for example, that he had read some form of 1 Enoch. Many of the best parallels between Rev and the Jewish apocalypses, however, are found in works contemporary with or later than Rev.⁵⁶ For such works, it would be wisest to handle parallels to apocalyptic literature as echoes—witnesses to the environment in which John lived—but not direct allusions in the sense of intended references to literary works that we and the author hold in com-

mon. Direct allusions to apocalyptic literature should be limited to passages which can be dated, with reasonable certainty, prior to the composition of Rev, and for which there is considerable evidence within Revelation that the author was familiar with the book's contents.⁵⁷

While it is certainly possible that John was familiar with many non-Jewish literary works, there is no external evidence that requires such familiarity. As a result, such familiarity must be demonstrated on the basis of careful analysis of the internal evidence of Rev. Since that has not yet been done, parallels to non-Jewish literary sources should be evaluated as echoes of the cultural milieu in which John and the churches of Asia Minor lived, rather than as direct allusions to specific literary works.

A similar problem surfaces with regard to the Revelator's relationship to the NT documents as we know them. It is probably safe to say that most of the NT documents were in writing by the time Rev was written. Although the author of Rev was thoroughly familiar with the traditions embodied in the NT, it is difficult to prove that the author of Rev had direct access to any one of them. Thus, parallels to NT writings should probably be handled as echoes of the author's Christian experience rather than as pointers to the context of specific NT books. As study in the sources of Rev progresses, the internal evidence may become weighty enough to point to specific works in the pagan background and in the NT that John is likely to have read.⁵⁸

V. Classification of Direct Allusions

The classification of direct allusions results from a careful analysis of both the internal and the external evidence. While we can never be absolutely certain what was going on in an ancient author's mind as he wrote, the confluence of evidence can lead to various levels of certainty.

The interpreter begins by examining the internal evidence of Rev for verbal, thematic, and structural parallels to earlier literature. A good starting point for such a study is the use of previous lists of allusions to the particular passage.⁵⁹ Computerized concordances can enhance the process of gathering information. The likelihood of a literary relationship between a passage in Rev and a passage in a previous work increases in direct proportion to the quantity and quality of the parallels discovered.⁶⁰ The more types of parallels found between two passages,⁶¹ the more likely it is that the later writer had the earlier passage in mind. This is particularly so where structural parallels can be located. In other words, the presence of a structural parallel enhances the probability that parallels of word and theme within that structural parallel are also valid.⁶² The likelihood of authorial intent is further increased wherever a given source in previous literature is unique.⁶³

Where it can be determined that a strong literary parallel exists, the external evidence should be brought to bear. The external evidence supports the likelihood that John was familiar with the OT and, to a lesser extent, such previous Jewish works as 1 Enoch, Jubilees, Wisdom of Solomon, Psalms of Solomon, and portions of the Sibylline Oracles.⁶⁴ Parallels to other works should be held as tentative until further evidence is forthcoming.

When listing allusions to the OT in Rev we are, then, dealing in probabilities. In many cases neither the external nor the internal evidence is strong enough to be certain that a particular expression is derived from a specific literary source.⁶⁵ In such cases there is a necessary element of subjectivity in the evaluation of allusions. The one who creates the list of allusions must, therefore, indicate the level of uncertainty involved and, where possible, the reasons for that uncertainty. The corrective nature of the scholarly debate can then help limit and control the subjectivity inherent in this process.

Potential allusions can be classified into five categories of probability: "certain allusions," "probable allusions," "possible allusions," and "non-allusions."⁶⁶ "Certain allusions" exist when the evidence for dependence is so overwhelming that the interpreter is certain that John was pointing to the antecedent text. An example of certain allusion is the reference to the seventh plague on Egypt (Exod 9:23-26) in the first trumpet (Rev 8:7). Exodus is a book that would be familiar to a Jew like John. The plagues of the Exodus are a structural parallel underlying the seven trumpets as a whole. Thus, we should expect that the author of Revelation might point to specific plagues at various points of his narrative. In both the first trumpet and Exod 9:23-26, the plagues originate in heaven, and involve a mixture of hail and fire falling to the earth with resulting destruction to the vegetation of the earth.⁶⁷ There is also a thematic parallel in that both plagues are judgments of God on those opposing Him and His people. This confluence of evidence lends this direct allusion a high level of certainty that is rare in Rev.⁶⁸

A "probable allusion" occurs when the evidence for a direct allusion is considerable but falls short of certainty. An example of a probable allusion is the relationship between the first trumpet and Ezek 38:22. The verbal and thematic parallels are virtually as extensive as is the case with Exod 9:23-26. Not only so, but the combination of hail, fire and blood being used in judgment is unique to Ezek 38. However, the seven trumpets are a portion of Revelation that has only a minimum of references to Ezekiel, so the structural parallel is minimal. Thus, there is enough uncertainty concerning this direct allusion to cause it to be classified as "probable" rather than "certain." Nevertheless, since both certain and probable allusions are

likely to have been in the mind of the Revelator when he wrote, the interpreter should take the source text's original context into account when interpreting the passage in Rev which contains the allusion.⁶⁹

"Possible allusions" are more problematic. With a possible allusion there is enough evidence to indicate that John **may** have been making a direct allusion to the OT, but not enough to be reasonably certain. An example of a possible allusion is the relationship between Isa 30:30 and Rev 8:7. In Isa 30:30 fire and hail are poured out as judgments on the Assyrians. However, though the first trumpet contains a verbal and a thematic parallel to Isa 30:30, there is no structural parallel to speak of, and the other parallels are relatively weak. Thus, it is possible that John had Isa 30:30 in mind when he wrote the first trumpet but there is not enough evidence for a reasonable certainty. Such a parallel may be instructive to the interpreter but should never be used as the sole evidence for an interpretation.⁷⁰ "Uncertain allusions" exist where the parallels do not allow the interpreter to conclusively deny a direct allusion, yet such an allusion is extremely unlikely. In the margin of the Nestle-Aland 26th Edition Ezek 5:12 is listed as parallel to Rev 8:7. The lack of verbal and thematic parallels indicates that it is, however, uncertain that our author had Ezek 5:12 specifically in mind here. If the concept of a "third" was drawn from the OT, it was probably based on Ezek 5:1-4 or Zech 13:8,9 rather than on this passage.⁷¹ The context of an uncertain allusion should not be used in interpreting Rev, but it could be a source for defining one or more "echoes." (see below)

The category of "nonallusions" is relevant only when evaluating lists of suggested allusions. After examination, the interpreter concludes that there is no evidence that the author intended a parallel between two texts. E. Hühn felt that the first trumpet made reference to Isa 2:13 where trees are a symbol of the proud and haughty whom God will humble. The absence of a verbal parallel in the Greek, and of any thematic or structural parallel, denies this parallel the status of a direct allusion. Isaiah's definition of trees, however, may be "echoed" by John in the first trumpet.⁷²

The conclusions of such study must, of course, remain somewhat tentative, but it is not necessary to trace every parallel to the OT in order to understand the basic message of the book.⁷³ While the interpreter must constantly be open to new evidence that may cause particular parallels to be reevaluated from time to time, the above procedure places the interpretation of Rev on a more objective basis.

VI. Echoes in Rev.

In contrast to the analysis of direct allusions in Rev, where John "echoes" an earlier idea we must go back to the origin of the idea, but

without the assumption that John was consciously pointing to a particular background passage. Such a "live symbol" has become divorced from its original context. Therefore, to list all the OT passages where a concept is found is not helpful.⁷⁴ What matters is the basic meaning of the concept which had often attained a fixed content by NT times.⁷⁵

A good example of an echo is the the concept of vegetation representing the people of God. It is used with such regularity that it appears to have attained a fixed meaning in NT times (Ps 1:3, Isa 5:1-7, and Jer 2:21 [cf. Rev 8:7 and 9:4]). Such an echo can, however, be applied differently in different contexts. For example, in Rev 7:1-3 and 9:4, greenery is protected by a mark from the judgments of God. On the other hand, in Rev 8:7 the greenery is destroyed by God's judgments.

The mere existence, therefore, of a parallel idea does not guarantee that John is directly dependent on a particular literary source.⁷⁶ Since previous commentators on Rev do not generally distinguish between direct allusions and echoes, many misunderstand the Revelator's use of the OT and other sources. What for John may have only been "stock apocalyptic" or an idea that was "in the air," can now ordinarily only be traced by means of its literary antecedents. Such a pursuit of John's language in previous literature must resist the temptation to import the context of an earlier passage unless it can be reasonably demonstrated that a direct allusion is involved.

VII. Conclusion

This analysis demonstrates that a major reason for the evident disagreement in the listing of allusions in the past is the failure to clearly distinguish between echoes and direct allusions. Many of the allusions cited by major commentators are really echoes and should not be listed as though the author had them in mind when he wrote. In addition, there is some evidence that many commentators operated more by intuition than on the basis of consistent criteria. It is hoped that this study will encourage a more careful and objective approach to background material in the study of apocalyptic literature.

NOTES

¹ R. H. Charles, **The Revelation of St. John**, 2 vols., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1920); Wilhelm Dittmar, **Vetus Testamentum in Novo** (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1903); Eugen Hühn, **Die alttestamentliche Citate und Reminiscenzen im Neuen Testament** (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1900); Heinrich Kraft, **Die Offenbarung des Johannes**, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, vol. 16a (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1974); J. Massyngberde Ford, **Revelation**, The Anchor Bible, vol. 38 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1975); Robert H. Mounce, **The Book of Revelation**, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977); Eberhard Nestle et al., eds., **Novum Testamentum Graece**, 26th Ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1979); Pierre Prigent, **L'Apocalypse de Saint Jean**, Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, vol. 14 (Lausanne: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1981); Kurt Aland et al., eds., **The Greek New Testament**, 3rd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1975); Brooke Foss Westcott and Fenton John Anthony Hort, eds., **The New Testament in the Original Greek** (London: MacMillan and Co., 1898).

² All indicate that Rev 9:5, 6 was written with Job 3:21 in mind.

³ In fact, Dittmar lists more allusions to the Old Testament in Rev 11:15 than any of the other nine commentators!

⁴ For a much more detailed examination of the ten selected works the reader is referred to my dissertation; "Allusions, Exegetical Method, and the Interpretation of Rev 8:7-12" (Andrews University, Ph. D. dissertation, 1987).

⁵ A survey of the literature indicates that among biblical scholars there is currently no agreed-upon method for evaluating allusions. Cf. Robert Horton Gundry, **The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel** (1967), 4-5; Merrill C. Tenney, **Interpreting Revelation** (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957) 101; Leonhard P. Trudinger, "The Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation" (Ph. D. dissertation, Boston University, 1963) 40; Louis Arthur Vos, **The Synoptic Traditions in the Apocalypse** (Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1965) 18-19, 112.

⁶ Note the following definition of "citation:" "A citation is a fairly exact reproduction of the words of the original text, accompanied by a statement of the fact that they are being quoted and by an identification of the source." Tenney, 102. See also below.

⁷ Franklin Johnson, **The Quotations of the New Testament from the Old** (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1896) 29; D. Moody Smith, Jr., "The Use of the Old Testament in the New," In **The Use of the Old Testament in the New and Other Essays**, edited by James M. Efird (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1972) 61; Crawford Howell Toy, **Quotations in the New Testament** (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884) xx.

⁸ Adela Yarbro Collins, **Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of the Apocalypse** (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984) 42; Edwin D. Freed, **Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John**, Supplements to Novum Testamentum, vol. 11 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965) 129; Donatus Haugg, **Die Zwei Zeugen**, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, vol. 17, bk. 1 (Münster: Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuch-

handlung, 1936) 85-86; Peter Ketter, **Die Apokalypse**, Herders Bibelkommentar, vol. 16, pt. 2 (Freiburg: Herder & Co., 1942) 4; Ronald H. Preston and Anthony T. Hanson, **The Revelation of Saint John the Divine** (London: SCM Press, 1949) 35; F. Stagg, "Interpreting the Book of Revelation," **Review and Expositor** 72 (1975):333-334; Krister Stendahl, **The School of St. Matthew** (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1954) 159; A. Vanhoye, "L'utilisation du livre de Ezéchiel dans l'Apocalypse," **Biblica** 43 (1962):461-472; Vos, 23-32.

⁹ Roger Nicole, "A Study of the Old Testament Quotations in the New Testament with Reference to the Doctrine of the Inspiration of the Scriptures" (M. S. T. thesis, Gordon College of Theology and Missions, 1940), 11-12.

¹⁰ Charles, vol. 1, lxvi.

¹¹ Nicole, 9-11; Tenney, 103; Leonhard P. Trudinger, "Some Observations Concerning the Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation," **Journal of Theological Studies** 17 (1966):82-88.

¹² In addition to the Septuagint; Greek translations such as Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotion; Aramaic Targums such as Neofiti I and Pseudo-Jonathan to the Pentateuch; and the Masoretic, Qumran and Samaritan traditions of the Hebrew should be consulted.

¹³ Matthew Black, "Some Greek Words with 'Hebrew' Meanings in the Epistles and Apocalypse," in **Biblical Studies. Essays in Honour of William Barclay**, ed. by Johnston R. McKay and James F. Miller (London: Collins, 1976) 135.

¹⁴ John Hollander, **The Figure of Echo: A Mode of Allusion in Milton and After** (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1981), 95. This is so, he notes on the same page, because even a single word or phrase can carry "rumors of its resounding cave."

¹⁵ Claudio Guillén, "The Aesthetics of Literary Influence," in **Influx: Essays on Literary Influence**, ed. Ronald Primeau (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977) 59-62.

¹⁶ Richard T. Altick, **The Art of Literary Research** (New York: W. W. Norton, 1975) 95; Samuel Sandmel, "Parallelomania," **Journal of Biblical Literature** 81 (1962):3. Sandmel points out, for example, that most of the supposed allusions to Philo in the rabbis (and vice versa) are probably due to a common approach to the Old Testament in those areas. Cf. James H. Charlesworth, **The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament**, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, no. 54 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) 78.

¹⁷ Altick, 90, 92, 101-102; Guillén, 63; Ronald Primeau, **Beyond Spoon River** (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981) x. In the words of Hollander, 65-66:

"The reader of texts, in order to overhear echoes, must have some kind of access to an earlier voice, and to its cave of resonant signification, analogous to that of the author of the later text. When such access is lost in a community of reading, what may have been an allusion may fade in prominence; and yet a scholarly recovery of the context would restore the allusion, by revealing an intent as well as by showing means."

¹⁸ Altick, 90. Cf. Guillén, 59.

¹⁹ This paragraph was strongly influenced by Ihab H. Hassan, "The Problem of Influence in Literary History: Notes Toward a Definition," in **Influx: Essays on Literary Influence**, ed. Ronald Primeau (Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977) 35.

²⁰ Altick, 91; Guillén, 59.

²¹ Tenney, 102.

²² As Hollander (64) points out, quotations and citations involve the literal presence of a body of text from a previous work in the work being studied. Trudinger ("Some Observations Concerning the Text of the Old Testament," 82) defines a quotation as follows: "One can be said to be quoting when one uses word combinations in a form in which one would not have used them had it not been for a knowledge of their occurrence in this particular form in another source."

²³ Hollander, 64: "Fragmentary or periphrastic presence."

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid. Hollander's book, *The Figure of Echo* (see ix), is particularly concerned with exploring these less-conscious allusions to previous literature.

²⁷ Carlos Baker, *The Echoing Green* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984) 7-8.

²⁸ Altick, 94.

²⁹ Ibid., 96.

³⁰ Baker, 7-8.

³¹ Hollander, 106.

³² As Charlesworth (17) points out, the citation of allusions to previous literature is misleading unless limited to dependency.

³³ Altick, 95-96.

³⁴ G. K. Beale (*The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and the Revelation of St. John* [Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984] 115) prefers the phrase "conscious allusion." The essence of a "direct allusion" is the author's intention to point the reader to a previous text in its context.

³⁵ Hollander, 106.

³⁶ Altick, 98-100; Beale, 308-309.

³⁷ Hassan (42) points out that authors are sometimes totally unaware of works that literary critics suppose influenced them.

³⁸ Altick, 98-99. Louis M. Rosenblatt ("Towards a Transactional Theory of Reading," in *Influx: Essays on Literary Influence*, ed. Ronald Primeau [Port Washington, NY: Kennikat Press, 1977] 125) notes that an autobiography is particularly helpful.

³⁹ Altick, 99.

⁴⁰ The versions extant in Origen's Hexapla (cf. Fridericus Field, ed., *Origenis Hexaplorum* [Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1964]) likely reflect at least some readings current when Revelation was written. For various approaches to verbal parallels see Beale, 44, n. 62; William Kimbro Hedrik, "The Sources and Use of the Imagery in Apocalypse 12" (Th.D. dissertation, Graduate Theological Union, 1971) 16; and Tenney, 101.

⁴¹ Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, "the Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1985) 24.

⁴² Cf. Altick, 95-96 and Beale, 31. Verbal parallels do not work in translation unless transliteration is involved. For example, Messiah is clearly a verbal parallel of the Hebrew *mesiah*. Cf. Morton Smith, *Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels*, Journal of Biblical Literature Monograph Series, vol. 6 (Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1951) 1-15.

⁴³ Gundry, 5.

⁴⁴ Vos, 112.

⁴⁵ Beale, 121, cf. 174. This criterion includes, to use the language of Morton Smith (16, 46-47), both "parallels of idiom" and "parallels of meaning." It may be helpful here to recall C. H. Dodd's insight that NT writers often used quotations of the OT as pointers to the larger context. Cf. C. H. Dodd, **According to the Scriptures** (London: Nisbet and Co., 1952) 126. The Revelator often alludes to a larger thematic context with merely a word or a phrase.

⁴⁶ Baker, 10; Tenney, 101. I find the following statement by Lars Hartman (**Prophecy Interpreted**, trans. Neil Tomkinson, Coniectanea Biblica, New Testament Series, no. 1 [Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1966], 126) to be helpful:

"One peculiar phenomenon is the contextual associations, i.e. [sic] the fact that links are made from one text to another via the context of either or both . . . A typical wording from a text draws with it its context, so that this context may form a spring-board or goal for a new association."

⁴⁷ Tenney, 102.

⁴⁸ Beale, 307; Hedrik, 17; Vanhoye, 440-441. This criterion includes what Morton Smith (78, 115) calls "Parallels of Literary Form" and "Parallels in Types of Association." Hartman appears to be suggesting something similar to my concept of "structural parallel" in his use of the phrase "pattern of thought" (95, 118, 137). He also notes (89) that Zech 12:2-4 provides the "framework" for 1 Enoch 56:5-8.

⁴⁹ M. D. Goulder, "The Apocalypse as an Annual cycle of Prophecies," **New Testament Studies** 27 (1981):343-350; Vanhoye, 436-476; Vogelgesang, 66-72.

⁵⁰ Under careful examination, verbal parallels may prove to be merely superficial or fortuitous. There is always the possibility that the religious syncretism of the ancient world might cause a multitude of artificial connections far beyond the bounds of the original sources. Cf. Gundry, 5.

⁵¹ Dodd, 126.

⁵² Hartman, 85, 155.

⁵³ Yarbrow Collins, 48.

⁵⁴ Charlesworth, 71; Hartman, 111.

⁵⁵ According to the margins in Nestle's 26th ed., the author of Revelation alludes to all Old Testament books except Ruth, Ecclesiastes, and Haggai. The citations listed in Nestle's margin are probably minimal.

⁵⁶ 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, for example.

⁵⁷ I am currently working on the evidence for the Revelator's reading in Jewish apocalyptic. Where he appears to have used material in a number of different parts of an earlier work with which we are familiar, the likelihood of his having read a form of that work increases.

⁵⁸ Note Charles's suggestions (vol. 1, lxxxiii) as to the New Testament books with which the author of Revelation was familiar. Cf. Vos.

⁵⁹ Beale, 154. Cf. Trudinger, "The Text of the Old Testament," 37-41.

⁶⁰ Morton Smith, 136.

⁶¹ In other words, verbal, thematic, and structural parallels provide different types of evidence of relationship. Where all three are found the weight of the parallel is heavier than where only one or two are found. Cf. Morton Smith, 135-136.

⁶² Beale, 173.

⁶³ Altick, 92-93.

⁶⁴ On the dating of Jewish apocalypses see Charlesworth, 31-44.

⁶⁵ Altick, 93.

⁶⁶ Cf. Hartman's five categories (112). Notice also his use of language such as "possible and probable connections" (151), "conscious allusion" (145), "clear allusion" (137), and "direct associations" (162).

⁶⁷ Because of space considerations, further verbal evidence supportive of authorial intent in this allusion is omitted here.

⁶⁸ The only other certain allusion discovered thus far in Rev 8:7-12 is the reference to Jer 51:24, 25, 42 in the second trumpet.

⁶⁹ The probable allusions in Rev 8:7-12 are listed as follows:

Rev 8:7: Isa 10:16-20; Ezek 5:1-4; 38:22; Zech 13:8, 9.

Rev 8:8,9: Gen 1:20,21; Exod 19:16-20 (if the Pseudo-Jonathan Targum contains an ancient reading here).

Rev 8:10,11: Exod 7:20.

Rev 8:12: Gen 1:16; Exod 10:21-23; Ezek 32:7,8; Joel 2:10; 3:15 (4:15 LXX).

⁷⁰ The possible allusions in Rev 8:7-12 are as follows:

Rev 8:7: Exod 7:17ff.; Ps 18:13; 105:32; Isa 28:2; 30:30; Joel 2:30,31.

Rev 8:8,9: Ps 46:2,3; Isa 10:16-18.

Rev 8:10, 11: Exod 15:22-25; Deut 29:17,18 (16,17 LXX); Isa 14:12-14 (if the Isaiah Targum contains an ancient reading here); Jer 9:14,15 (13,14 LXX); 23:15.

Rev 8:12: Isa 13:10; 30:26.

⁷¹ Ezek 5:12 could conceivably be listed with 5:1-4, which is a probable allusion, but this would add nothing to our understanding of the first trumpet.

⁷² The reader is again referred to my dissertation where I have concluded that a number of suggested allusions in the ten major works mentioned above should be classified as "uncertain allusions" or nonallusions."

⁷³ Yarbrow Collins, 44, 48.

⁷⁴ For example, the OT repeatedly refers to the use of hail and/or fire as a weapon of judgment in Yahweh's hand. John certainly did not have all such passages in mind as he wrote. More likely the basic idea expressed by hail and fire was in view.

⁷⁵ Hartman describes this phenomenon helpfully in the following quotations: "...most of the details... have OT parallels but at the same time do not seem to be derived directly from distinct passages in the OT. More likely the motifs had become traditional in apocalyptic circles..." (76)

"The relationship with the OT seems to be an indirect one: the motifs belong to the OT but their wording is such that it is difficult to find connections with definite OT texts... here the theme has become traditionally apocalyptic." (99)

⁷⁶ Sandmel, 3.

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