DOES THE AUTHOR OF REVELATION
MISAPPROPRIATE THE SCRIPTURES?

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Introduction

Though the language of John's allusions was the subject of a number of dissertations[1] in the 1960s, Schlatter's work of 1912[2] remained the only scholarly book-length treatment of John's use of Scripture until 1984.[3] This is surprising in that the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls (1948-1953) prompted a whole series of studies on the use of the OT in the NT.[4] The reason for this neglect is probably due to the fact that such studies generally focused on explicit quotations, whereas John's use of the OT is by allusion and echo. Lists of allusions appeared in the large commentaries[5] but with no hint as to the criteria used to produce them. R. H. Charles sought to categorize them according to their textual affinity, but as I have shown elsewhere, this was in the service of a particular theory and used questionable methodology.[6]

G. K. Beale's study of 1984 was a landmark. It was followed by a succession of studies, of which the most important are J. Paulien's[7]

[1]L. P. Trudinger, "The Text of the Old Testament in the Book of Revelation" (Th.D. Dissertation, Boston University, 1963); C. G. Ozanne, "The Influence of the Text and Language of the Old Testament on the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Manchester, 1964).

[2]A. Schlatter, *Das alte Testament in der johanneischen Apokalypse*, Beiträge zur Förderung christlicher Theologie 16.6 (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1912).

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

[4]E.g., K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Uppsala: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954); E. E. Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957); E. D. Freed, *Old Testament Quotations in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 1965).

[5]E.g., H. B. Swete, *The Apocalypse of St. John*, 3d ed. (London: Macmillan, 1911), cxl-clviii; R. H. Charles, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Revelation of St John* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1920), 1:lxviii-lxxxiii.

[6]S. Moyise, "The Language of the Old Testament in the Apocalypse," *JSNT* 76 (1999): 97-113.

[7]J. Paulien, *Decoding Revelation's Trumpets: Allusions and the Interpretation of Rev 8:7-12* (Berrien Springs: Andrews University Press, 1988).

work on establishing criteria for allusions, J. M. Vogelgesang[8] and J.-P. Ruiz[9] on John's use of Ezekiel, J. Fekkes[10] on John's use of Isaiah, S. Moyise[11] on allusion and intertextuality, and R. Bauckham[12] on Revelation as the "climax of prophecy." The century ended with a further book by Beale, a supplement to his already large commentary in the NIGTC series.[13]

According to Beale, this scholarly work can be divided into two categories. Bauckham, Fekkes, and Beale think that John paid careful respect to the original context of the allusions. Vogelgesang, Ruiz, and I believe that he used texts for his own rhetorical ends and largely disregarded their original context. This called forth a "Reply"[14] from me, where it was argued that while John certainly shows "awareness" of original context, he is not bound by it, and so the word "respect" is misleading. For example, John has no qualms about utilizing much of Ezek 40 through 48 in his description of the New Jerusalem, and then denying the existence of the very thing that these chapters are all about, namely, a restored temple.

Beale, in turn, has written a "Rejoinder"[15] to my "Reply," where he argues that while John's use of Scripture might sometimes appear novel or surprising to us, it is fully understandable given John's presuppositions. John sometimes gives new *significance* to ancient texts by applying them to new situations, but this never constitutes giving them new *meaning*. If the ancient prophets had been brought back to life, they would have agreed (in the light of Christ) that John has given the true meaning of their utterances.

[8] J. M. Vogelgesang, "The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1985).

[9] J.-P. Ruiz, *Ezekiel in the Apocalypse: The Transformation of Prophetic Language in Revelation 16:17-19:10* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1989).

[10] J. Fekkes, *Isaiah and Prophetic Traditions in the Book of Revelation: Visionary Antecedents and Their Development*, JSNTSup 93 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994).

[11] S. Moyise, *The Old Testament in the Book of Revelation*, JSNTSup 115 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995).

[12] R. Bauckham, *The Climax of Prophecy: Studies on the Book of Revelation* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1993).

[13] G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); idem, *The Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999).

[14] S. Moyise, "The Old Testament in the New: A Reply to Greg Beale," *Irish Biblical Studies* 21 (1999): 54-58.

[15] G. K. Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent, Epistemology, and Presuppositions and Their Bearing on the Study of the Old Testament in the New: A Rejoinder to Steve Moyise," *Irish Biblical Studies* 21 (1999): 152-180.

Beale's "Rejoinder" draws heavily on the hermeneutical theories of E. D. Hirsch[16] and K. Vanhoozer,[17] who argue, against all forms of text-centered and reader-centered interpretation, that the only legitimate goal of interpretation is the recovery of what the original author intended. Vanhoozer states: "To impute meaning to a text that an author could not have intended is to be guilty of the same lack of respect for the reality of the past that characterizes revisionist history. To read our ideas back into the biblical text may be the hermeneutical equivalent of denying that the Holocaust ever happened."[18]

In this article, I want to evaluate three positions. The first agrees with Vanhoozer that authorial intention is the only valid goal for interpretation and seeks to show that this is John's aim in the book of Revelation. The second position also agrees with Vanhoozer but seeks to show that John does not live up to this ideal. He reads texts in the light of his current beliefs and uses them for his own rhetorical ends. Thus in Vanhoozer's terms, he offers a misappropriation of Scripture. The third denies the validity of Vanhoozer's claim. Ancient interpreters, whether rabbis, Christians, or Essenes, read texts in the light of their presuppositions. They were not interested in an archaic pursuit of what Ezekiel or Isaiah might have meant *prior* to the establishment of their various communities. It is only modern historical criticism that puts this at the forefront of interpretation. John offers an appropriation of Scripture that is quite proper in its first-century context.[19]

It is a weakness of Vanhoozer's book that he cites only texts that illustrate continuity between the OT and the NT. Similarly, it would be a weakness of this study if I were to cite simply those texts where dissonance is at a maximum. Instead, I will summarize in the first section of this article what I consider to be the most important results from the studies listed above. In the second part, I will use these to evaluate the strengths and weakness of the three positions.

I

The studies mentioned above have established to my satisfaction six important conclusions concerning John's use of Scripture. The first is the use of key sections of Ezekiel (chaps. 1, 9-10, 16/23, 26-27, 37-48) in the same

[16]E. D. Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

[17]K. Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998).

[18]Ibid., 218-219.

[19]The debate between Beale and myself has been summarized by J. Paulien, "Dreading the Whirlwind: Intertextuality and the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *AUSS* 39 (2001): 5-22, with responses from both of us.

order in the book of Revelation (chaps. 4, 7-8, 17, 18, 20-22). The second is the importance of Daniel, particularly chapter 7, for the visionary descriptions of Christ (Rev 1, 5), the beast from the sea (Rev 13), and the final judgment scene (Rev 20). The third is the extensive use of Isaiah throughout the book, though usually in conjunction with other texts. The fourth follows on from this, the way that allusions from a number of sources are often combined to produce richly textured visionary descriptions. The fifth is the sheer variety of ways that Scripture is appropriated in Revelation. The sixth is the way that some texts are combined to produce sharp juxtapositions, such as Jesus being described as the "Lion of Judah" and a slaughtered lamb (Rev 5:5-6).

John's Use of Ezekiel

Over half of the allusions to Ezekiel in the NT come from the book of Revelation.[20] It is the only NT writing that shows a significant interest in this great prophet. What is of particular interest, however, is that John alludes to five major sections of Ezekiel and these occur in the same order in Revelation, raising the question of whether John is in some way modeling his book on Ezekiel.

God on his throne, multifaced creatures (Rev 4)	Ezek 1
Marking/sealing of the saints, coals (Rev 7-8)	Ezek 9-10
Punishment of the harlot city (Rev 17)	Ezek 16, 23
Lament over fallen city, trading list (Rev 18)	Ezek 26-27
Establishment of the New Jerusalem (Rev 20-22)	Ezek 37-48

God on His Throne, Multi-faced Creatures

John's vision draws on various throne visions in the OT (1 Kgs 22; Isa 6; Ezek. 1; Dan 7), but it is the parallels to Ezekiel that are most striking.[21] As well as the imagery of precious stones, a rainbow, and a crystal sea, both John and Ezekiel surround the throne with creatures exhibiting the faces of a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle, and use the curious expression "full of eyes."

As I looked . . . a great cloud with brightness around it . . . and in the middle

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[20]The tables in *UBS3* count 84 of 138.

[21]Beale disputes this, arguing that Dan 7 is the dominant influence on Rev 4-5, but the majority of scholars think it is Ezekiel (*John's Use of the Old Testament*, 79-93).

of the fire, something like gleaming amber. In the middle of it was something like four living creatures. This was their appearance: they were of human form. Each had four faces, and each of them had four wings . . [,] they sparkled like burnished bronze. . . . As for the appearance of their faces: the four had the face of a human being, the face of a lion on the right side, the face of an ox on the left side, and the face of an eagle . . . I saw a wheel on the earth beside the living creatures. . . . Their rims were tall and awesome, for the rims of all four were full of eyes all round. . . . Like the bow in a cloud on a rainy day, such was the appearance of the splendour all round (Ezek 1:4-28, abbreviated).

And the one seated there looks like jasper and cornelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. . . . Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning . . . and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal. Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside (Rev 4:2-8).

However, along with these many similarities come some notable changes. For example, Ezekiel speaks of "wheels" and so appears to be describing a chariot-throne moving through the heavens. This was subject of much speculation at Qumran (e.g., the Sabbath songs) and was important for the development of *merkabah* mysticism. John appears to have eliminated this aspect of the vision. He has also changed Ezekiel's four-faced creatures to four separate creatures, each having a different face. And the mention of six wings prepares for an allusion to the seraphim of Isa 6 in Rev 4:8. Thus John's dependence on Ezekiel is not slavish; he exercises freedom to change what does not suit his purposes.

Marking/Sealing of the Saints/Coals

Before the demonic beasts are allowed to deceive the world into false worship (Rev 13), the 144,000 (12 x 12 x 1000, probably a symbol for the whole church) receive a seal on their foreheads (Rev 7:3). This is reminiscent of the blood on the doorposts on the night of the Passover; but as it is followed by the hurling of fire onto the earth (Rev 8.5), Ezek 9 through 10 is the more likely influence, since it has the same sequence. Because the "land is full of bloodshed and the city full of perversity" (Ezek 9:9), God will send judgment in the form of six agents of destruction, but not before he has given the command: "Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of those who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it" (Ezek 9:4). There then follows another vision where the

command is given, "fill your hands with burning coals from among the cherubim, and scatter them over the city" (Ezek 10:2). John says:

> I saw another angel ascending from the rising of the sun, having the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice . . . [,] "Do not damage the earth or the sea or the trees, until we have marked the servants of our God with a seal on their foreheads." . . . When the Lamb opened the seventh seal . . . the angel took the censer and filled it with fire from the altar and threw it on the earth; and there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake (Rev 7:2-3; 8:5).

Punishment of the Harlot City

One of the more disagreeable features of the book of Revelation is its use of feminine imagery to characterize evil as a harlot, stripped, naked, and burned alive (Rev 17:16). However, the imagery did not originate with John. He found it in Ezekiel's description of apostate Jerusalem in chapters 16 and 23. Both the harlot and the city are decked in costly jewels and fine linen (Ezek 16:13/Rev 17:4), both are guilty of shedding blood (Ezek 16:38/Rev 17:6), and both use the image of drinking a cup of abominations (Ezek 23:33/Rev 17:4). As for their destruction: "[A]nd your survivors shall be devoured by fire. They shall also strip you of your clothes and take away your fine jewels . . . and they shall deal with you in hatred . . . and leave you naked and bare, and the nakedness of your whorings shall be exposed (Ezek 23:25-29, abbreviated). "And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the whore; they will make her desolate and naked; they will devour her flesh and burn her up with fire" (Rev 17:16).

Lament over the Fallen City, Trading List

Moving from evil as harlot to evil as city, John describes the destruction of Babylon (probably a cypher for Rome), followed by a series of laments from those who once prospered. This is similar to Ezekiel's description of the fall of Tyre. Verbal parallels include people weeping and throwing dust on their heads (Ezek 27:30/Rev 18:19), the end of music and dancing (Ezek 26:13/Rev 18:22), and the cry of amazement: "Who was ever destroyed like Tyre?" (Ezek 27:32)/"What city was like the great city?" (Rev 18:18). The major parallel, however, is the trading list. Among the goods mentioned (i.e., gold, silver, jewels, pearls), both speak of ψυχὰς ἀνθρώπων, presumably slaves. The interpretation of this passage has been important for determining the purpose of Revelation.[22]

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[22]See Bauckham, 338-383.

Establishment of the New Jerusalem

The account of the New Jerusalem involves a complex network of allusions (particularly from Isaiah; see below), but many commentators have been impressed by the way it corresponds to the broad sequence of Ezek 37 through 48.

Ezekiel	Revelation
Revival of dry bones (37:10)	First resurrection (20:5)
Reunited kingdom (37:21)	Saints rule for 1,000 years (20:4)
Gog of Magog battle (38:2)	Gog and Magog battle (20:8)
Gorging of the birds (39:4)	Gorging of the birds (19:21)
Taken to high mountain (40:2)	Taken to high mountain (21:10)
Temple is measured (40:5)	City is measured (21:15)
Temple full of God's glory (43:2)	City full of God's glory (21:23)
River of life (47:12)	River of life (22:2)

As well as these parallels, one of the main arguments for John's use of Ezekiel here is that it might explain why he envisages a resurgence of evil after the millennial kingdom. Other NT writers expect a final battle with evil (Mark 13; 2 Thess 2) but not the defeat of evil, followed by a resurgence and then a further battle. This has been a controversial feature of Revelation right from the start. Justin Martyr (ca. 150 C.E.) was one of many who took it literally: "I and others, who are right-minded Christians at all points, are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead, and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be built and adorned and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare."[23]

However, what is even more surprising is that having borrowed so much from Ezek 37 through 48, John denies the very thing that these chapters are all about: "I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb" (Rev 21:22). As Vogelgesang says: "A greater contrast with that vision, where seven of nine chapters describes this temple,

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[23]Dial. Trypho, 80, quoted in W. Barclay, *The Revelation of St. John* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrew Press, 1976), 2:189.

its ordinances and its priests, and the glory of God dwelling therein, cannot be imagined."[24] But John does not simply omit such material; he transfers it to his description of the New Jerusalem. Thus while Ezekiel speaks of measuring the temple (40:5), John speaks of measuring the city (21:23); while Ezekiel speaks of the glory of God filling the temple (43:2), John speaks of God's glory filling the city (21:23). This is further evidence of John's creative freedom when appropriating Ezekiel.

John's Use of Daniel

Beale makes the point that relative to its size, there are more allusions to Daniel in Revelation than in any other portion of Scripture. Since nearly half of the allusions come from its seventh chapter, a good case can be made for regarding this as one of John's most important influences. This is signaled at the beginning of the book where John says: "Look! He is coming with the clouds" (Rev 1:7/Dan 7:13). He then describes a vision of "one like the Son of Man," whose hair was "as white wool, white as snow" (a description of God in Dan 7:9). Daniel 7 has also contributed to John's description of the throne scene, particularly in Rev 5, with its mention of the scroll, the saints reigning in an everlasting kingdom, and the myriads of worshiping angels. Correspondingly, the throne scene at the end of Revelation has books being opened and judgment pronounced in favor of the saints (Rev 20:12).

As well as the use of the throne imagery, John models his description of the beast from the sea on Daniel's four beasts. Verbal parallels include their rising from the sea (ἀναβαίνω, θάλασσα) their appearance (πάρδαλις, ἄρκος, λέων), making war with the saints (ποιέω, πόλεμος, ἅγιος), speaking haughty words (στόμα λαλοῦν μεγάλα) and the time of their reign (variously given as 3½ years, 42 months, or 1260 days). The major difference is that instead of having a succession of beasts coming from the sea (lion, bear, leopard, beast with ten horns) which represent a succession of empires, John combines these features into a single beast. It is interesting that this is the opposite of what he did with Ezekiel's four-faced creatures, which he turned into four separate creatures.

> and four great beasts came up out of the sea. . . . The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings . . . [,] a second one, that looked like a bear . . . [,] another appeared, like a leopard . . . and dominion was given to it. After this . . . a fourth beast . . . [, which] had ten horns. . . . Then I desired to know the truth . . . concerning the ten horns . . . and concerning the other horn . . . that had eyes and a mouth that spoke arrogantly. . . . As I looked, this horn made war with the holy ones and was prevailing over them. . . . As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them. . . . He shall speak words against the

[24]Vogelgesang, 77.

Most High, shall wear out the holy ones [,] . . . and they shall be given into his power for a time, two times, and half a time (Dan 7:3-7, 19-21, 24-25, abbreviated).

And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads; and on its horns were ten diadems, and on its heads were blasphemous names. And the beast that I saw was like a leopard, its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And the dragon gave it his power and his throne and great authority. . . . The beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months. . . . [I]t was allowed to make war on the saints and to conquer them. It was given authority over every tribe and people and language and nation (Rev 13:2-7, abbreviated).

Also important to John is the Nebuchadnezzar material in Dan 2 through 4. In Dan 2, the king has a dream which no one can interpret. Daniel is brought in and tells Nebuchadnezzar that God has revealed "what will happen at the end of days." The Greek translation of the first part of this phrase (ἃ δεῖ γενέσθαι) is used in John's opening sentence and is repeated in 1:19 (ἃ μέλλει γενέσθαι), 4:1, and 22:6. Beale argues that this divides the book into four sections and that John's replacement of "end of days" with "soon" means that "what Daniel expected to occur in the distant future, the defeat of cosmic evil and ushering in of the kingdom, John expects to begin in his own generation, and perhaps has already been inaugurated."[25]

John's Use of Isaiah

The highest number of allusions in total come from Isaiah, though they have attracted less attention than John's use of Ezekiel and Daniel. This is probably because they are often combined with other texts. For example, in the visionary descriptions of Christ in Rev 1 and 19, the sword that comes from his mouth is almost certainly an allusion to Isa 11:4, but there is no suggestion that John has modeled his vision on that passage. Similarly, the four living creatures in Rev 4 have six wings and sing, "Holy, holy, holy," undoubtedly a reference to Isa 6:3. But the more significant parallels come from Ezekiel and Daniel. Fekkes[26] summarizes John's use of Isaiah under four headings:

(1) *Visionary experience and language:* Isa 6:1-4

(2) *Christological titles and descriptions:* Isa 11:4,10; 22.22; 44:6; 65:15

(3) *Eschatological judgment:*
   a) Holy war and Day of the Lord: Isa 2:19; 34:4; 63:1-3
   b) Oracles against the nations: Isa 13:21; 21:9; 23:8,17; 34:9-14; 47:7-9

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[25]Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament*, 115.

[26]Fekkes, 282.

(4) *Eschatological salvation:*
   a) Salvation oracles in anticipation: Isa 65:15/62:2; 61:10; 60:14/49:23; 43:4; 49:10; 25:8b
   b) Oracles of renewal: Isa 65:15-20a; 25:8ab; 43:18,19; 55:1
   c) New Jerusalem oracles: Isa 52:1; 54:11-12; 60:1-3, 5, 11, 19

One passage where the influence of Isaiah is dominant is John's description of the New Jerusalem. The passage opens with the statement, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth," a reference to Isa 65:17. It is described as "the holy city" (Isa 52:1). It is a place where there will be no more tears (Isa 25:8). The thirsty will be invited to drink from the water of life (Isa 55:1). It is adorned with every precious jewel (Isa 54:11-12) and the nations will bring their glory into it (Isa 60:3, 5). Its gates are left open (Isa 60:11). Indeed, the one who sits on the throne says, "See, I am making all things new," a parallel to Isa 49:19 ("I am about to do a new thing"). Despite the "gloom and doom" that pervades much of Revelation, it is Isaiah's universal vision that shines through John's description of the New Jerusalem.

Interweaving Sources

Matthew, Luke, and John all record appearances of the risen Christ, but they bear little resemblance to Rev 1:12-16. Whatever it was that John saw, what he has written down is an amalgam of OT phrases, taken from descriptions of angels (Dan 10:5-6), the one like a son of man (Dan 7:13), the branch of Jesse (Isa 11:4), the Ancient of Days (Dan 7:9), and the brilliance of the rising sun (Judg 5:31).

> Then I turned to see whose voice it was that spoke to me, and on turning I saw seven golden lampstands, and in the midst of the lampstands I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden sash across his chest. His head and his hair were white as white wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and from his mouth came a sharp, two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining with full force (Rev 1:12-16).

Some of this imagery reappears in the description of the rider in Rev 19:11-16, but it is now interwoven with Ps 2:9 ("he will rule them with a rod of iron"), Isa 63:3 ("tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God"), and Dan 4:34, LXX ("King of kings and Lord of lords").

> His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems; and he has a name inscribed that no one knows but himself. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is called The Word of God. . . . From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he

will rule them with a rod of iron; he will tread the wine press of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name inscribed, "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Rev 19:12-13, 15-16).

Variety of Ways That John Appropriates Scripture

Beale[27] has usefully summarized the various ways that John uses the OT. He speaks of

(1) Using the OT as a literary prototype, such as the influence of Dan 7 on key chapters of Revelation (chaps. 1, 4-5, 13, 17).

(2) Using OT themes, such as "divine warrior," "earthquake," and the notion of "sealed books."

(3) Analogical uses of the OT, as in the command not to add to or subtract from John's work (22:18-19), which borrows from similar commands about the Torah (e.g., Deut 4:1-2).

(4) Universalization of the OT, as when statements made to Israel are applied to the church or to the world.

(5) Informal direct fulfillment of the OT, as when the victors of Rev 2:17 are promised a new name (cf. Isa 62:2/65:15).

(6) Informal, indirect (typological) fulfillment of the OT, as with the use of Isa 22:22 (concerning Eliakim) and Christ's possession of the key of David in the message to Philadelphia (Rev 3:7).

(7) Inverted uses of the OT, as when Isaiah's promise (45:14; 49:23; 60:14) that Gentiles would one day bow before Israel is used for persecuting Jews bowing before the church (Rev 3:9).

(8) Stylistic borrowing of the language of the OT, as when the nominative ὁ ὢν is used in Rev 1:4 to point to the LXX of Exod 3:14.

Juxtaposition of Scriptures

Revelation 5:5-6 has been a key passage for the interpretation of Revelation. In Rev 4, John has a vision of God on his throne, which he describes in language drawn from Ezek 1, Dan 7, and Isa 6. In Rev 5, he sees a scroll and the question is asked, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" (5:2). He then hears that only Jesus can open the scroll: "'See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders a Lamb standing as if it had been slaughtered, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth" (Rev 5:5-6).

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[27]Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament*, 75-128.

The significance of this passage is that we have the juxtaposition of two quite different images of Jesus, one violent (lion) and one gentle (lamb). The first is drawn from Gen 49:9 and Isa 11:1 and represents the Messiah as a powerful military figure (as in the Targums and 1QSb 5:21-29). The lamb is probably the Passover lamb or perhaps the lamb of Isa 53:10 (or both) and seems to represent gentleness and self-sacrifice. Thus according to J.P.M. Sweet, the "Lion of Judah, the traditional messianic expectation, is reinterpreted by the slain Lamb: God's power and victory lie in self-sacrifice."[28] This is an attractive position, as it allows the violence of Revelation to be reinterpreted as symbolic of Christ's self-sacrifice. However, it may be more complicated than that. The lamb of Revelation is not a gentle figure. Even in this passage, the lamb has seven horns, a symbol of power, and seven eyes, a symbol of omniscience. In the following chapter, the destruction brought about by opening the seals causes the people to seek death rather than face the "wrath of the Lamb" (6:16). In 17:14, the kings of the earth make war on the lamb, but he conquers them, for he is "Lord of lords and King of kings." It would appear that, as well as the lion undergoing reinterpretation by being juxtaposed with a lamb, the lamb has also picked up characteristics of the powerful lion. As J. L. Resseguie says: "The Lion of the tribe of Judah interprets what John sees: death on the cross (the Lamb) is not defeat but is the way to power and victory (the Lion). . . . [T]he Lamb, though not in nature a strong animal, is a being of incontrovertible might in this book."[29]

II

The Original Intention of the Ancient Authors?

There can be little doubt that John believed his visions were the fulfillment of the prophecies of Ezekiel, Daniel, and Isaiah. The deliberate modeling of parts of his book on Ezekiel, particularly the end-time sequence, makes this clear. His vision of a New Jerusalem without a temple is, of course, different from what Ezekiel had in mind, but it could be argued that John is here preferring the more universal vision of Isaiah. The final victory of God's kingdom over the beastly kingdoms is a fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy to Nebuchadnezzar (2:35), his vision of "one like a human being" receiving universal worship (7:14) and the resurrection of "those who sleep in the dust" (12:2). By combining features of these three great prophets, John has produced a synthesis

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[28]J.P.M. Sweet, *Revelation* (Philadelphia: Trinity, 1990), 120.

[29]J. L. Resseguie, *Revelation Unsealed: A Narrative Critical Approach to John's Apocalypse* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 34, 129. See further, S. Moyise, "Does the Lion Lie down with the Lamb?" in *Studies in the Book of Revelation*, ed. S. Moyise (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2001), 181-194.

which Bauckham appropriately calls "The Climax of Prophecy."[30]

Furthermore, John takes over many of the themes of the OT which are not in themselves prophecies but can be seen as "fulfilled" in the sense of ultimacy. For example, the theme of God as divine warrior is present in many of the battle scenes in the OT but comes to completion when God wins the ultimate victory over evil in Revelation. Visions of a return from exile are fulfilled in the New Jerusalem, where "mourning and crying and pain will be no more" (21:4). The command not to add to or subtract from the law is "fulfilled" in the even more important command not to add to or subtract from the "revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave to him" (22:18-9).[31]

However, if this view is to be sustained, there are two other types of material which require explanation. The first is those texts that seem to be taken out of context and applied to quite different subjects. For example, the specific promise to Eliakim in Isa 22:22 to "place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open," is applied to Christ because he "holds the power over salvation and judgment."[32] Beale denies that John has taken this verse out of context, since "John apparently understands Isa. 22.22, not originally as a verbal prophecy, but retrospectively as a historical narration about Eliakim which contained a pattern foreshadowing what the Messiah would do on a grander scale."[33] He then lists six parallels to support such a view.

The second type of material consists of those texts where there appears to be dissonance between old and new contexts. For example, Isaiah's promise that Gentiles would come and bow down before Israel (45:14; 49:23; 60:14) is applied to persecuting Jews bowing down before the church. Beale calls this an "inverted" use of Scripture but denies that it is a misappropriation. Isaiah envisaged a time when the enemies of God would be forced to acknowledge his presence among a particular people, namely, the Jews. In John's understanding, that people is now the church, while God's enemies are those Jews who are persecuting the church. It is thus in line with what Isaiah meant, though it is being applied to a different situation.

Beale concludes that what may appear to be "John's novel interpretations of the Old Testament are the result of his new presuppositional lenses through which he perceives the Old Testament."[34] He

[30]See n. 12.

[31]See Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament*, 95-98.

[32]Ibid., 117.

[33]Ibid., 118.

[34]Ibid., 127.

lists these four as being the most significant: (1) Christ corporately represents true Israel of the OT and NT; (2) history is unified by a wise and sovereign plan, so that the earlier parts of canonical history are designed to correspond typologically and point to later parts of inscripturated history; (3) the age of end-time fulfillment has been inaugurated with Christ's first coming; (4) in the light of points 2 and 3, the later parts of biblical history interpret earlier parts, so that Christ as the center of history is the key to interpreting the earlier portions of the OT.[35]

Beale acknowledges that if these presuppositions are regarded as false, then John's interpretations will appear novel or arbitrary. But if they are regarded as true, then John has given us the true meaning of the ancient texts, the meaning intended by the original author.

Misappropriation of the Ancient Authors?

What is difficult about Beale's position is not so much the presuppositions listed above but the fact that he relies on Hirsch and Vanhoozer to claim that John preserves the original meaning of the ancient texts. He himself says that "John is offering new understandings of Old Testament texts and fulfilments of them which may have been surprising to an Old Testament audience."[36] But the key for Beale is that these would not have been surprising to a "New Testament audience which retrospectively looks at the Old Testament in the light of the above presuppositions."[37] The thrust of my "Reply" was to suggest that Beale cannot have it both ways. If he thinks that John viewed the OT through a set of presuppositional lenses and thus offered new understandings of old texts (which the original authors would have found surprising!), how can he maintain that John has preserved the original authorial meaning of these texts?

The thrust of his "Rejoinder" and his response[38] to Paulien's article is to argue, based on Hirsch and Vanhoozer, for a broader definition of "authorial intention." If John is offering the true meaning of the ancient texts by viewing them through his new presuppositional lenses, this is clearly not identical with the thought processes of the original authors. But need we confine "authorial intention" to the immediate thought processes of the author? Beale cites Hirsch's notion of "transhistorical intentions."

Authors using some genres will extend meaning to analogous and

[35]Ibid., 127-128.

[36]Ibid., 128.

[37]Ibid.

[38]G. K. Beale, "A Response to Jon Paulien on the Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," *AUSS* 39 (2001): 23-34.

even unforeseeable situations so that their meaning is intended to have presently unknowable, future implications. In this respect, one can "speak of open-ended authorial intentions" and "extended meaning" in which an original meaning can tolerate some revision in cognitive content and yet not be essentially altered. . . . Interpretation should go beyond the author's letter, but it must never exceed the author's spirit."[39]

Beale illustrates this by borrowing Hirsch's example of a traffic regulation that says that it is against the law for a wheeled vehicle to pass through a red light. In the future, a vehicle might be invented that does not have wheels but runs on compressed air and this might require a change in the wording of the law (omitting the word "wheeled," for example). But it would be wrong to claim that this constitutes a change in meaning. The original intention of laws like this is to be applied to analogous situations, even if they cannot at the moment be envisaged. Thus Beale challenges those that speak of John's misappropriation of Scripture by asking, "Can we say with confidence that John's interpretations do *not* fall in line with legitimate extensions and applications of the meaning of Old Testament texts?"[40] He then asserts: "Surely it is possible that someone like Isaiah, if he were living in the first century, might well think the extended application of his prophecies to Jesus would fall within the parameters of his understanding of what he wrote."[41]

Perhaps he would. But I believe that we have now moved a long way from what most people would understand as preserving original authorial intention. Vanhoozer's quotation against revisionist history states that it is wrong to "impute meaning to a text that an author could not have intended." To have any force, this surely must mean "in their own situation and context." If it is to be glossed with "or could have intended had they been living in our time and shared our beliefs," it points to something quite different. Thus I agree with Beale that there is enough continuity between Revelation and the OT to deny the accusation of misappropriation. But I think his need to speak of "willed types" and "extended meaning" also demonstrates the inadequacy of our first category. What is needed is a model that speaks of "trajectories" of interpretation and can do justice to both continuity and discontinuity (or, as Beale would put it, varying degrees of contextual awareness).

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[39]Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent," 160.

[40]Ibid., 173.

[41]Ibid.

Interpretation as Trajectory?

The attempt of Hirsch and Vanhoozer to broaden the meaning of "authorial intention" is important but misdirected. The reality to which they are pointing is that interpretation takes place in the flux of history. The NT authors were not seeking to ascertain the meaning of Isaiah in some isolated historical moment. They were conscious of being part of an ongoing tradition. Beale would appear to agree with this, for he says: "In my commentary on Revelation, I often found that a number of subsequent exegetical reflections on the Old Testament text (by later Old Testament authors, Jewish writers, and other New Testament writers) together with that text had influence on John and that he himself in good prophetic fashion further expanded on the Old Testament text's meaning."[42]

Where I differ from Beale is that I believe this represents a significant shift from a purely author-centered account of meaning. That is why in my monograph, after five chapters of predominantly historical investigation, I ended with a chapter on intertextuality. The purpose of that chapter was to show how insights from reader-centered approaches to interpretation need to be combined with traditional historical approaches to do justice to John's complex use of Scripture. In particular, I wanted to find a way of explaining John's "surprising" interpretations, such as a New Jerusalem without a temple and the juxtaposition of lion and lamb. I asked myself: "What is the most important factor in these interpretations, the original author, the text itself or John's presuppositions?" And since the Qumran community thought Ezekiel was referring to a restored temple, it seemed inescapable that the decisive factor in this instance was John himself. And if that is the case, then reader-centered interpretation might well have insights to offer. I found this in the work of Thomas Greene, who offers a typology of "imitation" in Renaissance poetry. He says that "each literary work contains by definition what might be called a revivalist initiative, a gesture that signals the intent of reanimating an earlier text or texts situated on the far side of a rupture. . . . [I]t would seem useful to distinguish four types of strategies of humanist imitation, each of which involves a distinct response to anachronism and each an implicit perspective on history."[43]

His four forms of imitation are reproductive, eclectic, heuristic, and dialectic. The first is when the author perceives the subtext as coming from a golden age which is now over. All that can be done is to rewrite

[42]Ibid., 169.

[43]T. M. Greene, *The Light in Troy: Imitation and Discovery in Renaissance Poetry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 37-38.

the subtext "as though no other form of celebration could be worthy of its dignity."[44] Though much of Revelation is modeled on the OT, John's Christian presuppositions prevent him from adopting such a reverence for the past. Put another way, there is not much that John is unwilling to change or adapt.

Eclectic imitation is where the author draws on a wide range of sources, seemingly at random, without laying special emphasis on any one of them. The key is that the "art of poetry finds its materials everywhere, materials bearing with them the aura of their original contexts, charged with an evocative power implanted by the poet or the convention from which they are taken."[45] Though few scholars would agree that John's choice of Scriptures was random, the visionary nature of the material might well suggest that some of the texts came to John because of their "evocative power" rather than theological or doctrinal content. In particular, this form of imitation emphasizes that an author cannot make a text mean whatever he or she likes. It might be difficult to pin down the exact meaning of "Babylon" for John, but it certainly does not refer to a city of justice and righteousness. Like language itself, interpretation is *constrained* by past usage but not *confined* to it.

Heuristic imitation is when the new work seeks to *define* itself through the rewriting or modernizing of a past text. It advertises itself not simply as an imitation of the old but its true successor. This comes about "only through a double process of discovery: on the one hand through a tentative and experimental groping for the subtext in its specificity and otherness, and on the other hand through a groping for the modern poet's own appropriate voice and idiom."[46] John almost certainly sees his work as the true fulfillment of the OT, but that is not a simple or linear process. He has swallowed the scroll (Rev 10:10) and now has to find his own voice and idiom. He must discern what the Spirit is saying to the churches of Asia.

Lastly, dialectical imitation is when the poem engages the precursor in such a way that neither is able to absorb or master the other. The effect is to create "a kind of struggle between texts and between eras which cannot easily be resolved."[47] John's juxtaposition of lion and lamb is a good example of this. On the one hand, it would appear that John has alluded to Gen 49:9 in order to reinterpret its militancy by the slaughtered lamb. But as we continue reading the book of Revelation, we find that the

[44]Ibid., 38.

[45]Ibid., 39.

[46]Ibid., 40.

[47]Ibid., 45.

lamb seems to have picked up many of the connotations of the lion. As Davidson says of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," "The work alluded to reflects upon the present context even as the present context absorbs and changes the allusion."[48] In other words, it creates "a kind of struggle between texts and between eras which cannot easily be resolved."

John was not seeking the original authorial meaning of the OT authors, but seeking to discern the *trajectory* of interpretation that makes most sense of his present. This meets Beale's concern that the "New Testament authors creatively develop 'new interpretations' of Old Testament texts but not 'new meanings,' since that *could* be understood to indicate that what they develop is not organically related in some way to the earlier source text."[49] The idea of trajectory safeguards Beale's concern that John does not *arbitrarily* impose new meaning on ancient texts, for the trajectory does have a starting point. But it also meets the other requirement, that some of John's appropriations would have been surprising to an OT audience because he knows and believes things that they did not. I do not think Beale does justice to this end of the trajectory when he claims that Ezekiel's restored temple or Isaiah's promise to Eliakim have received new significance in Revelation, but not a new meaning. How is exegesis served by claiming that an absent temple is what Ezekiel *really* meant when he prophesied a restored temple?

The idea of trajectory also explains why other communities, such as that at Qumran, interpreted these texts differently. It is not simply that they viewed the texts through a different set of lenses, as if belief/experience mechanistically determines interpretation. It is more that they were seeking to discern meaning along a different set of trajectories. For them, the trajectories move from the ancient texts to the establishment of the Qumran community. But they do not stop there. A process of discernment is required to determine how the trajectory got there and where it goes next (i.e., what is still to happen). In other words, interpretation is not simply the inevitable consequence of presuppositions. There is still the matter of personal (or corporate) choice.[50]

Beale objects to my use of the word "choice," for it suggests to him something that is arbitrary. But as I have explained above, the trajectory model has a starting point and so is not arbitrary. But there is nevertheless an aspect to interpretation that involves choice. Paul also held to the four

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[48]H. Davidson, *T. S. Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in the Waste Land* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1985), 117.

[49]Beale, "Questions of Authorial Intent," 161-162.

[50]See my article, "Seeing the Old Testament through a Lens," *Irish Biblical Studies* 23 (2001): 36-42.

presuppositions mentioned by Beale, but this did not lead him to describe the authorities as Beast/Babylon or indeed make much use of Ezekiel and Daniel. To say that Paul and John looked at the Scriptures through their presuppositional lenses is only half the story. They also made choices which were no doubt obvious to them but were not necessarily obvious to others.

Conclusion

If Vanhoozer is correct that the only valid form of interpretation is that which seeks to determine what the original author intended, then John has misappropriated the Scriptures. He gives meanings to texts that could not possibly have been in the mind of the original authors. Beale's attempt to show that they are quite understandable given John's presuppositions is beside the point. The ancient authors did not share these presuppositions and so could not have had these meanings in mind. This leaves two options. The first is to acknowledge that John was a man of his time and used modes of interpretation that were considered valid then.[51] Some would wish to call this misappropriation, but that seems anachronistic to me. He was simply doing what all first-century interpreters did. Or secondly, Vanhoozer is wrong. The meaning of a text is not solely what the original author intended. That is a post-Enlightenment perspective that was not shared by the authors of Scripture and is increasingly challenged today. In order to assert its truth, Vanhoozer spends several hundred pages broadening the understanding of authorial intention to something that will reach out into the future. Indeed for him, authorial intention finds its maximal expression in the divine intention which supervenes it: "The problem of the 'fuller meaning' of Scripture and of determining the divine author's intent is precisely the problem of choosing the intentional context that best enables one maximally to describe the communicative action embodied in Scripture."[52]

I wish to add only that this is not what most people would regard as seeking original authorial intention. Indeed, it seems closer to what I am advocating, a discernment of trajectories. Like language users, interpreters would be foolish to ignore what has gone before them. But meaning is not dictated by past usage. It involves a process of discernment.

John is serious about the original context of his allusions, in so far as the trajectories have a starting point. But his focus is not on that starting point. It is on what has happened since, as a clue to what is still to come. John is a seer not a scholar.

[51]This issue is debated in a number of the contributions to G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

[52]Vanhoozer, 265.