

Singing New Songs: Traditions in Conversation

By Kendra Haloviak

My earliest interest in theology was sparked by fascinating conversations in my parents' home on Sabbath afternoons as Seventh-day Adventists from different parts of the world filled our living room. Pastors and teachers sent from their conferences or divisions to the General Conference Archives and Ellen G. White Estate to reconsider their theological questions would do research all week assisted by my father, and then they would often share Sabbath meals with our family. I listened as our guests asked questions and enthusiastically shared their convictions.

It seemed that everything was somehow related—Ellen White's ministry, understandings of Scripture, views of salvation and the nature of Christ, considerations of last-day events, even church organization and policies. During those years in the late 1970s and early 1980s, several values came to the fore for my family: the importance of studying for oneself, the potential inherent in thoughtful questions, the necessity of dialogue with others, and the joy of discovery in community. As a teenager, I enthusiastically embraced my faith tradition as one engaged in the most interesting and important conversations imaginable.

My choice of dissertation topic as a graduate student—the hymns in the book of Revelation—emerged from almost twenty years of theological conversations. Those important conversations on Sabbath afternoons had often emphasized the victory of the slain Lamb, and drew me to the sections in Revelation that most clearly celebrate this victory.

Numerous conversations with Roy Branson about moral imagination, worship, and social ethics opened up new theological categories and cross-disciplinary questions. Teaching the book of Revelation to Seventh-day Adventist college students allowed me to witness a hunger for the book as one that touched their lives in the present—in a United States without

Sunday laws, yet with huge social challenges. Experiencing one of Charles Teel's liturgical celebrations last year in Chicago confirmed my conviction that Revelation's hymns provide key moments within the narrative that anticipate an amazing future and thus compel moral response. Graduate school introduced me to a literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin, whose insights into language and meaning offered new and exciting strategies for reading Revelation with an eye to ethical responsibility.

As I explored Revelation's hymns, I heard voices in conversation from different times and places. Especially in the hymns, Hebrew prophetic, Jewish apocalyptic, and Christian liturgical traditions collide and collaborate.¹ The traditions present in the hymns remain in conversation throughout the narrative. The theology of the book of Revelation is embodied in different traditions that are being remembered and re-formed. The theology of the book of Revelation is conversation!

Like the people in my parents' living room, the voices singing Revelation's hymns considered the relationship between their community through time, and the world around them. They wondered about their faith tradition in light of new theological convictions. Their convictions suggest to Seventh-day Adventists, and all who value this final book of the Christian canon, that using this text to shut down conversation is fundamentally opposed to the nature of the book itself. Rather, to embrace this work is to join a great multitude in conversation without end.

Meaning as Conversation

One of Mikhail Bakhtin's insights is his understanding of literary genre, or form of writing, as "form-shaping ideology."² Rather than genre as the neutral container of meaning, genre is inseparable from meaning, a particular way of envisioning human experience. The Seer uses the apocalyptic genre because he has to; it is the best way to grasp and articulate the meaning of his worldview.³

Ideas do not appear out of nowhere. A text arises out of a particular setting, from specific voices, which are in conversation with other voices. Many scholars suggest that the earliest Jewish apocalyptic works arose out of communities that were wrestling with how to respond in a new social context of persecution.⁴ Thus, apocalyptic literature grew out of new experiences in which other genres of literary expression were no longer adequate.⁵

The Seer remembers this context as he creates his Apocalypse. The experiences of Jews under Antiochus are recalled by this Christian writer of the Roman

Empire. As the Seer writes from his context, he remembers the second-century apocalyptists and he remembers their conversations with the Hebrew prophets.⁶ In order to express his Christian convictions concerning God and God's relationship to humanity, the Seer needs elements of both prophetic and apocalyptic literature. Apocalyptic literature's focus on the future must be reshaped in light of the conviction that Messiah had already arrived within human history. Jewish apocalyptic literature's view of a restored justice only at a future radical break in human history had to be re-formed when the Christian apocalypticist believed that the future had arrived in the historical figure of Jesus the Christ.

For the Christian Seer of Patmos, something significant had already happened within human history. The apocalyptic genre is modified by contemporary Christian experience. Apocalyptic literature's future focus entered a conversation with prophetic literature's emphasis on present, earthly realities. The Christian literary landscape was suddenly exploding with temporal and spatial possibilities.

In the book of Revelation, worship moments, especially the hymns, hold these conversations together. In the hymns, the apocalyptic genre's vast cosmic scope remembers the experiences of the prophets, their calls and convictions, and the earthly social contexts of singing and service. The following section considers the conversations between prophetic and apocalyptic traditions in the first of Revelation's sixteen hymns.

The Trisagion: Revelation's Hymns as Traditions in Conversation

The book of Revelation's worship scenes contain elements atypical of apocalyptic texts. These elements highlight the apocalyptic genre in conversation with the prophetic genre. The Seer repeatedly revisits the view of God and humanity depicted in prophetic literature.

Typically, an apocalyptic work emphasizes the huge gap between the divine or heavenly realm and humanity. Almost every compositional element in an apocalypse stresses this distance, including out-of-this-world imagery, strange spatial and temporal realities, a cosmic canvas that includes bizarre creatures and holy beings, and the end as a radical break from present social-historical realities. Whether a tour of other worlds or a review of history, the visionary's limitations are punctuated by the strange discord between everyday life and the experience of the

vision. The human, an onlooker to the events, usually requires a guide or intercessor or translator just to grasp the visual images minimally.

The beginning of Revelation 4 sounds a lot like any good apocalyptic text, complete with the assumption of a three-tiered universe,⁷ movement into the heavenly realm through an open door,⁸ and a throne room vision report that includes God enthroned and surrounded by otherworldly beings.⁹ A human visionary has entered the realm of the transcendent. Expecting to hear a review of the epochs of human history culminating in a radical end of time, John instead hears singing “day and night without ceasing” (4:8b).¹⁰

throne room vision report, when Isaiah sees the embodiment of God’s glory in the context of Judah’s temple. In the narrative account, no intermediary—neither human priest nor angelic being—stands between Isaiah and the Lord. After a brief description of the throne room, one of the winged beings proclaims:

Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord of hosts,
the whole earth is full
of his glory. (Isa. 6:3)

Holy, holy, holy,
the Lord God, the Almighty,
the one who was and is
and is to come. (Rev. 4:8c)

As in Isaiah’s vision, John’s includes otherworldly

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The book of Revelation does not include a clear review of history.¹¹ It does not describe a journey through distant worlds.¹² It does not even involve an otherworldly guide who interprets what is going on.¹³ Instead, it is the figure of the exalted Christ who first interprets for John. The one who in 1:17-18 calls himself “the first and the last and the living one,” who “was dead,” but is “alive forever and ever,” says to John: “As for the mystery of the seven stars that you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lamp stands: the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lamp stands are the seven churches” (1:20).

This same figure then continues by dictating to John the letters to the seven churches (2:1-3:22). The exalted Christ is the otherworldly guide. This is a fascinating re-formation of apocalyptic. In these first three chapters, there is no intermediary between John and transcendent divinity. Thus, the gap between the heavenly and earthly realms, between divinity and humanity, is softened. Instead of the vast distance typical of the form-shaping ideology of apocalyptic literature, John actually ends up a part of the worship scene (5:4-5, 13a).

By taking the main human character into the heavens and landing him before the throne, the Seer recalls encounters with the divine in throne room visions of the prophets, where the culmination of the experience was worship, not otherworldly journeys; where the human bowed before holiness, not history. The only place in the entire Hebrew Scriptures where one finds the phrase “holy, holy, holy,” is in another

creatures who give praise to God. This praise and its inclusion within the larger vision is remembered in Revelation 4, not only formally and linguistically, but also ideologically. The cultural values of the writer of Isaiah and the entire epoch that shaped those values enters, along with John, through the “door standing open in heaven.” The first five chapters of the book of Isaiah portray Judah as a people who no longer worship God faithfully. There are false idols in the land that are the creations of human hands (Isa. 2:8).

Revelation’s narrative revisits these ideas in the context of Jewish Christians who lived in the Roman Empire. Images from Isaiah 1-5 pulled into this apocalypse bring the prophetic genre into this apocalyptic work. For example, in both Isaiah the prophecy and Revelation the Christian apocalypse, Judah tramples God’s courts (Isa. 1:12; Rev. 11:2), Jerusalem acts like a whore (Isa. 1:20; Rev. 17), people worship the work of their own hands (Isa. 2:8; Rev. 9:20-21); therefore, they hide themselves in rocks and caves and caverns from the presence of God (Isa. 2:10, 19, 21; Rev. 6:15-16). In both Isaiah and Revelation, Judah acts like Sodom (Isa. 3:9; Rev. 11:8), placing material goods above all else (Isa. 3:18-23; Rev. 18:9-24), even human lives (Isa. 3:14-15, 5:8-23; Rev. 18:13b).

Having been created as God’s own vineyard (Isa. 5:1-7; Rev. 14:14-16), Judah, in both prophecy and



apocalypse, ignores the ways of her Creator and becomes a vineyard of wild grapes, that is, of bloodshed and injustice (Isa. 5:7; Rev. 14:17-20). Therefore, the wicked will be devoured by the sword (Isa. 1:20; Rev. 19:15), and then the city will again be called "the city of righteousness" (Isa. 1:26; Rev. 21:1-5a). It will be located upon Mount Zion (Isa. 2:3, 4:2-6; Rev. 14:1). There the inhabitants will be called holy (Isa. 4:3; Rev. 22:11), and God will be present day and night on Mount Zion (Isa. 4:5; Rev. 7:15-17; 21:3-5a), providing shade from the heat (Isa. 4:6; Rev. 7:15-17) for all who are on God's holy mountain. The book of Isaiah's image-shaping theology (view of God) and image-shaping ideology (view of human existence) enter into the book of Revelation.¹⁴

The vision of the throne room recorded in Isaiah 6 carries much more than a hymn into the book of Revelation. It also carries a way of thinking about humanity's relationship to a holy God. Isaiah brings ethics into this apocalypse. Within the book of Isaiah, this worship scene witnesses to everything that Judah could have and should have been, and to all that God already was. This particular prophetic work portrays human existence as moved by the divine to immediate action in the earthly present. All of the earlier accounts

concerning worship and moral action (Isa. 1-5) are present in the experience of Isaiah before the heavenly throne (Isa. 6).

In this first hymn of the book of Revelation, readers can notice the conversation between the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions. Careful readers of the hymn sense the presence of earlier ideologies and their former contexts. While expressing his apocalyptic view of human experience, the Seer includes a perspective on human experience from a prophetic context.¹⁵ The Seer and his first-century social location are joined by a fellow traveler, the writer of Isaiah, of generations earlier. The Seer's apocalyptic view of the ultimate transcendent reality includes the prophetic encounter with an immanent divinity.

As the Seer creates an apocalyptic work with heavenly beings in continuous praise to God, conversations with prophetic literature pull the prophet Isaiah and the nation of Judah into the scene. Revelation invites readers to see like John and like Isaiah, to hear living creatures and seraphs singing. The scene of apocalyptic praise in the transcendent realm is also an encounter with an immanently present God who calls all heavenly and earthly beings to true worship and social justice.

These conversations between genres are multidirectional. The transcendent realm takes on the ideology of prophetic throne room encounters, and the throne room visions of prophets are given cosmic significance in the context of the book of Revelation. The Seer changes the Trisagion from "holy, holy, holy, Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:3), to "holy, holy, holy, the Lord God, the Almighty" (Rev. 4:8c). This is an example of how the Seer takes the prophetic view of God and humanity and expands them across time and space.

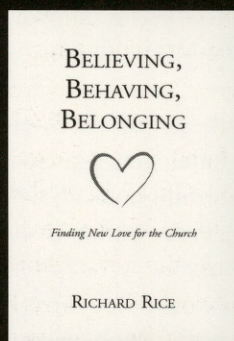
The "Lord of hosts," or "Lord of armies," connotes the heavenly lord of a localized, earthly realm. For the Seer, this description is changed to "the Lord God, the Almighty," which expands God's authority to a universal domain, including supernatural beings and powers. Whereas the writer of Isaiah portrays a God concerned with the future of Judah, the Seer's apocalyptic canvas involves all of humanity from all times and places. The use of "the Almighty" declares this conviction.

The hymnic lines that follow each Trisagion are also important. In Isaiah, the hymn concludes: "the whole earth is full of his glory." The Seer changes the passage to: "the One who was and is and is to come." In apocalyptic, the earth, even the whole earth, is not a large enough realm! Apocalyptic literature expands the scope of the vision to involve the entire cosmos. "The whole earth" is too limited. The God who cannot

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be confined by space is also located throughout all time: “the One who was and is and is to come.” Divinity permeates all locations in space and time.

If the reader had not already heard a version of this phrase twice earlier in the book of Revelation (1:4, 8), it would be shocking because it contains an unusual formula that shifts from time to space. Since the first two sections of the description, “who was and is,” denote existence in time, readers expect the phrase to conclude “and will be.” Instead, the description, the first Christian use of this divine description, ends with: “and is to come.”¹⁶ The Lord God Almighty, the recipient of this praise, will be described with similar language throughout the book of Revelation (1:4, 8; 4:8; 11:17; 16:5).¹⁷

In the first appearance of the divine title, the One, “who is and who was and who is to come” is the source

Lord, God the Almighty are similar, as both are referred to as reigning. In addition, the obvious absence of the phrase, “is to come” in this part of the narrative (in contrast with the earlier descriptions in 1:4, 8; 4:8c) suggests that the arrival of God, and the reign of the Messiah and God Almighty have already begun!

There is one final account of this title found during the third bowl plague. In the “solo song” in 16:5b, an angel cries out: “you are just, who is and who was, the holy one, for you have judged these things.” Later voices respond using some of the language found in the Trisagion for the One seated on the throne: “Yes, Lord God, the Almighty, your judgments are true and just.” However, within the narrative, it is the Christ-figure who judges (19:11); that is, he who is called “the word of God” (19:13b) and “king of kings and Lord of lords” (19:16b).

Whereas the writer of Isaiah portrays a God concerned with the future of Judah, the Seer’s apocalyptic canvas involves all of humanity from all time and places.

of “grace and peace,” along with the seven spirits and Jesus Christ (1:4-5). In the second appearance, the voice of the Lord God declares, “I am the Alpha and the Omega” (1:8a), which is then followed by the further identification of the speaker, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.”

It is interesting that this declaration and description follow directly after the description of the parousia in 1:7 where the word “to come” is also used: “Behold he is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.” In verse 7, the figure of Jesus Christ “is coming.” In verse 8, the Lord God Almighty is the one “who is to come.” It seems that the Seer’s Christian convictions concerning the divine nature of the exalted Christ and his proximity to God allow him to blur the descriptions of the two here and throughout the book of Revelation.

Later in the narrative, during another hymn (11:15b), loud voices in heaven declare that “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah, and he will reign forever and ever.” Then immediately the twenty-four elders sing to the “Lord, God the Almighty, who is and who was, for you have taken your great power and begun to reign.” Once again, the descriptions of the Messiah figure and the

Christian convictions re-form apocalyptic visions. As an apocalyptic text, Revelation is able to express the cosmic ramifications of worshiping Christ. Christ is God. Christ is judge. Filled with Christian ideology, the apocalyptic genre is never the same. A Christian apocalyptic genre is born!

Revelation’s hymns remember the prophetic call to worship and social justice as all of creation sings before the throne. At its most “apocalyptic” moments, the book of Revelation is in conversation with prophetic literature’s portrayal of God’s relationship to humanity. Revelation remembers the prophetic works and elevates them, creating a new masterpiece out of their ideas and contexts, now being celebrated from a new perspective, a new place.

The new place reflected the relatively small Christian communities that worshiped Jesus within large cities of the Roman Empire. John J. Collins states that, “The worship of Jesus, and the way in which divine imagery is applied to him, marks perhaps the most fundamental point at which Revelation departs from Jewish precedent.”¹⁸ Christians experienced new ways of seeing



and responding to human existence, which required new ways to articulate their experiences.

The Seer's apocalypse includes throne room encounters and the worship of Christ. This combination creates a conversation between the transcendent, which so often overshadows all activity in apocalyptic literature, and the realm of human experience. Similarly, the future eschaton so often the focus of apocalyptic literature, maintains a conversation with the present experience of those in worship before the throne of God. Careful readings observe this textual richness created by conversations among Hebrew prophetic, Jewish apocalyptic, and Christian liturgical traditions. Contemporary readers enter this work needing ears to hear the ideological medley found in its hymns. Revelation's theology is conversation!

Singing New Songs: Conversation Without End

In a recent conversation, Fritz Guy told me that good theology has at least three qualities: it is humble in its claims, respectful of the mystery, and (here he paused and grinned) . . . fun! I suggest that the Seer embraces all three qualities.

First, the Seer is humble in that he respects various

voices. As he creatively and passionately creates his narrative, he does so keenly aware of those who have gone before. Rather than claim a superior theological position, he engages the traditions he loves so much.

The Seer is also respectful of the mystery of theology as he places different views of God and God's relationship to humanity side-by-side in his work. Ideas carried in Hebrew prophetic, Jewish apocalyptic, and Christian liturgical traditions all contribute insights into the mystery that remains mystery, and before whom all creatures bow in worship and praise.

And the Seer seems to have fun creating a text full of scenes of worship, where each reading is a new song! Remembering the believing community through time, the congregations of Asia Minor sing hymns made even more meaningful through their new experiences, convictions, and contexts.

Seventh-day Adventists have long embraced the final book of the Christian canon as crucial for their theology and mission. If this book shapes our theology, then, like the Seer, we must be humble in our claims, respecting the different voices within our tradition, among our fellow believers, and in the world around us. Rather than close down conversation, the book of Revelation invites others to join in! We should eagerly anticipate the ways new voices will enrich our readings



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of this unique apocalypse.

If this book shapes our worship, then, like the Seer, we will stand in awe of the mystery—an Almighty God who meets people in earthly throne rooms, and a Christ who is God of the cosmos. Prophetic and apocalyptic views of the mystery join in conversation with Christian convictions concerning the Christ. Such conversation enriches human contemplation of the mystery. The apocalyptic view expands Christian

his painting according to a certain technique. In real fact, seeing and representation merge. New means of representation force us to see new aspects of visible reality, but these new aspects cannot clarify or significantly enter our horizon if the new means necessary to consolidate them are lacking. One is inseparable from the other.”

“The same is true in literature. The artist must learn to see reality with the eyes of the genre. A particular aspect of reality can only be understood in connection with the particular means of representing it. On the other hand, the means of expression are only applicable to certain aspects of reality. The artist does not

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worship across all time and space, even as the prophetic view reminds Christians of a God who calls people to true worship and social justice.

If this book shapes our mission, then each new choir member enhances the continuing conversation, which is the life of the church. Remembering the believing community through time, our congregations sing songs from new experiences, considering ways to embody the songs in our contemporary contexts. For all whose voices join the great multitude, it is conversation without end.

Notes and References

1. David E. Aune, *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger (Dallas, Tex.: Word, 1997), 52a:314–17, identifies sixteen hymnic utterances within the narrative of the book of Revelation: 4:8c, 11; 5:9b–10, 12b, 13b; 7:10b, 12; 11:15b, 17–18; 12:10b–12; 15:3b–4; 16:5b–7b; 19:1b–2, 3, 5b, 6b–8. See also, Michael A. Harris, “The Literary Function of Hymns in the Apocalypse of John” (Ph.D. diss., Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1989), 4–16.

2. For Bakhtin, meaning can only occur through contemplation of the entire creative work as a particular form that embraces a particular perspective on human experience. Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Poetics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 282–83, begins its exploration of Bakhtin’s understanding of genre with the following description: “[A] genre, understood as a way of seeing, is best described neither as a ‘form’ (in the usual sense) nor as an ‘ideology’ (which could be paraphrased as a set of tenets) but as ‘form-shaping ideology’—a specific kind of creative activity embodying a specific sense of experience.” Mikhail Bakhtin and P. N. Medvedev, *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, trans. Albert J. Wehrle (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 134, states: “The process of seeing and conceptualizing reality must not be severed from the process of embodying it in the forms of a particular genre. It would be naive to assume that the painter sees everything first and then shapes what he saw and puts it onto the surface of

squeeze pre-made material onto the surface of the work. The surface helps him to see, understand, and select his material.”

3. For purposes of this paper, “Seer” refers to the recipient of the vision, the narrative’s implied author. Several times within the narrative, the “narrator” will identify himself as “John.” Jewish apocalyptic literature carries a pessimistic view of the human situation, whose only hope for societal justice is divine interaction. Thus, apocalyptic literature emphasizes the transcendent realm and a future break in history.

Setting itself to be the true reality “unveiled” for the few who can “see,” apocalyptic literature remains intrigued with strange symbolism, celestial geography, and future epochs. The human visionaries within the narratives are constantly reminded that the world of apocalyptic is far from their own. The assumption of such literature is that the most important aspects of reality cannot be seen by humanity and need unveiling.

This idea is underscored by the presence of an otherworldly being, usually an *angelus interpres* (interpreting angel), who guides both the human’s interpretation of the vision and his journey. The human’s abilities are inadequate to the task. He requires outside help. The gap between what is human and what is transcendent remains stark.

The canvas for apocalyptic literature is the entire cosmos. Apocalyptic ideology is vast in scope, claiming spatial and temporal comprehensiveness. From the vantage point of the transcendent, apocalyptic literature considers the whole of human history. The visionaries, suddenly unlimited by temporal existence, can see the past and future as clearly as the present. In order to capture the whole of human history, apocalyptic literature must include the end of human history as currently experienced. Thus, this genre anticipates a future punctuated by a radical break from what is currently and historically known. Apocalyptic literature also expresses a heightened sense of good and evil. Ambiguity is minimized. Good and evil are given supernatural force through embodiment in mythic figures and events. The loyal are not described by their nation or culture, but by their choices for God in the midst of oppressive affluence and persecution.

In apocalyptic literature, human social history is on the



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decline. From all earthly perspectives, evil appears to be winning the day. Faithlessness and accommodation, deceit and violence rule the affairs of the earth. However, the greater, revealed reality affirms the ultimate defeat of evil and all those who attach themselves to it. Apocalyptic literature concludes that although only divine interaction into human history can eradicate evil and its consequences and vindicate the loyal, such action—a type of eschatological judgment—will indeed occur. The resulting radical break will be so pervasive that individual human bodies, cities, entire civilizations, and the cosmos will be transformed. Even people who have died will be able to experience this transformation through resurrection.

For discussions of the ideology of apocalyptic literature, see D. S. Russell, *The Method and Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1964), 104–57; and Klaus Koch, *The Rediscovery of Apocalyptic*, trans. Margaret Kohl, *Studies in Biblical Theology* 22 (London: SCM, 1972), 18–35.

4. The consensus among scholars concerning the birth of Jewish apocalyptic literature is during the first half of the second century B.C.E. John J. Collins, “From Prophecy to Apocalypticism: The Expectation of the End,” in *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism*, John J. Collins, ed. (New York: Continuum, 2000), 1:147, says: “The first major cluster of Jewish apocalyptic writings originated in the period shortly before and during the Maccabean revolt.”

5. When a genre is carried into a new context, the genre must be modified since, like life, the creative event is not merely discovered, but also shaped. New understandings of human experience and new social experiences yield new genres. Morson and Emerson, *Mikhail Bakhtin*, 277, state: “Literary forms change not because devices wear out, but because real people create new ways to understand their changing lives.”

6. Consider ways the ideology of Hebrew prophetic literature differs from the ideology of Jewish apocalyptic literature (note 3, above) in expressions of God and God's relationship to humanity, descriptions of time and space, eschatology, and social ethics. Apocalyptic literature keeps wrestling with its literary ancestors. A conversation between the ideology of the prophets and the ideology of the apocalypticists is maintained, particularly in the hymns of the book of Revelation.

7. A typical feature of apocalyptic literature, the book of Revelation also hints at this view in describing the one like the son of man having the keys to the door of the underworld (1:18). The earthly and heavenly realms fill out the rest of the three-tiered universe. For examples, see I Enoch, Apocalypse of Ezra, and Testament of Abraham, in James H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:13–89, 571–79, 882–902.

8. Aune, *Revelation*, 281, discusses this open door as a typical feature of apocalyptic denoting a scene of revelation. For example, see I Enoch 14:14b–15, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 20–21.

9. For examples, see I Enoch 14, 71, and Testament of Levi 2:6; 5:1, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 20–21, 49–50,

788–795. In the throne room scene of Revelation 4–5, there is repeated use of the words translated as “around” or “circling” (4:3, 4, 6, 8). The throne is surrounded by a rainbow (4:3), by twenty-four thrones with elders upon them (4:4), and by four living creatures described as having eyes all around (4:6b–8). Other descriptions of images and beings that surround the throne room include: lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder (4:5a), seven torches (4:5b), a sea of glass (4:6a), a host of angels (5:11), and finally all living things (5:13). The same Greek word is used in 7:11 to describe another scene of worship.

10. Aune, *Revelation*, 303, notes that the only other example of ceaseless praise found in an apocalyptic work is Testament of Levi 3:8.

11. It certainly does not include one in Revelation 4–5. Although some interpreters of the book of Revelation base their entire reading of the book on a review of the epochs of human history (specifically, and in different ways, the historicist and futurist approaches to Revelation), I agree with John J. Collins and the Apocalypse Group of the Society of Biblical Literature Genres Project that the book of Revelation does not include a historical review.

12. Although this is certainly a visit into the heavenly realm, it is not the beginning of a tour of celestial places like most Type II apocalypses. Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Early Christian Apocalypses,” *Semeia* 14 (1979):71, says: “John is not led from region to region in the beyond as is typical in works of the journey type.”

13. Some suggest that there is never an angelus interpres as in typical apocalyptic texts. An elder will provide some guidance in 5:5; 7:13–17, and an angel, eager to avoid being worshiped by John, will give some direction to him in 19:9–10; 21:9–14; 22:1a, 6, 8–9. But they never actually interpret for John (5:5; 17:1).

14. These motifs from Isaiah are all from material just prior to (in anticipation of) the throne room scene and Isaiah's encounter with divinity in chapter 6.

15. Aune supports this further by interpreting the repeated phrase “in the Spirit” (1:10; 4:2; 17:3; 21:10), as “in a prophetic trance.” See Aune, *Revelation*, 283; and G. B. Caird, *The Revelation of Saint John, Black's New Testament Commentary* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1966), 59.

16. Aune, *Revelation*, 303.

17. Richard Bauckham, *The Theology of the Book of Revelation, New Testament Theology*, ed. James D. G. Dunn (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 28–30, includes a fascinating discussion of these phrases.

18. John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998), 274.

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